

Earthquake Early Warning: Public Policy, Organization and Management Considerations in Implementation in the US

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With the recent introduction of a national earthquake early warning system in Japan, experimentation with various approaches to rapid analysis of an evolving seismic sequence in the US, and accelerating interest among scientists and the public, it seems reasonable to begin serious discussion of how such a system might be implemented in the United States. Thus, the purpose of this presentation is to explore some of the policy challenges, organization and management considerations and sociological issues in implementing an earthquake early warning system in the United States. The array of issues considered include: the costs and benefits of the technology, the division of labor among organizations that will operate and manage the system, the potential impact of false alarms and missed events, equity issues in the dissemination of warnings, legal authorities and liabilities and how alerting successes and failures are defined. This discussion will rely on the extensive social science disaster research literature, including some recent studies that have focused on earthquake early warning and lessons learned from the operation of existing warning systems for earthquakes and other hazards.