



# ICC NEWS RELEASE

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## East Coast Earthquake, Hurricane Irene Serve as Reminders Why Codes Compliance is Important

The 5.8 magnitude earthquake in central Virginia that was felt along much of the East Coast and as far west as Illinois is a reminder why the continued development, adoption and compliance of building codes and standards is vital to structural performance and public safety in seismic events. Hurricane Irene's path toward the East Coast also serves as a reminder of the importance of taking precautions before natural disasters strike.

"While inspections of office buildings, schools and landmarks such as the Washington Monument continue, initial reports indicate there were minimal structural damages following Tuesday's earthquake," said International Code Council Chief Executive Officer [Richard P. Weiland](#). "That is welcomed news and a tribute to the code enforcement professionals and governmental jurisdictions that are committed to safety during earthquakes and other disasters. While the areas affected by the earthquake may not build to seismic code provisions and standards as other regions do, I believe code compliance played a positive role."

Unlike the annual U.S. hurricane season, which spans from June through November, Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Craig Fugate pointed out that earthquakes have no regular season and are not limited to geographic regions such as the western U.S. "It is a reminder that the East Coast is vulnerable to earthquakes," Fugate said, in a [video posted to the White House](#) blog. "Not all disasters come with a forecast. Earthquakes don't give us much warning, but if we're prepared and know what to do we can minimize the impacts and take care of ourselves and our families." Fugate will address the critical role of code enforcement officials and the importance of codes in disaster

mitigation while serving as the keynote speaker at the Code Council's [2011 Annual Conference and Final Action Hearings](#) in Phoenix.

Weiland said jurisdictions in the region should treat Tuesday's earthquake as a wakeup call for structural performance and public safety. "About 200 years ago, four major quakes ranging from 7.0 to 8.0 in magnitude hit the New Madrid region, covering eight states including the cities of Memphis and Nashville, Tenn., St. Louis, and Little Rock, Ark., causing the Mississippi River to run upstream and church bells to ring in Boston," Weiland said. "We know that a similar earthquake in this region today would be one of the worst disasters in American history, yet code officials are struggling to persuade local and state governments to [include the seismic provisions](#) outlined in the *International Codes*. Building smart saves lives and money."

Forecasters are concerned Hurricane Irene could strike the East Coast. Citizens can [take precautionary steps](#) to help minimize the damages before, during and after the storm. Weiland said jurisdictions that adopt and enforce the latest building safety codes and standards such as the Code Council's [Standard for Construction in High Wind Regions](#) are better equipped to withstand the disaster.

"Despite the multitude of damages inflicted by hurricanes since 2005, there also have been numerous instances—in places such as Orange Beach, Alabama, and Galveston, Texas,—where structures built to the latest codes and standards survived relatively unscathed," Weiland said. "Much like in Washington, D.C., today, there is visible evidence that building smarter and safer saves lives and protects property during disasters."

The [International Code Council](#) is a member-focused association dedicated to helping the building safety community and construction industry provide safe, sustainable and affordable construction through the development of codes and standards used in the design, build and compliance process. Most U.S. communities and many global markets [choose the International Codes](#).

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