



Opening Statement of Research and Technology Subcommittee Chairman Mike Collins

Research and Technology Subcommittee Hearing
*From Risk to Resilience: Reauthorizing the Earthquake and Windstorm Hazards
Reduction Programs*

January 30, 2024

Good afternoon. Thank you to our expert panel of witnesses for taking the time to be here with us today.

I look forward to hearing about how the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program (NWIRP) and the National Earthquake Hazard Reduction Program (NEHRP) have helped us respond to natural hazards and mitigate their effects.

Earthquakes, tornadoes, and hurricanes destroy property and take a huge toll on families, communities, and businesses.

Billions are spent each year on recovery efforts and the costs associated with natural hazards are only expected to increase. That is why we need cost-effective measures to reduce the fallout of natural disasters.

All 50 states endure windstorm hazards including tornadoes, tropical storms, hurricanes, and thunderstorms. These storms and their associated flooding are the most destructive and costly natural hazards in the United States.

My home state of Georgia is no stranger to severe weather, which frequently damages homes, businesses, and crop land. Butts County, Georgia, where I live, suffered severe windstorms last January, which killed a child and caused \$15 million worth of damage across the area.

But of course, severe weather poses a challenge throughout most of the country. Between 2010 and 2020 communities across America endured 6,000 tornadoes, which cost an average of \$2.5 million in property damage per storm.

Just as every state is affected by windstorms, they are vulnerable to earthquakes. Nearly, 75 percent of the United States faces some risk from earthquakes.

While rare, Georgia has been prone to small earthquakes over the years as a number of fault lines run through the State.

While we are unable to predict when earthquakes may occur, by analyzing past quakes, scientists can better assess the likelihood of future earthquakes.

That's where NEHRP comes in.

NWIRP and NEHRP were created to improve our understanding of natural hazards and their impacts, and to encourage the implementation of strategies that reduce the damage from natural disasters. And we know that research pays off.

The National Institute of Building Science estimates that for every \$1 invested in mitigation strategies, \$11 is saved.

Both NWIRP and NEHRP help coordinate research efforts between the government, academia, and the private sector. This collaboration is needed to meet the challenge of responding to severe weather events.

Additionally, NWIRP and NEHRP both conduct research and development to update building codes, voluntary standards, and construction practices to improve the resiliency of structures.

I would like to again thank our witnesses for being here and I look forward to hearing from them about how vital these programs are protecting Americans from future weather events and saving taxpayers and the private sector money.

Thank you, and I yield back the balance of my time.