

Reclamation Building Seismic Safety Program Briefing Bulletin No. 1

Rapid Visual Screening Inspections --- Frequently Asked Questions ---

Date: Revised January 2005

Why are you doing a RVS inspection?

Executive Order 12941 asked all Federal agencies to identify any federally-owned or leased building that is unsafe during a major earthquake. To accomplish this, we are looking at the Reclamation-owned building inventory and identifying those buildings, with the help of the Rapid Visual Screening (RVS) methodology, that may have potential seismic hazards. If the RVS inspection shows serious seismic safety concerns for building occupants during a major earthquake, a more detailed seismic evaluation is completed for the building.

What is the RVS inspection used for?

The RVS inspection methodology is used by the Reclamation Building Seismic Safety Program (Program) to collect building data, as well as pertinent earthquake safety-related data, so that an *Initial Risk* can be assessed. The RVS inspection develops a score for a building. Lower RVS scores indicate that there is a greater chance for injuries to building occupants during a major earthquake. Higher RVS scores tell us that the building occupants should be safe during a major earthquake.

Why are you doing an RVS inspection on my building?

All Reclamation-owned buildings are included in a building inventory. The lower seismic risk buildings, such as unoccupied buildings, are exempted and removed from further consideration. The remaining non-exempt buildings are considered to be a higher seismic risk and we complete an RVS inspection on each of these buildings. The RVS score tells us if a building is acceptable as to risk to life safety or those that may be seismically hazardous and should be studied further. Generally speaking, if the RVS score is below approximately 4.0, the building is considered to have poor earthquake performance characteristics and a more in-depth seismic evaluation should be considered. If the RVS score is above 4.0, the building is considered to be safe for occupants during a major earthquake and no followup evaluation is required; but the Program does occasionally sample these buildings to verify the validity of the RVS tool. The Program is completing RVS inspections in all seismic zones so that a comprehensive risk identification program is completed for all Reclamation-owned buildings. The RVS methodology is calibrated probabilistically to accommodate multiple seismic zones.

Who pays for the RVS inspection?

All risk identification costs, including inventory, RVS, and seismic evaluation activities are non-project, non-reimbursable costs that are funded by the Program.

If you find a problem with my building, when will it be fixed?

The Program is transitioning from a risk assessment phase to a risk reduction phase. Risk assessment activities should be completed for all non-exempt buildings in all seismic zones by fiscal year 2008. We have identified a few, very serious concerns and we are working with Regions and Area Offices to plan and eventually mitigate identified problems. Seismic risk mitigation costs such as rehabilitation designs and construction are considered reimbursable in accordance with the original funding authority used to construct the building.