

# **Reclamation Building Seismic Safety Program Briefing Bulletin No. 2**

## **Rapid Visual Screening Inspections for Transferred Buildings**

**Date:** Revised January 2005

The Reclamation Building Seismic Safety Program (Program) uses a new, innovative tool developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to quickly assess the level of seismic risk at a particular building. The tool is called Rapid Visual Screening (RVS) and is used to develop a structural score for a building. The score is an indication of the level of risk that a building will represent to the lives of the occupants during a major earthquake. Buildings with higher RVS scores are found to be safer, in terms of occupancy, than those buildings with lower RVS scores.

As implied by the name, the RVS Inspection is a screening tool that is used to identify those buildings that may be seismically hazardous and should be studied further. If a building receives a very poor RVS score, it may be a good candidate for the more in-depth, followup seismic evaluation study. The costs of risk assessment activities such as RVSs and seismic evaluations are funded by the Program.

The Program has substantially completed RVS Inspections for all Reclamation-owned, non-transferred (reserved) buildings. Only buildings that trigger certain risk categories (such as office buildings with regular occupancies) are considered. Since Reclamation retains ownership, the Program performs RVS Inspections on non-exempt transferred buildings.

The Program is coordinating RVS inspections through Regions and Area Offices. You may have received a call, from one of these offices, explaining the inspection process. In summary, Area Offices have identified a Water User Association or District point of contact in the areas where the transferred buildings of interest have been identified. Usually, the Area Office will contact the Water User to coordinate the inspection, but in some cases, the Area Office will ask the Program inspector to call the Water User to request an inspection appointment. A schedule will be established that is convenient for the Water User and allows the inspector to maximize the number of inspections scheduled for any particular day.

The onsite inspection usually takes about 45 minutes and is visual in nature. The inspector uses a RVS form for a given seismic zone to establish the structural type of the buildings and then identifies irregularity issues that effect building response during an earthquake. While it helps to have access to the building, some sensitive sites can be inspected from the exterior. But it should be noted that a building classification can be misdiagnosed since exterior veneers may conceal the actual model building type.

The data are collected at the site and finalized in our Denver Office. A brief report, containing the inspection forms will be submitted to the Water User, with copies to the Area and Regional Offices, containing an assessment of the seismic risk at the site. The intent of the RVS inspection is to identify potentially unacceptable risk situations to the management of the Water User that is occupying the building.