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SUBJECT: [ARCHITECTURAL TECHNICAL GUIDE 0005 \(March 10, 2006\)](#)
[Seismic Safety Requirements for New Building Construction and Substantial Rehabilitation Using Rural Housing Service \(RHS\), Rural Business - Cooperative Service \(RBS\), and Rural Utilities Service \(RUS\) Loan, Grant, and Guaranteed Funds](#)

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Architectural Technical Guide (ATG) is to explain federal responsibilities for seismic design for new construction and substantial rehabilitation financed under the authorities of the RHS, RBS, and RUS as implemented in 7 CFR Parts 1924, 1942, 1948, and 1980, Final Rule, (reference the Federal Register, Vol. 61, No. 239, December 11, 1996) as they pertain to Rural Development construction activities in Colorado. Some program funded activities (i.e. Subpart D Guaranteed Loans and B&I) are not covered by regulations but are instead protected in practice (see text below).

IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES:

Concern for design for seismic safety in new construction owned or financed by the United States Government first appeared in the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Act of 1977 which was enacted to reduce risks to life and property from future earthquakes in the United States. It directed the President to establish and maintain an effective earthquake hazards reduction program. It eventuated the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was designated as the agency with primary responsibilities for coordinating the NEHRP..

The President signed Executive Order 12699, "*Seismic Safety of Federal and Federally Assisted or Regulated New Building Construction*", on January 5, 1990 and thereby required that each Federal agency initiate a plan to assure appropriate consideration be given to seismic safety. The Executive Order resulted in the formation of the Interagency Committee on Seismic Safety in Construction (ICSSC) which derived specific technical requirements and evaluated various national model building codes for compliance with the initiatives of the NEHRP.

The RHS, RBS, and RUS effectively implemented the requirements of the Executive Order via the Final Rule on December 11, 1996. It amended Instructions 1924-A, 1942-A, 1948-C, and 1980-A to require, in general, that all new building construction be designed and constructed to a code providing an equivalent level of safety to that contained in the latest edition of the NEHRP's "*Recommended Provisions for the Development of Seismic Regulations for New Building*".

The model building codes prevalently used in the State of Colorado and by Single Family Housing and Multi-Family Housing Programs in Colorado have been determined by the ICSSC to provide an "equivalent level of safety", so there is no change from the present way of doing

business in this regard and the seismic design box on page 1 of Form RD 1924-25, “*Plan Certification*”, should be completed by the appropriate design professional. With regard to financing “manufactured housing” (above-foundation construction built to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s “*Federal Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards*”), this type of factory-built construction is considered to meet the intent of the Executive Order and the foundation on which such housing is permanently set is required to be certified as conforming to the model building codes prevalently used in the State of Colorado and by Single Family Housing and Multi-Family Housing Programs in Colorado.

No specific “development standard”, on the other hand, has ever been enforced by Rural Development in either the Community Facilities Loan and Grant Program, the Intermediary Relending Program, the Business and Industrial Loan Program, or the Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program. The Federal seismic requirement is being met, however, in these program areas by virtue of the design architect or engineer dating, signing, and sealing the construction documents and identifying and dating the pertinent model building code on these same documents.

Actual ramifications to new construction in Colorado as a result of the implementation of these Federal level regulations are probably negligible due to the actual relatively low seismic risk zone pattern for the State as well as the State of Colorado’s requirement that more complex structures already be designed by a registered architect or engineer. Reference the attached “*Seismic Zone Map of the United States*” excerpt typical of the model building codes prevalently used in the State of Colorado and by Single Family Housing and Multi-Family Housing Programs in Colorado. It only shows a small area in Zone 2B (i.e. California being divided between two much more severe Zones 3 and 4), the remainder in Zones 0 and 1.

One last point to keep in mind. The seismic safety provisions of national model building codes are only intended to prevent fatalities and do not claim to be capable of preventing property damage. This is due to the generally unpredictable nature of earthquake events and the economic unfeasibility of designing modern structures to prevent significant property damage. A building constructed to meet present code requirements would be considered a success, per National Office, if, after an earthquake, no one were killed by a total or partial collapse.

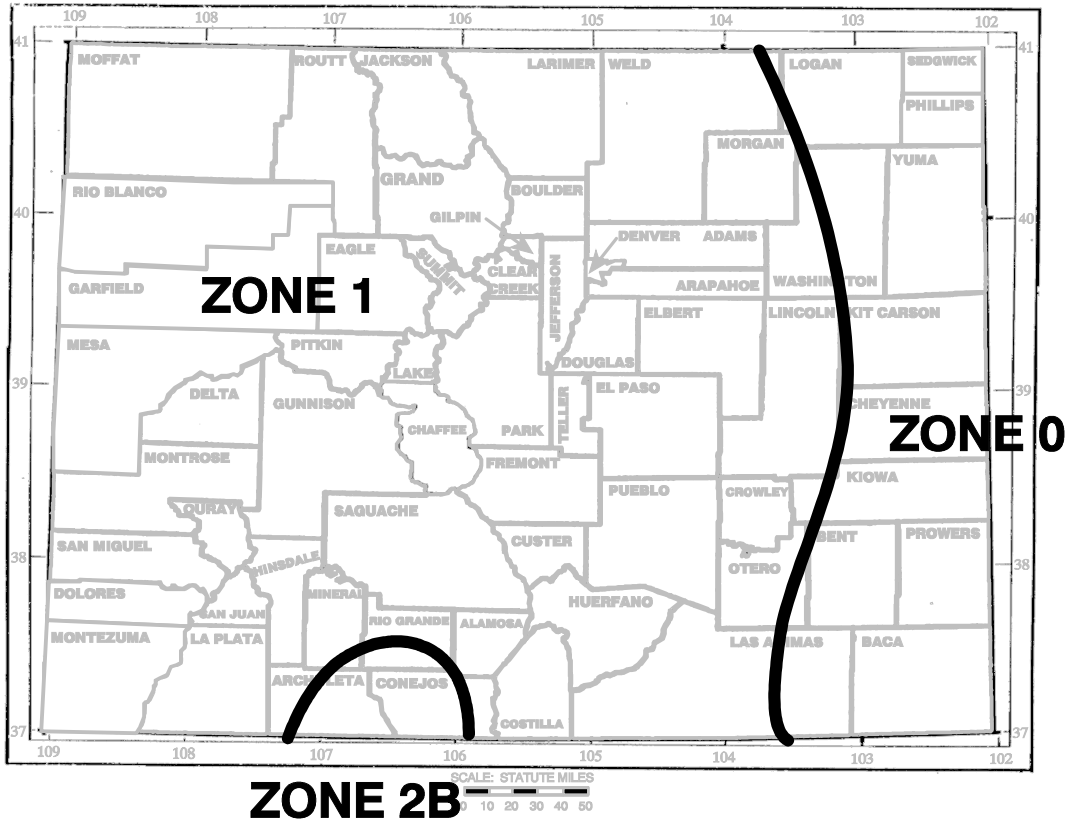
Please consult the State Architect if you have any further questions on this subject.



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Attachment: Exhibit A: “*Seismic Zone Map for the State of Colorado*”

SEISMIC ZONE MAP FOR THE STATE OF COLORADO



DEGREE OF SEISMIC SAFETY RISK

