



## EERI Policy Statement

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### Schools shall be URM Free by 2033

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To keep students safe, school buildings must be “URM free by 2033” in regions with high and moderate earthquake hazard.

#### Background

During the early to mid twentieth century school buildings were commonly constructed out of unreinforced masonry (URM). This structural type has inherent, life-threatening vulnerabilities to earthquake ground shaking. URM buildings have collapsed or suffered major damage in numerous earthquakes in the United States and throughout the world, leading to many casualties.

In particular, the risk posed by school buildings was brought to public attention in the 1933 Long Beach earthquake in Southern California, where more than 230 URM school buildings were either destroyed, suffered major damage, or were judged unsafe to occupy following the earthquake. Since then, many communities have identified their URM schools and either retrofitted or replaced them. However, more than 80 years after this earthquake, many school children in the United States still attend school in these dangerous buildings.

#### Needed Action

Legislatures, school districts, and school boards in regions with high and moderate earthquake hazard should:

1. Establish programs to identify URM school buildings and prioritize them for retrofit or replacement.
2. Establish funding mechanisms, financial assistance, and incentives to finance the retrofit or replacement of URM school buildings.
3. Establish fully-funded programs at the state, regional, or school district levels to set criteria and standards, allocate funding for school retrofit and replacement projects, and ensure quality compliance of all retrofit or replacement projects for schools.
4. Require structural upgrades to or replacement of all actively used URM school buildings in regions with moderate and high seismic hazard by 2033, the 100-year anniversary of the Long Beach Earthquake.

Further considerations for safe schools should include mitigating nonstructural hazards and creating community resilience plans that align and prioritize mitigation efforts.

More information on this policy statement can be found on the full policy white paper:  
<https://www.eeri.org/wp-content/uploads/eeri-policy-urm.pdf>

Information on EERI’s Public Policy and Advocacy efforts, including other policy statements at:  
<https://www.eeri.org/advocacy-and-public-policy/>