



April 18, 2011

Dear Colleagues:

Recent events throughout the world — a powerful earthquake in Japan, the fifth largest in recorded history, as well as devastating earthquakes in New Zealand and Haiti — serve as a reminder that earthquakes can happen at any time and can have disastrous and far-reaching effects. The 2011 Great Central U.S. ShakeOut on April 28, 2011, provides a timely and relevant opportunity for us all to put this reminder into practice by exercising what to do when an earthquake strikes. The first ShakeOut in the central U.S. also coincides with the bicentennial anniversary of the great New Madrid earthquakes of 1811-1812. For this drill, the federal government and the New Madrid Seismic Zone (NMSZ) states and local governments will hold a coordinated exercise to prepare for a major NMSZ earthquake.

**We would like to encourage you and your schools to join more than one million participants across 11 states and hundreds of schools in this first-of-its-kind, multistate earthquake drill.** The drill is now less than a month away, and to date, more than 2.3 million people are registered to participate. With 40 million residents in the NMSZ region, we encourage as many schools as possible to join the ShakeOut.

**The “Great Central U.S. ShakeOut” drill will be conducted at 10:15 a.m. CT on April 28, 2011.** Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Tennessee would be impacted directly or indirectly by a New Madrid seismic event, and thus are participating in the event.

We recently sat down to discuss the importance of events like the ShakeOut, and how critical this is for school preparedness. The ShakeOut has been organized to increase awareness of the “Drop, Cover, Hold On” method of protecting ourselves during an earthquake. A major NMSZ earthquake would have a devastating impact on much of the Midwest. The purpose of the ShakeOut is to help individuals and organizations be better prepared for major earthquakes and to practice how to protect ourselves when they happen.

To make participation in the ShakeOut drill as simple as possible, the Central United States Earthquake Consortium, along with its partners, has put together a Web page focused on the drill, <http://www.shakeout.org/centralus/index.html>, with instructions on participating as well as resources to support you through the ShakeOut. In addition, the Department of Education’s Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center provides and disseminates information about emergency management to help schools, school districts, and institutions of higher education learn more about developing, implementing, and evaluating crisis plans. Additional information regarding how schools and communities can plan for, respond to, and recover from a disaster such as an earthquake can be found online at <http://rems.ed.gov>.

All of our citizens, and especially our students, can play a critical role in helping our nation become well-prepared. Giving our next generation of leaders the tools to help teach their friends, families, and peers how to be ready for earthquakes will help our entire country become more resilient in the face of a disaster.

If you have any questions regarding the ShakeOut, please contact Brian Blake, Program Coordinator for the Central U.S. Earthquake Consortium, at [bblake@cusec.org](mailto:bblake@cusec.org) or Regina Moran at [Regina.Moran@dhs.gov](mailto:Regina.Moran@dhs.gov).

Sincerely,



Janet Napolitano  
U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security



Arne Duncan  
U.S. Secretary of Education