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California Shakes, but Building Codes Ensure Public Safety

CHINO HILLS, CA – Just before noon Pacific Standard Time on July 29, 2008, the inland communities of the Los Angeles area withstood an earthquake of 5.4 on the richtor scale. The tremor was felt as far away as Las Vegas, Nevada, nearly 300 miles away from the epicenter of the earthquake. Immediate reports from the press stated that little structural damage was expected and no lives were lost. These results are directly attributable to the building codes that California has in place that protect the lives and welfare of our communities each day.

“California has always been at the forefront of building code development and public safety and today’s events are certainly a testament to our efforts,” stated Jay Elbettar, Director of Building Safety for the city of Newport Beach and President of California Building Officials. “Although our city shook, lives were saved and the built environment was preserved.”

In January 2008, California adopted the newest version of the California Building Code, which has been internationally hailed to encapsulate the most progressive and seismically safe provisions available today. California adopts a new building code every three years to ensure that the regulations, codes and standards that we build to each day in California are the most updated and technologically advanced.

In 2004, the Indian Ocean earthquake which triggered the Asian Tsunami took over 250,000 lives in eleven countries. Had proper building codes been in place, there is a great possibility that many of these lives that were tragically lost to the natural disasters could have been spared.

“When we think of building codes, oftentimes we think of negative connotations and laborious processes. However, the lives saved everyday by the building codes we have in place coupled with strong enforcement, should serve as a testament to the necessity for strong regulation and standards,” continued Elbettar. “I am proud of our collective work as the code enforcement profession, for we save lives each day in our building departments.”

California Building Officials (CALBO) is a nonprofit 501(c)6 membership organization headquartered in Sacramento, California. CALBO’s members, representing over 500 local California jurisdictions, are primarily responsible for enforcing building code requirements in an estimated 95% of the buildings constructed in California.