



## Building Beyond Code Requirements in Charleston

### Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

#### *Charleston County, South Carolina*



**Charleston, SC** - In the fall of 2002, a magnitude 4.32 earthquake was measured in the Charleston area. That earthquake pales in comparison to the magnitude 7.7 earthquake that struck Charleston on August 31, 1886. Could a magnitude 7.7 earthquake strike again? If so, many of those in the building industry in Charleston want to be prepared. The Superior Code Home Standards, which are voluntary standards that go beyond the minimum code requirements for new and existing construction, have been adopted by the Home Ownership Program in the Charleston area, Seabrook Island, South Carolina, and the Habitat for Humanity. The City of Charleston also began enforcing the International Residential Code on April 1, 2002, 90 days in advance of any other jurisdiction in South Carolina. "Why would we offer the citizens of Charleston less than the nationally recognized standards for their protection," says Doug Smits, Director of Inspections, Chief Building and Fire Officials for the City of Charleston.

There are many other activities being undertaken in Charleston to reduce the risk from earthquakes. In the City of North Charleston, a non-profit organization established in part with NEHRP assistance will break ground in May 2003 on a permanent home for the organization and an educational center for the community. The center, which will include cut-outs so that the public can view earthquake resistant structural systems, will feature a library, hundreds of safety items and displays, and training programs for a variety of audiences, including architects and engineers, building code officials, contractors, and school children.

#### Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County (County-wide)**

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **South Carolina**

County: **Charleston County**

#### Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**

Hazard Type: **Earthquake**

Activity/Project Type: **Building Codes**

Activity/Project Start Date: **04/2002**

Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**

Funding Source: **National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP)**

### Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

### Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal  
Disaster? **Unknown**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Unknown**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

### Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: [http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/earthquake/sty\\_charleston.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/earthquake/sty_charleston.shtm)

Reference URL 2: [http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/bestpractices/NEHRP\\_BP\\_page.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/bestpractices/NEHRP_BP_page.shtm)

### Main Points

- The Superior Code Home Standards, which are voluntary standards that go beyond the minimum code requirements for new and existing construction, have been adopted by the Home Ownership Program in the Charleston area, Seabrook Island, South Carolina, and the Habitat for Humanity.
- The City of Charleston began enforcing the International Residential Code on April 1, 2002, 90 days in advance of any other jurisdiction in South Carolina.
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