

## News release



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### **What do YOU think about disasters and getting ready for them?**

*Everett Public Schools asks for your perspective about disaster planning*

An [online survey](#), open until Feb. 6, 2015, is gathering public perspective about getting ready for natural hazards.

Specifically, the survey seeks the public's concerns about those natural disasters most likely in the state of Washington to destroy structures and take lives.



"Some might call this a 'worry survey'," commented Construction Manager Darcy Walker, who is in charge of the survey to gather community concerns and to oversee the district's pre-disaster readiness planning. "All available science indicates the schools in our district are more prone to earthquake and floods than to other potential natural disasters. The survey will help us better understand to what extent the public considers schools and students to be most vulnerable. The survey will also help us learn what our public's risk tolerance level is. That information will help determine priorities for mitigation planning."

"Natural disaster preparedness will vary depending upon each school district's location and upon each school's location within each district," explained Walker. "What the public in Wenatchee School District sees as that district's vulnerability will be somewhat different than what our public thinks we most need to be ready for."

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) received a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to help school districts in Washington

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develop pre-disaster mitigation plans. OSPI sought district partners to work together on such planning. Everett Public Schools was one of 20 district partners who were selected by OSPI as a pilot group to develop mitigation plans before disaster strikes – in other words, plans that would help diminish loss of life and structural damage. Once the pilot group has finished its work, all school districts in the state of Washington will be required to develop their own pre-disaster mitigation plans.

The [online survey](#) is one portion of the district's planning process. Other pieces include engaging teachers, administrators, school district personnel, parents and other stakeholders through a mitigation planning team. Planning information will be on the district's website, and public comments solicited at various stages during the planning work.

As Walker and OSPI point out, preparation ahead of a disaster can significantly reduce the costs of a disaster – money and lost business for a local community and costs of federal disaster funds. “This is a ‘win/win’ locally, at the state level and for our federal government,” Walker points out.

The pre-disaster planning survey is [online](#) starting Monday, Jan. 26 until 4 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 6. The results will be incorporated into *hazard mitigation planning*.

As planning moves ahead, more information about it and the results of the local survey will be available on the [Facilities and Planning website](#). More information about the state Hazards Mitigation Planning work is on the [OSPI website](#).

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