

Unreinforced Masonry Buildings (URM)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How do I know if I am living or working in a URM?

A: There are two ways to check if you are living or working in a URM.

1.) You can access a list of URMs at the Department of Construction and Inspections website here: www.Seattle.gov/DPD/URM in the “Project Documents” section.

2.) You can view the “URM” tab of the Seattle Hazard Explorer at www.seattle.gov/emergency. Zoom in to your neighborhood or search for your address and see if there is a URM at that location.

Q: Why has the City not put a policy in place that addresses the danger of URMs?

A: The issue of URMs in Seattle is very complicated. Because there are so many URMs in the city (1164), retrofitting these buildings to make them safe would require a very high financial cost and potentially impact housing affordability in the city. A Policy Committee has been formed to look at all of the funding options, including incentives and assistance for building owners to complete retrofits. The Policy Committee is scheduled to convene again in the fall of 2016.

Q: If I am living or working in a URM, what can I do?

- Find out if your building has been retrofitted (Ask your landlord or building manager)
- Find out if your landlord has insurance coverage and emergency plans for tenants
- Purchase earthquake insurance
- Know multiple ways out of the building in case exits are blocked with debris
- Have a plan that identifies where you can stay if your building is damaged

Q: If I own a business in a URM, what can I do?

- Find out if your building has been retrofitted (Ask your landlord or building manager)
- Find out if your landlord has insurance coverage and emergency plans for tenants
- Purchase earthquake insurance
- Create a continuity plan for your business
- Teach your employees how to be safe (Drop, Cover, Hold)
- Talk with other business owners in the building about how to work together and get prepared

Q: If I own a URM, what can I do?

- Find out if your building has been retrofitted and if not, look into retrofitting your building
- Purchase earthquake insurance
- Encourage tenants to have adequate insurance, including earthquake insurance and business interruption insurance
- Train tenants on what they should do during and immediately following a disaster

More Detailed Information on the status of URM's in Seattle and City of Seattle policy development can be found at www.Seattle.gov/dpd/urm