



National Institute of  
BUILDING SCIENCES

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January 15, 2010

Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton  
United States Department of State  
2201 C St., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

First, on behalf of the National Institute of Building Sciences I commend you and President Obama for your leadership in responding to the devastation in Haiti. Obviously, it is imperative to address the immediate needs for rescue and response. It will be some time before longer-term recovery issues move to the fore, but it is not too soon to begin considering how best to ensure that reconstruction efforts encompass needed natural hazard mitigation measures.

Haiti is no stranger to natural disasters. Since 2001, USAID has provided assistance to Haiti in response to some 15 disasters, and the United States has provided more than \$16 million in disaster aid. The quake that occurred this week came while Haiti was still recovering from four tropical storm/hurricane events that occurred in 2008. One indisputable fact is that the buildings and structures in Haiti have not served the citizens very well in the face of these disasters.

Some will argue the country's economy does not provide sufficient funds to build structures that will resist earthquakes, tropical storms, or hurricanes. Nevertheless, in the wake of the earthquake some buildings were capable of avoiding total destruction and collapse. Others that should have been built with the purpose of being a safe haven in a disaster unfortunately did not fare as well.

It is to the benefit of all that critical structures such as hospitals, schools, and emergency service facilities be constructed in a manner that can resist such devastation so that they are still standing and able to provide services following a disaster. Every dollar spent on mitigation can result in a saving of 4 dollars in recovery cost. The 2005 report "Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: An Independent Study to Assess the Future Savings from Mitigation Activities" issued by the National Institute of Building Sciences Multihazard Mitigation Council supports this very important fact. The report includes an examination of disasters resulting from flooding, earthquake, and severe wind events.

It is for these important reasons that the National Institute of Building Sciences has solicited assistance from our nation's building community in compiling a tool kit for use in Haiti. This tool kit can provide guidance and assistance for the reconstruction process. It can include

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standards for rebuilding structures to resist seismic, wind, and flood forces as well as techniques for the application of such standards and construction practices to be used in the rebuilding process. All of these tools will be designed to work with the materials and resources available to Haiti.

While the lack of standards/codes and enforcement certainly comes into play, we cannot ignore the reality that the economic conditions of Haiti will undoubtedly make a difference in how construction is completed. The resources available through this effort will bring together the engineering, academic and construction fields and materials suppliers to create potential systems of construction that are economical yet provide the resistance to earthquakes and hurricanes needed in this tropical country.

Many U.S. codes- and standards-development organizations have pledged to participate in the development of this tool kit. These organizations, along with the Institute's Building Seismic Safety Council and Multihazard Mitigation Council, are combining efforts to create this very important and useful toolkit. However, it will be a useless tool unless the United States requires it be followed when administering grants and funding applications during Haiti's reconstruction efforts. The alternative – funding a reconstruction without mitigation requirements – could mean witnessing similar devastation from future catastrophic events.

We call upon you to support this effort and look forward to working with the Department to support this effort.

Please do not hesitate to call upon the Institute for additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henry L. Green". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Henry L. Green, Hon. AIA  
President

Information on the National Institute of Building Sciences, Multihazard Mitigation Council and Building Seismic Safety Council can be viewed at [www.nibs.org](http://www.nibs.org)