January 13, 2012

Dear Colleagues:

In the past year or so, we have seen the destruction that major seismic events can cause — a powerful earthquake in Japan, the fifth largest in recorded history; unexpected seismic activity in the Mid-Atlantic United States; and devastating earthquakes in Turkey and New Zealand. These serve as a reminder that earthquakes can happen at any time and can have disastrous and far-reaching effects. The 2012 Great Central U.S. ShakeOut on February 7, 2012, provides a timely and relevant opportunity for us all to put this reminder into practice by exercising what to do when an earthquake strikes. This second ShakeOut in the central United States also coincides with the bicentennial anniversary of the great New Madrid earthquakes of 1811-1812. For this drill, the Federal Government and the New Madrid Seismic Zone (NMSZ) states and local governments will hold a coordinated exercise to prepare for a major NMSZ earthquake.

We would like to encourage you and your schools to join more than one million participants across eight states and hundreds of schools in ShakeOut, the largest multistate earthquake drill in the United States. The drill is now less than a month away, and to date, more than 2.3 million people are registered to participate. Because the NMSZ region is home to 40 million residents, we encourage as many schools as possible in this region to join the ShakeOut.

The "Great Central U.S. ShakeOut" drill will be conducted at 10:15 a.m. Central Standard Time on February 7, 2012. Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee would be impacted directly or indirectly by a New Madrid seismic event and are therefore participating in the event. We would like to emphasize the importance of events like the ShakeOut, and how critical they are for school preparedness. In a recent survey conducted in the Central United States, fewer than half of education institutions indicated they train staff or students in earthquake preparedness. The ShakeOut offers a unique opportunity for schools to train students and staff on preparedness and to increase awareness of the "Drop, Cover, Hold On" method of protecting ourselves during an earthquake.

To make participation in the ShakeOut drill as simple as possible, the Central United States Earthquake Consortium, along with its partners, has put together a Web page focused on the drill, http://www.shakeout.org/centralus/index.html, with instructions on participating as well as resources to support you throughout the ShakeOut. In addition, the Department of Education's Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center provides and disseminates information about emergency management to help schools, school districts, and institutions of higher education learn more about developing, implementing, and evaluating crisis

plans. Additional information regarding how schools and communities can plan for, respond to, and recover from a disaster such as an earthquake can be found online at http://rems.ed.gov.

All of our citizens, and especially our students, can play a critical role in helping our Nation become well prepared. Giving our next generation of leaders the tools to help teach their friends, families, and peers how to be ready for earthquakes will help our entire country become more resilient in the face of a disaster.

If you have any questions regarding the ShakeOut, please contact Brian Blake, Program Coordinator for the Central U.S. Earthquake Consortium, at bblake@cusec.org, or Paulette Aniskoff at paulette.aniskoff@fema.dhs.gov.

Sincerely,

Janet Napolitano
Secretary of Homeland Security

Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education