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## Standing Tall in the Pacific Northwest

Would a repeat of the recent Chilean earthquake in the Pacific Northwest cause "...many of the region's iconic tall buildings...[to] collapse," as claimed by Peter Yanev in his opinion article on this page last week? No. As members of the Pacific Northwest structural design community, we strongly refute many of the claims made by Mr. Yanev.

The earthquake building code in the U.S. incorporates state-of-the-art scientific research and engineering design practice. The Chilean building code adopted parts of the U.S. code, but specifically omitted key concrete reinforcement provisions, which are critical for building strength.

The U.S. code takes into account ground shaking expected from "mega-quakes" in the Pacific Northwest. It is incorrect for Mr. Yanev to state that "Seattle's buildings... are designed for roughly half of the earthquake loads of buildings in San Francisco or Los Angeles." In fact, the U.S. code requires buildings in Seattle to be designed for comparable earthquake loads as buildings in California.

While Mr. Yanev's article serves the useful purpose of raising public awareness of earthquake risks, he creates the mistaken impression that there are dangerous deficiencies in tall buildings in the Pacific Northwest. We do agree that there are lessons to be learned from the Chilean earthquake, and we look forward to working with the U.S. building code community to further improve the design of buildings to withstand earthquakes.

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*The Structural Engineers Association of Washington (SEAW) is a not-for-profit professional organization dedicated to the advancement of excellence in structural engineering.*