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130 228th Street, SW
 Bothell, WA 98021
 (425) 487-4600

Region X

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King County Courthouse - FEMA Approves \$2.6 Million Earthquake Damage Repair

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Seattle, WA -- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has approved more than \$2.6 million to repair damages to the King County Courthouse caused by the Feb. 28, 2001 Nisqually Earthquake.

A significant amount of non-structural damage occurred to the 80-year-old, 569,000-square-foot building, including interior walls, stairwells, windows, doors, elevator shafts, light fixtures and interior marble panels. Seismic activity from the 6.8 earthquake also caused damage to the ornamental façade, bricks and mortar of the exterior of the Courthouse.

According to FEMA Regional Director John Pennington, FEMA will provide 75 percent of the \$2.6 million. The remaining 25 percent comes from State and local resources. The King County Courthouse sustained more than \$8 million in total damages in the February earthquake. FEMA and the State are covering \$2.6 million, and the County is working with its insurance to cover the remainder of the damages.

"The King County Courthouse is in an historic district and is listed on the King County Register of Historic Places. Like many Nisqually Earthquake-damaged government buildings, it has presented federal and state inspectors with unique challenges," said Pennington. "One challenge has been to sort out the various types of damage. In addition, qualified repairs have to conform to the Secretary of the Interior's guidelines for the treatment of historic properties."

"This courthouse project award is the result of the hard work and coordinated efforts of FEMA, the State of Washington, King County and King County's Landmarks and Heritage Commission," said Glen W. Vetter, director of the Washington Emergency Management Division (WEMD).

King County Executive Ron Sims, who toured the Courthouse immediately after the earthquake, said that despite the cosmetic damage to the building, it is structurally safe for the thousands who walk through the doors each day to visit the County Council, the Executive and the court system.

The project funds are made available under the FEMA Public Assistance program and are administered by the State of Washington Emergency Management Division. Under the program, eligible disaster-related costs are reimbursed to government and certain non-profit organizations for the areas of emergency protective measures, debris removal and restoration of public facilities.

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FEMA 500 C Street, SW Washington, D.C. 20472 Phone: (202) 566-1600