Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 10, 2025

Dr. Ned Mamula
Director
U.S. Geological Survey
12201 Sunrise Valley Drive
Reston, VA 20192

Dear Director Mamula:

We are writing to request information regarding the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) ShakeAlert system and recent incidents that have generated public concern.

On December 4, 2025, a false alert for a magnitude 5.9 earthquake near the California-Nevada border triggered notifications to residents hundreds of miles away including in the San Francisco Bay Area.[1] While we appreciate that USGS quickly removed the false alert, this incident understandably caused confusion among emergency managers and the public. In addition to concerns about the false alert, we have questions about the criteria that determine whether alerts are sent out.

Given the critical importance of timely and accurate early warning for seismic events, we respectfully request the following information regarding the ShakeAlert system:

1. Why would multiple seismic stations report shaking when none occurred, and why did this occur on December 4? Was this the result of equipment malfunction, data-processing errors, or other factors?

2. What safeguards exist within ShakeAlert to validate anomalous readings before issuing public alerts? Are additional verification measures under consideration following this incident?

3. How is USGS working with state and local emergency management officials to assess impacts from the false alert and identify improvements to minimize disruption in future events?

4. What criteria determine whether ShakeAlert or related USGS notification systems issue alerts to the public?

The public relies on USGS for authoritative, real-time information during earthquakes. Ensuring the accuracy and reliability of alerts is essential for emergency preparedness and public confidence. We appreciate your agency's ongoing work to strengthen the nation's earthquake

[1] Lipton, Eric. "False Report of 5.9 Earthquake Sends Phones Buzzing in Nevada." *New York Times*, December 4, 2025, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/04/us/nevada-earthquake-usgs-false.html.

early-warning capabilities, and a clear understanding of these issues will help support efforts to further improve seismic safety and resilience.

Thank you for your work ensuring communities have the information they need to stay safe.

Sincerely,

Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress

Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress

Laura Friedman
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress