



**Justin P. Wilson, Comptroller**

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## **Comptroller's Office Releases Report on School Earthquake Drills**

The Comptroller's Office of Research and Education Accountability (OREA) has released a report on school compliance with state earthquake drill requirements and an accompanying infographic on all current safety drills required for students in K-12 public schools.

Twenty years ago, the General Assembly passed legislation requiring that certain school districts conduct at least two earthquake drills each school year. The impetus for the requirement was the threat posed by the New Madrid Fault Line which runs through portions of West Tennessee.

The New Madrid Fault Line has a 7 to 10 percent chance of producing a major earthquake within any 50-year period. Between December 1811 and February 1812, three earthquakes occurred along this fault line, which caused portions of the Mississippi River to run backwards and created Reelfoot Lake.

OREA's review of safety drill logs from schools in the 40 districts subject to earthquake drills found that 84 percent of schools had not conducted the required two drills in school year 2016-17. Of the 352 school logs reviewed, 89 schools (25 percent) had not conducted any earthquake drills and 207 schools (59 percent) had conducted one of the two required drills.

School districts that lie entirely or partially within 100 miles of the New Madrid Fault Line are required by state law and State Board of Education rules to conduct at least two earthquake drills each school year. Earthquake drills are optional for other Tennessee districts.

The Comptroller's Office reviewed the list of districts identified by the Tennessee Department of Education as falling within the 100-mile fault zone and sought input from the University of Memphis Center for Earthquake Research and the United States Geological Survey on potential alternatives for identifying school districts that should be subject to earthquake drills. The report includes policy considerations and administrative recommendations.

The student safety drill infographic details current state requirements for earthquake, fire, and armed intruder drills, as well as general non-evacuation drills that would be used for weather emergencies such as tornadoes. To review the report and infographic, please visit OREA's website at <http://comptroller.tn.gov/orea>

Media contact: John Dunn, Public Information Officer, (615) 401-7755 or [john.dunn@cot.tn.gov](mailto:john.dunn@cot.tn.gov)

