

Using the Science of Earthquakes and the Law to Protect the Public

Castro & Associates

As one of the most prominent construction and failure analysis law firms in the country, Castro Associates has led the way in helping earthquake victims resolve damage and injury claims to put their lives back together. In January 2018, the Castro team recovered \$55 million for its clients to repair construction and seismic deficiencies, during litigation. It was reported as the largest construction recovery by the Los Angeles Daily Journal.

"We cannot predict earthquakes, but we can prevent excessive property losses and minimize injuries and fatalities."

- Joel Castro

The Castro firm has practiced for over four decades, and is renowned for its comprehensive failure analysis and hands-on testing of damaged and collapsed building sites throughout California. The firm's unique expertise combines science and law, with construction as the foundation. Among the firm's proudest accomplishments was winning jury trials with published results by the California Court of Appeals (*Myrick v. Mastagni*) that enabled the construction industry to adopt new safety measures for unreinforced masonry (URM) and soft story structures. This followed the first successful California jury trial against URM building owners, after two women were killed in the Acorn Building during the 2003 San Simeon Earthquake. The *Myrick* case was reported nationally, affirmed by the California Supreme Court, and held that building owners will be held liable if they fail to repair hazardous URM and soft story buildings, regardless of retrofit compliance dates. Retrofitting these buildings now will protect the public from catastrophic earthquake losses and



Joel Castro

will minimize downtime for the housing market.

In 2016, Joel Castro spoke at the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute's [EERI] seminar "Using Legal Action to Improve Earthquake Safety." He has also lectured about earthquake preparedness, performance-based engineering, and housing stock impact from damaged earthquake buildings. He received the first annual Justice Advocacy Award in 2012 for his litigation of the San Simeon Earthquake deaths, and was voted Outstanding Construction Attorney by his peers in the Los Angeles County Bar Association. He is frequently quoted as a seismic/legal resource by National



Geographic, the Los Angeles Times and the Los Angeles Daily Journal.

Where Law Bridges Science

"We have donated our research and earthquake findings from our biggest seismic cases to universities and state agencies to further their understanding of the impact and scope of seismic events, and to better protect the public from faulty construction during earthquakes," says Castro.

"Our efforts to bridge law and science are noteworthy."

Castro Associates is a boutique trial firm experienced with over four decades of litigating complex, multiparty construction damage cases, including seismic failures, structural collapses, steel moment frame high-rise projects, soils, grading and landfill compaction failures, concrete failures, unreinforced masonry, soft story structures and systemic water intrusion. The firm has recovered hundreds of millions of dollars for its clients in successful construction litigation. In addition, the firm has won landmark legal cases for 16 victims of the 1994 Northridge Earthquake, one of California's most notorious earthquake disasters, resulting in multimillion-dollar recoveries for residents of the collapsed Northridge Meadows apartments killed during the earthquake.

"The Castro firm has helped set important public policy that will save lives," says Castro, citing the *Myrick* published opinion.

"We are very proud of that. We are at the intersection where science bridges law and impacts public safety. We cannot predict earthquakes, but we can prevent excessive property losses and minimize injuries and fatalities."