

ESP

BULLETIN

SUMMER 1997, VOL. IX, ISSUE 3

FIRE SUPPRESSION

In addition to the damage caused directly by strong ground shaking, earthquakes can pose other threats to your community.

One of the most common threats resulting from earthquakes is fire. Strong earthquakes can increase the fire risk by:

- Rupturing gas lines;
- Downing power lines;
- Damaging electrical wiring in appliances; and
- Toppling shelves holding combustible chemicals.

Earthquake-related fires also can be caused by:

- Leaving food unattended while on the stove;
- Lighting or using matches before checking for gas leaks;
- Using fireplaces before they've been inspected for damage; and
- Using candles, which can fall as the result of aftershocks.

Neighborhoods can reduce the potential and actual fire threat by reducing or eliminating hazards before the next earthquake and by forming a fire suppression branch as part of its neighborhood response team.



**Can't
Do It
Alone!
1997**

Monthly Preparedness Items and Actions

January

Understand the Threat

February

Meet with Your Neighbors

March

Inventory Community Resources

April

Develop Response Teams

May

Get Trained

June

Update Emergency Supplies

July

*Reduce Neighborhood
Hazards*

August

Learn Search and Rescue

September

Review First Aid Skills

October

Assess the Damage

November

Plan for Emergency Housing

December

Plan Your Drill

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ORGANIZE THE FIRE BRANCH

If your neighborhood response team hasn't yet established a fire suppression branch as part of its operations section, it should do so now. The fire suppression branch should include a coordinator and several teams to assess the fire threat and put out small fires after an earthquake or another disaster.

At a minimum, members of the fire suppression branch should know basic fire safety, the types of fires they might encounter, the proper ways to put out each type of fire and how to use a fire extinguisher.

ELIMINATE HAZARDS

Before the next earthquake or other disaster, the fire suppression branch should work with the hazard reduction branch (discussed in the July 1997 ESP Focus sheet) to identify, reduce and eliminate potential fire hazards. Such hazards include:

- Water heaters and other gas appliances that are not properly secured or do not have flexible connections;
- Flammable liquids;
- Flammable vegetation;
- Trash;
- Tree branches near power lines.

After identifying and working to reduce fire hazards in the neighborhood, the fire suppression branch should try to:

- Ensure that each home has a multi-purpose dry chemical fire extinguisher (ABC type);
- Train residents how to use the fire extinguisher;
- Encourage neighbors to install smoke detectors and change batteries regularly;
- Help neighbors develop a family plan, including:
 - An escape route;
 - Plans to reunite.
- Compile an emergency supplies kit;
- Encourage neighbors to identify reliable water sources;
- Teach residents where utility shut-offs are located and how to turn them off;
- Remind neighbors not to light matches or candles.

- Determine the nature of the fire, whether it is manageable and putting it out is within their capabilities;
- Call neighbors for assistance and attempt to put out the fire if it is small and within their capabilities;
- Evacuate the building and close all doors if the fire is too large or the result of leaking gas;
- Try to call 9-1-1 from a public phone or send a runner to the nearest fire station if the fire is too big;
- Turn off the gas and electrical supplies to the building and surrounding buildings, if possible.

Never enter a burning building to save property or pets.

RESPONDING TO THE AFTERMATH

After an earthquake or another disaster, members of the fire suppression branch should:

- Ensure the safety of their families and homes;
- Report to the neighborhood command post or other designated site for assignments unless otherwise directed;
- Carefully check the neighborhood for fires and gas leaks;
- Put out small blazes (see information below);
- Help neighbors turn off gas meters if a leak is detected;
- Remind people not to use open flames.

FIRE SUPPRESSION AND SAFETY

Should members of the fire suppression branch encounter a fire, they should:

The ESP Focus and Bulletins are only suggestions for preparing your neighborhood. You need to use discretion and common sense in your relationships with neighbors.



WHAT IS ESP ?

ESP is an awareness campaign designed to increase earthquake preparedness. ESP was developed by the County of Los Angeles. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services and representatives from Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties assist in the development of campaign materials and in coordination of the campaign.

COUNTY CONTACTS

Imperial County

Robert Carter
County Office of Emergency Services
(619) 355-1164

Inyo County

Paul Morrison
Disaster Services
(619) 878-0272

Kern County

Charles H. Conner
County Office of Emergency Services
(805) 861-2491

Los Angeles County

Joyce Harris
County Chief Administrative Office
Office of Emergency Management
(213) 974-1302

Mono County

Paula Winn
County Sheriff's Department
(619) 932-5279

Orange County

Dawna Finley
Orange County Emergency
Management Organization (OCMO)
(714) 724-7148
Linda Bomberg
County Sheriff's Emergency Mgmt.Div.
(714) 834-7218

Riverside County

Carmen Nieves
City of Riverside
(909) 782-5550

San Bernardino County

Jana Ellis
City of Rancho Cucamonga
Disaster Preparedness Division
(909) 477-2700, Ext. 2605
Lola Hampton
County Fire Office of Emergency Serv.
(909) 356-3998

San Diego County

Susan Asturias
County Office of Disaster Preparedness
(619) 565-3490

San Luis Obispo County

Ron Alsop
County Office of Emergency Services
(805) 781-5011

Santa Barbara County

Ed Carey
County Fire Office of Emergency Serv.
(805) 686-8181

Ventura County

Dale Camathan
County Sheriff's Department
Office of Emergency Services
(805) 654-2551