

F *Structural Engineers Emergency Response Plan*

It is recommended that local emergency response plans be developed for natural and manmade disaster events. The plans should define the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved, set up a system of credentialing, and define procedures for the participants. The plan should be flexible and comprehensive to allow for easy modification for differences encountered in each event. The following list, which was taken from the proposed SEAoNY “Structural Engineering Emergency Response Plan (SEERP),” is offered as a basis for the development of other similar plans:

1. Organizations willing to assist in natural or manmade disasters must immediately work with state and local governments to pre-establish a permanent relationship.
2. Issues relating to responsibilities and liabilities of individuals, firms and the organizations must be worked out in advance. These may include a process for the deputizing of volunteers or the enactment of “Good Samaritan” laws.
3. Response teams must be composed of pre-qualified volunteers and not drawn ad hoc from the organization’s general membership.
4. There must be specific criteria to ensure that the volunteers are suitably qualified. Each volunteer should also be classified in accordance with their professional knowledge and physical abilities. As a minimum, they must be properly trained in emergency structural evaluations and perhaps urban search and rescue techniques.
5. A database must be created and maintained that contains all volunteer contact and other information.
6. There must be a chain of communication (a tree or pyramid system) for the contact of the volunteers in the event of an emergency.
7. Volunteers must have a specified set of equipment available at all times. Equipment must be tested and maintained regularly.

8. There must be specific, predetermined response locations where the volunteers are to report.
9. There must be a specific photo identification badge which is developed in conjunction with the local authorities. It is recommended that the individual's name, affiliation with the organization and qualifications as a "Structural Engineer" be clearly indicated. It is further recommended that these identifications have specific expiration dates. Periodic renewal will verify compliance with all requirements listed above.
10. The local authority should maintain command and control once the event occurs.
11. The volunteers must be kept actively involved and interested. When the actual disaster strikes, the organizers and the local government need to be assured that the volunteers will be ready, willing and able to help.
12. Volunteers should include experts in other specific disciplines as well. These may include architects, mechanical engineers, civil engineers specializing in underground utilities, and transportation engineers familiar with above- and below-ground transportation.
13. Volunteers for nontechnical assistance such as day-to-day coordination, communications, scheduling, and media relations are also important.
14. A database should be created that contains general information about selected buildings, including data concerning the structural systems, architectural layouts, principal contacts, fire alarm and suppression systems, drawings, and other useful information that would make for a more expedient emergency response.
15. Other Observations:
 - The magnitude of the event may require that plans be modified. Each situation must be evaluated separately. Contingency plans should be in place for all aspects of the response.
 - Situations change rapidly. Plans must be flexible and versatile and participants must have the ability to change with the situation.
 - Good communication equipment on the site is an absolute necessity. Although cell phones may eventually be workable, it must be assumed that normal communications at the event location are not properly functioning. The local authorities must provide high quality two-way radios for teams to keep in contact with each other and the local authorities.