

ESP FOCUS

Learn Light Search & Rescue



WHY?

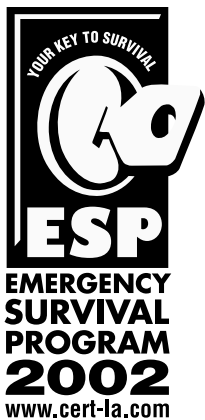
You may have to help in rescue efforts!

A moderate or major earthquake or another disaster near a heavily populated area may overwhelm emergency response agencies initially, leaving residents, communities, businesses and school employees to put out small fires, provide first aid and conduct light search and rescue operations.

If members of your family, friends, co-workers or students were trapped behind doors or under debris or other heavy objects, could you help them without endangering them or yourself?

Light search and rescue operations are designed to provide an initial search of a building or to locate victims with minor or no injuries and help them exit from lightly damaged buildings. Government teams with special equipment and trained search dogs may conduct secondary searches, particularly in moderately and heavily damaged structures. These experts often locate injured or unconscious victims that untrained rescuers cannot see or hear.

Forming a Light Search and Rescue Team is the next step in preparing for future earthquakes and other disasters. This ESP Focus Sheet provides tips on conducting light search and rescue.



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A U G U S T

Before the Next Earthquake

The Planning Committee should select the members of a Light Search and Rescue Team. Once established, the team should:

- Prepare and frequently update a list of neighbors, employees, students, etc.
- Prepare a list of people with special needs and designate team members to check on them after the earthquake or disaster.
- Train in basic light search and rescue. (Training in first aid and CPR also is recommended.)
- Determine signals such as red flags or "HELP" signs to indicate that help is needed and white flags or "OK" signs to indicate that help is not needed.
- Make sure that you have enough flashlights, work gloves, hard hats, sturdy shoes, ladders, crowbars, axes, sledge hammers and communication devices.

After the Earthquake

After an earthquake or another disaster, the Light Search and Rescue Team should:

- Determine if anyone is missing and make a list.
- Check buildings for trapped victims.
- If entering a private home, use caution as pets may be present.
- Make sure that designated team members check on people who have special needs.

Keep a list of all homes, buildings and rooms searched. Note major or minor damage. Include each address, the date, if the home was OK or needed help, and the type of help provided.

Clearly mark each building that has been searched as a "preliminary search" and include the lead searcher's name or organization, the date and time.

Light Search and Rescue Guidelines

1. Never search alone. Plan your search with a partner; communicate with each other often and do not wander.
2. Feel the top and bottom of each door with the back of your hand before entering. Do not enter if it's hot. Open the door carefully. Repeat this at every closed door.
3. Check the door jams, walls and ceilings for cracks and splinters. Broken glass and bowed structures, including windows, could mean that the building may collapse. **Do not enter if the building appears unsafe.** Prepare for aftershocks.
4. Never use candles, matches or lighters. Be aware of natural gas odors. If you smell gas, turn off the gas line located outside. Open the front and back doors and as many windows as possible without going inside. Enter the building only when the odor of gas is gone.
5. Before you enter the building, loudly call out, "Is anyone here?" Listen for an answer. If someone answers, ask where he or she is and the type of help needed. If you don't hear anything, ask that they make some kind of noise. Listen for cries, moans, thumping, banging or other signs.
6. If it's dark, slowly sweep each room with your flashlight before entering. Check the floor and ceiling for holes, falling beams, glass and other hazards. Check under beds and stairs, behind furniture, and inside closets, bathtubs and showers.
7. Maintain contact with the wall, if it's dark. Always follow the wall to return to your original entry point in case you become confused.
8. If you find an injured person, determine the nature of his or her injuries. Do not move a person whose limbs are caught under a heavy object; immediately seek qualified first aid and advanced life-support assistance.

This Focus Sheet was adapted from the OES publication "Organizing Your Neighborhood for Earthquake Preparedness."



This action sheet is produced as part of the Emergency Survival Program (ESP). ESP is an awareness campaign designed to increase emergency preparedness at home, in the community, at work and at school. ESP was developed by the County of Los Angeles. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) and representatives from Southern California cities and counties assist in the development of campaign materials and in coordination of the campaign.