

MEDIA ALERT

EERI POST-EARTHQUAKE RECONNAISSANCE TEAM EN ROUTE TO ITALY

November 7, 2002, Oakland, CA – By early next week, a team of volunteers from the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI) is due to arrive at the scene of a significant recent earthquake in Molise, Italy to begin a rigorous data collection mission. Their purpose is to bring back “lessons” relating to earthquake impacts on buildings, transportation, utility systems and emergency response efforts – valuable information that could mitigate damage and loss of life from future earthquakes in the U.S. and around the world.

The EERI team in Italy will apply data collection protocols tested over a thirty year period by the Institute’s National Science Foundation-funded Learning From Earthquakes program. Starting with this field mission, these protocols will be enhanced by GPS, digital photos and video and portable transmission devices to enable nightly transmissions of data to EERI’s Oakland headquarters - all for the first time.

The research priorities for the Italy team are expected to be quite interesting. In Italy, where the relatively small October 31st earthquake and its subsequent aftershocks (up to 5.4 magnitude) caused a total of twenty-nine deaths and left a thousand homeless, the primary focus is expected to be building practices, building performance and seismic hazard mapping.

San Francisco earthquake engineer with AIR Worldwide and EERI Italy team leader, Paolo Bazzurro, explains, “We’ll look at all collapsed buildings, especially those that (because of their age) should not have failed. But we’re equally interested in nearby structures, some centuries old, that withstood the same forces.” Bazzurro continues, “It’s important for us to get the whole picture since, from the point of view of loss estimation, the most important factor is the percentage of total buildings that do vs. those that do not fail.” Other U.S. members of EERI’s Italy Reconnaissance Team include structural engineers Joshua Marrow of Simpson Gumpertz & Heger, Inc., San Francisco, Joseph Maffei with Rutherford & Chekene, Oakland, CA, Sandro K. Kodama of ABS Consulting, Seattle, WA, and Barbara Foster, a Sausalito, CA-based emergency management consultant.

EERI reconnaissance teams work with their counterparts in local or host country government agencies, universities and research institutes to collect a wide range of data. Afterwards, team members compile and analyze their observations into a final “Learning From Earthquake” reconnaissance report. Reports are released by EERI to inform and catalyze efforts toward earthquake mitigation worldwide. Preliminary field reports and photographs will be available on the EERI web site: www.eeri.org

###

The Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI) is a national, nonprofit, technical society of engineers, geoscientists, architects, planners, public officials, and social scientists working to reduce earthquake risk by advancing the science and practice of earthquake engineering, by improving understanding of the impact of earthquakes on the physical, social, economic, political and cultural environment, and by advocating comprehensive and realistic measures for reducing the harmful effects of earthquakes.

EERI 499 14th Street, Ste. 320 Oakland, CA 94612
Tel (510) 451-0905 ~ Fax (510) 451-5411