SECTION 3
General Response Procedures

EERI Field Office

When EERI deploys a Reconnaissance Team to investigate a U.S. earthquake, a field office will be established to coordinate field reconnaissance activities. The field office will be located as close to the damaged area as practical, and will be staffed with personnel from EERI headquarters. For earthquakes occurring in the San Francisco Bay Area, the EERI headquarters office will be used as the field office if it is functional.

The field office will function as a clearinghouse. It will provide direction and coordination for the field investigation and serve as a focal point for receipt and compilation of information. Staff will handle calls, monitor status boards, keep minutes of technical briefings, issue news items to the press and other interested parties, and put field researchers in touch with others at the scene.

The field office will be equipped with fax machine, laptop computer with modem and printer, and portable telephones. Other equipment necessary will be obtained in the local area, if possible.

Daily meetings of the Reconnaissance Team will be held in the EERI field office. The field office is expected to remain in operation for approximately 10 days.

For earthquakes abroad, the field office concept will be modified to respond to communication and coordination needs. Major earthquakes in Canada or Mexico, where the need for field coordination may be great, will be handled as U.S. earthquakes, and a field office established. In more distant areas, provision will be made for Reconnaissance Team briefings and for reports to be transmitted back to the LFE Project Manager on a regular basis.

EERI Headquarters Disabled

EERI headquarters could be rendered nonfunctional by an earthquake in the San Francisco Bay Area. Should this occur, the procedures outlined below should be followed:

1. If communication can be established, but headquarters is nonfunctional, the Executive Director will communicate by telephone with the LFE Project Manager or a member of the Executive Committee and will select a suitable location from which to operate.
2. If no telephone, fax, or e-mail service is available in the Bay Area, the Executive Director will travel out of the area and establish contact with the LFE Project Manager or member of the Executive Committee and select a suitable location from which to operate.
3. If communication with EERI headquarters or the Executive Director cannot be established within a period of two hours, the LFE Project Manager should inform the Executive Committee or other member of the Board that the headquarters office is disabled, and that he/she is enlisting EERI members outside the affected area to help organize the investigation effort.

4. In the event that both the LFE Project Manager and the Executive Director are located in the affected area and communication cannot be established, the EERI President, Vice President, or Secretary/Treasurer—in that order—shall initiate response procedures according to this plan and designate a Team Leader and Team Members/Team Coordinators.

Gaining Access to Affected Areas

EERI will issue identification badges to all members of field investigation teams, as well as to any EERI member wishing to gain access to the affected area. Before a badge is issued, a release form must be signed and given to the field office Coordinator or the Team Leader. Refer to Appendix A, Forms: EERI Release Form.

Letters of introduction will also be issued to facilitate collection of data and information. EERI will attempt to contact agency officials to facilitate entrée as necessary. Previous investigative teams have found that wearing a hard hat and carrying a clipboard and camera have been useful in gaining entrée to restricted areas.

EERI bears no responsibility for the safety of investigators serving on investigation teams or for those issued identification badges. Each investigator or badge recipient is expected to be aware of the dangers inherent in field investigations.

Preparing to Go into the Field

Clothing and equipment requirements for a field investigation trip will vary according to location of earthquake, climate and standard of living in the affected area, season, extent of damage, and other factors. Team members are expected to provide their own clothing and personal effects, medical and emergency supplies, necessary tools or equipment, and ensure that they have the documents—passports, visas, immunization records— and immunizations necessary for their destination.

Investigators who enter a damaged area shortly after a destructive earthquake expose themselves to danger from further collapses caused by aftershocks or weakened structures. A hard hat, heavy boots, and outdoor clothing suitable for the climate and season are essential. In some cases, potable water, food, and shelter may have to be carried into the area. Flashlights with extra batteries and bulbs are indispensable. Most experienced investigators carry cameras, film, microcassette recorders, and portable surveying equipment. Color slide film is useful for later briefing presentations, while black and white glossy photos are preferred for published reports. The Team Leader and Team Coordinators should make certain both types of film are used by contributors.

Refer to Appendix B, Pre-Departure Checklist.

Team Travel and Rendezvous Procedures

The severity and extent of the earthquake will determine departure, in-area travel, and rendezvous procedures. Insofar as is practical, it is best that all team members select a common meeting site adjacent to the stricken area at which to rendezvous. For earthquakes abroad, travel together as a group is best. Local arrangements may often be made at the scene by the Team Leader. Team Members should make own travel arrangements. In all cases, Team Members are responsible for keeping accurate records and receipts to justify later reimbursement. Refer to Appendix A, Expense Reimbursement Policy.

The LFE Project Manager will provide general instructions and information to the Team Leader. The LFE Project Manager might also meet with the team before or during the investigation if he/she deems it valuable to do so.

In cases where additional people are sent while the Reconnaissance Team is still in the field, the LFE Project Manager will notify the Reconnaissance Team Leader. The Team Leader is expected to meet the new arrivals and coordinate their work with those already in the field.

While in the Field

Safety Assessments

EERI Team Members are NOT to be involved in assessing the safety of structures for occupancy purposes solely or in conjunction with local building officials. This would interfere with the investigator's primary job of data and information collection, and expose EERI to a liability for which it is unprotected.

In most cases, determining the safety of structures is the responsibility of local building officials. In California, the Office of Emergency Services has developed a program to bring in trained cadres of structural engineers, architects, and building inspectors to assist local building officials in making structural inspections and safety determinations.

If the area receives a federal declaration as a disaster, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) becomes responsible for assessment of the structural safety of federal highways and structures.

EERI has informal agreements with both the Structural Engineers Association of California and NIST to share information on earthquake effects.

Field Reporting Procedures

In general, each field investigator is responsible for reporting either orally or in writing to the Team Leader. Where reconnaissance efforts are extensive, Team Coordinators may be appointed. In this case, individuals gathering data in that topic area report to a Team Coordinator, who in turn reports to the Team Leader. The Team Leader reports to the LFE Project Manager/Executive Director.

The Team Leader is responsible for communicating with the LFE Project Manager. Ordinarily, reports are made by telephone or e-mail. However, in some circumstances, this may not be possible. Alternate ways to keep in touch with EERI headquarters include: fax, telex/telegram, embassy/military/private communications systems, ham radio operators, and relaying information to nearby areas for transmission or overnight/next day delivery of written documents. It is of primary importance that timely information from the field be made available on at least a daily basis for broader dissemination to EERI headquarters or electronically to the membership and other interested parties. The Team Leader should submit a field report upon arrival, after the first 24 hours, and every 48 hours thereafter until the field investigation is terminated.

Basic information to be included in reports includes:

1. Location of team and how they can be contacted.
2. Initial activities and activity since last report.
3. Major observations and foci of the team.
4. Apparent needs for further investigation.
5. Coordination with other investigators.
6. Problems encountered and assistance needed.

Collecting Data

This Field Guide contains sections, divided by discipline, devoted to data collection. Checklists of suggested topics and forms on which to record observations are provided. These, however, are not meant to be all-inclusive, and field investigators are encouraged to augment them as necessary. Any data collection techniques that may aid other investigators in gathering data following future earthquakes should be passed on to the LFE Project Manager or to the EERI Executive Director.

Team members are strongly encouraged to take photographs while in the field, and to keep track of the photos by roll and frame numbers. This will assist in both illustrating the reconnaissance reports and preparing slide sets and presentations upon the team's return.

Coordinating with Other Organizations/Agencies

Post-earthquake investigations are now major activities for several private, research, and governmental organizations. Consequently, EERI must coordinate its field investigations with other groups. Such coordination enhances data collection, minimizes duplication, and expands the amount of information collected for the benefit of the community at large.

Some of these interested organizations can be found in Appendix C, Information Sources. Field investigators will often meet representatives from these and other organizations during the course of their reconnaissance efforts. Names, affiliations, addresses, and telephone numbers of other investigators should be noted. It is to the advantage of all parties to share information.

Dealing with the Media

Earthquakes generate a great deal of media interest. EERI members in the field may be approached for comment by members of the media. In the case of a severe earthquake, EERI may convene a news conference. This will present opportunities for favorable media coverage for EERI and the work we do.

Whether in the field, at the field office, or elsewhere, there are several things investigators must keep in mind when dealing with the media. Points that ought to be emphasized to the media include:

1. EERI is a professional association of volunteers with nearly 50 years of earthquake investigation experience.
2. The purpose of EERI field investigations is to learn as much as possible from the destructive effects of earthquakes.

3. The EERI field team is in the area to learn about seismic and geologic activities and to document the performance of structures and lifelines, determine nonstructural impacts, and document the earthquake's influence on the social and economic fabric of the affected area.
4. The nature and scope of the investigation, and the professional skills the EERI field team brings to the investigation.
5. Give preliminary information, when possible, about post-investigation public briefings.
6. Outline potential opportunities for collaboration with local professionals (local flavor).
7. Offer to provide the final report to interested media personnel. Obtain their business cards.

DO NOT MENTION, OR GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF, ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

1. Do not indicate that EERI members are there to help with detailed analyses, repairs, reconstruction, or solving of other problems. THEY ARE NOT.
2. Do not indicate that EERI's findings will be THE definitive answers.
3. Do not compare what the EERI investigative team finds with locally prevailing opinions reflected in the media.

After Returning from the Field

Documenting Investigative Findings

One important goal of post-earthquake investigations is to document field findings and publish them in a format that can be archived. Part of the LFE project involves disseminating the results of such investigations to other EERI members, to interested organizations/agencies, and to professionals in the field.

Depending on the significance of the event and depth of investigation, dissemination of information will be accomplished through one or more of the following methods:

- Electronic information
- Newsletter article or insert
- A special reconnaissance report, as a supplement to the EERI journal Earthquake Spectra
- Public briefings held at various locations around the U.S.
- Articles in Earthquake Spectra following a period of research analysis

Team participants are required to contribute to the above post-earthquake activities.

Post-Investigation De-Briefings

Post-investigation de-briefings will be conducted by the Team Leader, and possibly Team Coordinators, within 72 hours after the team's return from the field. The de-briefing will provide federal agency officials, funding agency representatives, and other interested organizations with the observations of the EERI Reconnaissance Team. The nature and level of follow-up activities will also be discussed. The post-earthquake de-briefing can be of significant value to other organizations and agencies that may play active roles during a possible subsequent documentation effort.

In addition to disseminating technical observations, post-earthquake de-briefings provide opportunities to evaluate how well the Reconnaissance Team and clearinghouse activities functioned and discuss ways to improve field investigations. Information from these de-briefings will be used subsequently to revise EERI's field procedures and this Field Guide.