

## **ASCE DISASTER RESPONSE**

### **Introduction**

In the immediate aftermath of natural and human-caused disasters, ASCE's Organizational Entities and members often generously ask how they can help. This brief overview summarizes typical ASCE disaster response initiatives.

Perhaps the most well-recognized of ASCE's disaster response initiatives is ASCE's post-disaster engineering assessments, drawing upon our members' technical expertise with a purpose of learning from disasters and disseminating that knowledge, ultimately advancing the science and profession of engineering for the public welfare. ASCE has conducted assessments following both natural and human-caused disasters, including earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tropical storms, tsunamis, tornados, and terrorist attacks. Consistent with ASCE's educational mission and expertise, ASCE also frequently responds by making its relevant disaster preparedness and mitigation publications available to the public on ASCE's website. In addition, considering the wealth of experience and knowledge amongst ASCE's membership, ASCE serves as a resource of scientific and technical expertise for government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as for national and local media. Recognizing that many such government entities and NGOs have specific missions and jurisdiction to provide post-disaster rescue, recovery and inspections, ASCE coordinates with such other lead organizations, maintaining close contacts and communications with agencies including FEMA, USAID and USACE, and NGOs including the American Red Cross, Hands on Disaster Response, the International Association of Emergency Managers, RedR, and Build Change. ASCE also provides post disaster safety evaluation training for engineers to prepare them for work with these organizations. In addition to involvement through ASCE, many civil engineers are directly involved in disaster response efforts through their employers or under contracts for engineering services.

### **Planning and Mitigation**

ASCE's Committee on Critical Infrastructure offers Post Disaster Safety Evaluation Workshops at ASCE and Institute conferences and to ASCE Sections and Branches. Participants completing the entire training can earn up to 6.0 Professional Development Hours (PDHs) and may be eligible to register with federal, state or local officials as safety assessment program evaluators to assist with government safety inspections and evaluations of the built environment. Such evaluations may include on-the-spot decisions regarding the continued entry, use, operation, and occupancy of buildings and other facilities in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. The purpose of this advance training is to better prepare ASCE members to respond if called upon by a federal, state, or local government entity or NGO in a time of need.

### **Rescue and Recovery**

Rescue efforts are coordinated by appropriate government entities, with assistance from humanitarian relief NGOs. ASCE maintains a long-standing partnership with the American Red Cross. Through this relationship, ASCE has helped raise tens of thousands of dollars in relief funds on behalf of the civil engineering community. Donations can be made at <http://www.redcross.org/charitable-donations>. In addition to members and staff, ASCE and its Organizational Entities have also made direct contributions to relief organizations.

ASCE does not directly provide post-disaster on-site safety inspections and evaluations, recognizing that such evaluations are part of the mission and jurisdiction of various government entities, which often contract with consultants who are trained and insured for that purpose, and also considering the limitations of federal and state volunteer protection liability laws. Instead, consistent with ASCE's mission of advancing education, science and engineering, ASCE (i) provides the advance training to enable members to provide such services, as noted under Planning and Mitigation above, and (ii) serves as a source of technical expertise and referrals for such organizations. As part of ASCE's Disaster Assistance Volunteer Program, ASCE maintains a directory of members who offer their interest, expertise and availability to assist with

post-disaster planning, inspection, evaluation, recovery and rebuilding efforts. Data provided may be made available upon request to qualified parties, including local, state, and federal agencies and NGOs, with the ultimate goal of assisting their response to future disasters by utilizing the expertise of qualified members.

### **Disaster Response Assessment Teams**

ASCE has a long history of conducting engineering post-disaster assessments, dating back to the Johnstown Flood in the late 1800s. The purpose of ASCE's post-disaster assessments is to evaluate the behavior of engineered facilities under extreme conditions and to learn from the behaviors observed. The goal of these assessments is to document lessons learned, including success stories, failures, and restoration efforts. The assessments are conducted in accordance with procedures identified in the *ASCE Post-Disaster Assessment Manual* located at:

<http://www.nehrp.gov/pdf/ASCEPost-DisasterManual.pdf>.

Over the last decade, ASCE has participated in more than a dozen post-disaster assessments in various parts of the world. Examples include the tsunami in Japan in 2011; earthquakes in New Zealand, Chili and Haiti in 2010; and the 2009 earthquake and tsunami in Samoa. The reports published by these study teams represent an important part of the Society's continuous effort to advance engineering practice for the benefit of humanity, and contribute to the understanding of how to make engineered structures safer in the event of both natural disasters and human-caused events.

While ASCE's post-disaster assessments have typically been initiated by one of the Society's Institutes, other ASCE Organizational Entities may request support for a post-disaster assessment by completing an ASCE post-disaster assessment team request form, in accordance with the Assessment Manual. The assessments typically are funded by ASCE's Voluntary Fund, using funds voluntarily contributed by the membership for the purpose of funding post-disaster assessments. ASCE's Executive Director and President, collectively, are authorized to expend up to twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) from the Voluntary Fund in support of unanticipated disaster response by the Society. Expenditures exceeding twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) require the authorization of the Board of Direction or Executive Committee.

### **Support**

In coordination with the ASCE Foundation, ASCE's Sections, Branches and other Organizational Entities have participated in local fundraising initiatives to raise money to support locally impacted Sections, Branches and their individual members. In the past, contributions have been utilized for expenditures such as office supplies, computers, tuition and related business and educational expenses.

### **Education**

In addition to its post-disaster assessment reports, ASCE publishes a variety of journal and magazine articles, books, guides and standards relating to disaster preparedness and mitigation, including articles in its quarterly journal *Natural Hazards Review*. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, ASCE often compiles articles and publications relevant to the particular type of disaster and geographic location, and makes the information available for public review on the ASCE website. ASCE and its Organizational Entities also hold numerous conferences and seminars on lessons learned and disaster preparedness and mitigation.

### **Media Protocol**

The depth and breadth of ASCE's technical and geographic membership provides an invaluable resource for media and public relations. As a consequence, the national and local media routinely contact ASCE for interviews and information following natural and human-caused disasters. When representing ASCE regarding disaster response, volunteer leaders should coordinate any contact with the media through

ASCE's Communications Department, in accordance with ASCE's Protocol for Media Outreach. As referenced in the protocol, please refer media calls in the following order to:

Senior Manager, Media Relations

Lynn Badgley 703-295-6406 (work), 571-528-2354 cell, 703-327-8567 (home), [lwallace@asce.org](mailto:lwallace@asce.org)

Manager, State Public Relations and Infrastructure

Aaron Castelo 202-789-7855 (work), [acastelo@asce.org](mailto:acastelo@asce.org)

Director of Communications, ASCE

Jane Howell 703-295-6403 (work), 703-760-0804 (home), 703-629-3827 (cell), [jlombardi@asce.org](mailto:jlombardi@asce.org)

When representing a Section or Branch, members do not need to clear their media contacts, but they are encouraged to inform the Section's designated PR coordinator and to seek professional counsel from ASCE staff. This policy ensures that staff and volunteer leaders are properly informed on the best way to meet the needs of both media and the Society; enables the communications staff to track media contacts; and ensures media receive quick, accurate and complete responses.