



L.A. County's Emergency Survival Program Los Angeles County, California

Summary: "It won't happen to me," is a common response to the possibility of disaster. However, emergency managers and responders know that earthquakes, fires, floods, terrorism and other natural and man-made disasters can happen at any time. Therefore, Los Angeles County developed the Emergency Survival Program (ESP).

The Emergency Survival Program, developed by Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management, is a public information campaign that is designed to enhance emergency preparedness where you live, learn, work, play and pray. Campaign materials include calendars, posters, an activity book for kids produced in English and Spanish, an emergency plan called *Neighborhood Preparedness – Alert, Well-prepared and Ready for Emergencies*, in English and Spanish, the *Kids Quake Club*, puppet show, the *Family Steps to Survival guide*, in English and Spanish, the *ESP Bulletin on Terrorism*, in Chinese, English and Spanish, and the *ESP Bulletin on Shelter in Place or Evacuate*. Materials are provided in camera-ready format, posted on the ESP Web site at www.espfocus.org, and distributed throughout the county and region.

"The general public is certainly much better prepared now than it was before the start of the Emergency Survival Program," said Joyce Harris, ESP program manager for the county's Office of Emergency Management. "Preparing in advance can reduce the impact of disasters and ESP provides an easy and cost-effective way for everyone to prepare."

Emergency survival information is published each month for members of the public with general guidelines for safety and survival following a major disaster or incident. The Emergency Survival Program focuses on different preparedness actions each month. For example, the theme for January 2003 was *Understand the Threat*, with a focus on preparation for California's natural hazards – wildfires, floods and earthquakes. Information about hazardous materials was also included.

The month of August will emphasize *Light Search and Rescue*, for those instances when residents or employees may be the first ones on site in the immediate aftermath of a disaster incident. The first item on the checklist for the 'search and rescue' planning committee is to prepare a list of neighbors and people with special needs. Next on the check list is training in basic light search and rescue, first aid and CPR. An important resource for neighborhood emergency training is FEMA's Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), which provide a range of emergency training, including CPR and triage, through local Citizen Corps Councils across the country.

The ESP has expanded to include 14 southern California counties, many cities, the California Office of Emergency Management, Southern California Edison, the Southern California Earthquake Center and the American Red Cross. The program also has been used in several other states and countries, according to Harris. "ESP can be readily incorporated into existing emergency plans and training or it can be used as a stand-alone emergency preparedness program," she added.

To submit a 'Smart Practice' for consideration or to subscribe to Smart Practices Spotlight, send an email to SmartPractices@fema.gov.

Smart Practices Spotlight highlights practices and ideas that members of the emergency management and responder community have found useful and effective; they are not necessarily advocated or endorsed by FEMA. For more information about this initiative, contact Joyce Harris, Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management, at 323-980-2267 or joyceh@laceoc.org.