

ASCE DISASTER RESPONSE

Introduction

In the immediate aftermath of natural and manmade disasters, ASCE's Organizational Entities and members often ask how they can help. Disasters are, by nature, rapidly evolving events with highly variable impacts, often requiring a response uniquely tailored to the circumstances. This brief overview summarizes *typical* ASCE disaster response initiatives.

Post-Disaster Engineering Assessments

Perhaps the most well-recognized of ASCE's disaster response initiatives is ASCE's post-disaster engineering assessments, which draw 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 a long history of conducting engineering post-disaster assessments, dating back to the Johnstown Flood in the late 1800s. Over the last decade, ASCE has participated in more than a dozen post-disaster assessments around 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 are typically initiated by one of the Society's technical 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 [ASCE Post-Disaster Assessment Manual](#).

News and Information

Consistent with ASCE's educational mission and expertise, ASCE frequently responds by making its relevant disaster preparedness and mitigation publications freely 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, state, and local media. Articles reporting on the impact of disasters on ASCE members or coverage of ASCE member involvement in disaster response and relief efforts is reported in the Society's member publications and on ASCE social media channels. ASCE's online member forum, ASCE Collaborate, is also frequently used to connect members in affected areas with their ASCE colleagues around the world for communication, support and knowledge sharing.

Media Protocol

The depth and breadth of ASCE's technical and geographic membership provides an invaluable resource for media and public relations. Consequently, the national and local media routinely contact ASCE for interviews on the record and information following natural and manmade disasters. When representing ASCE regarding disaster response, ASCE volunteer leaders must coordinate any contact with the media through ASCE Media Relations, 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

Alexa Lopez 202-785- 7853 (work), 571-266-9364 (cell), alopez@asce.org

When representing a Section or Branch, members do not need to clear their media contacts. However, they are encouraged to inform the Section's designated PR coordinator and to seek professional counsel from ASCE staff. Volunteers must also notify his or her place of employment to ensure there is no conflict of

interest. 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 ASCE staff to track media contacts; and ensures media receive efficient, accurate, and complete responses.

Disaster Aid

ASCE and its Sections, Branches and other Organizational Entities have supported initiatives to raise money to support locally impacted Sections, Branches and their individual members as well as affected communities. Generally, ASCE encourages contributions be made directly to authorized relief funds set up by recognized NGOs, and publicizes those funds in its related communications.

Rescue and Recovery

ASCE does not directly provide post-disaster onsite safety inspections and evaluations, as the Society recognizes that such evaluations are part of the mission and jurisdiction of various government entities. These government entities often contract with consultants who are trained and insured for that purpose, and there are limitations of federal and state volunteer protection liability laws. Many ASCE members are directly involved in disaster response efforts through their employers, under contracts for engineering services, or through volunteer participation in official government or NGO response and recovery efforts. ASCE encourages engineers who may be interested in volunteering in disaster response to seek appropriate training in advance through local governmental or humanitarian relief agencies, as this is generally required for service.

ASCE headquarters does coordinate with organizations, maintaining close contacts and communications to serve as a source of technical expertise and referrals

ASCE leaders in regions or localities affected by natural or manmade disasters are encouraged to contact ASCE executive director Tom Smith at tsmith@asce.org or 703-295-6061 or Nancy Berson, Director of Global Geographic Services at nberson@asce.org or 703-295-6010.