



EARTHQUAKE ENGINEERING RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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Press Release – 3/10/11

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EERI'S LEARNING FROM EARTHQUAKES PROGRAM TO SEND TEAM TO NEW ZEALAND: SCIENTISTS AND ENGINEERS TO BRING BACK LESSONS

A multi-disciplinary research team organized and led by the U.S.-based Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI) will be traveling to New Zealand on March 9th to document the effects of the 6.3 earthquake that struck Christchurch on February 22nd (local time). This team will bring back lessons for U.S. practice and academia. Team co-leader Ken Elwood of the University of British Columbia was in Christchurch at the time of the earthquake and stayed on for nine days, assisting New Zealand colleagues in the assessment of critical buildings in the central business district, and making preparations for the main team's arrival.

The larger group, under the leadership of Professor Mary Comerio from the University of California, Berkeley, will focus on the performance of engineered structures in the earthquake, nonstructural building components, and hospitals and the health care system, as well as issues related to the resilience of the community, lessons in the use of social media during and after the earthquake, and risk communication issues between the September and February events and after the February earthquake. The February event is particularly interesting for the U.S. scientific and engineering community because it was part of the aftershock sequence to the September 2010 earthquake. Although of a smaller magnitude than the September event, the resulting consequences were much more damaging to life, infrastructure, and the economy.

The team is organized under the auspices of EERI's Learning from Earthquakes Program, which has sent reconnaissance teams to investigate hundreds of damaging earthquakes over the past forty years. Six team members are receiving support from the National Science Foundation to focus on the specific themes of building collapse, resilience, and the use of social media for risk communication. The Pacific Earthquake Engineering Center has contributed logistical and travel support. Many other organizations are also contributing travel support, including ABS Consulting, AIR Worldwide, ARUP, Auburn University, Canadian Seismic Research Network, Forell/Elsesser Engineers, Johns Hopkins University, Simpson Gumpertz and Heger, Tokyo Institute of Technology, and the U.S. Geological Survey. Air New Zealand has also generously provided reduced fares for EERI team members.

Team members will be contributing to a blog on the EERI clearinghouse site at <http://www.eqclearinghouse.org/2011-02-22-christchurch/>.

For a complete listing of team members on this site, click on "EERI PLANS".

About EERI and the Learning From Earthquakes program

The Earthquake Engineering Research Institute, headquartered in Oakland, CA, is the nation's preeminent technical organization dedicated to reducing society's risk to the effects of earthquakes. EERI sends researchers to investigate all damaging earthquakes across the world. The research teams bring back valuable observations that hold lessons for U.S. and international engineering practitioners and researchers as they strive to reduce earthquake hazards. After the New Zealand team returns, their findings will be published and briefings will be made to researchers, practitioners, and decision makers.

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