

Fact Sheet

Planning and Preparedness Branch

May 2025



Cal OES
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Safety Assessments for Schools After a Disaster

Introduction

What happens when a school site is struck by a disaster and it's unclear if the site is safe for use?

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) Safety Assessment Program (SAP) coordinates assessments of damaged structures to identify those unsafe or restricted for use. This fact sheet outlines the specific process for school-related sites to request a safety assessment and best practices for mitigating future challenges.



Requesting a School Safety Assessment

When school-related sites are damaged and the operational area (OA) or neighboring jurisdiction(s) do not have the capacity to perform required evaluations, the Cal OES SAP Coordinator aids in acquiring certified SAP evaluators through state agencies or through the mutual aid process with local jurisdictions and other states (e.g., civil, structural, geotechnical, architect licensees, and International Code Council (ICC) certified-building evaluators).

When a local jurisdiction determines school-related infrastructure damages during a visual assessment (i.e., windshield assessments), the totality of the damaged infrastructure needs to be accurately identified to decide the need for SAP evaluators.

Best Practices

Remember, all disasters are local. Any school-related safety assessment requests need to be routed following the [Standardized Emergency Management System \(SEMS\)](https://www.caloes.ca.gov/office-of-the-director/operations/planning-preparedness-prevention/planning-preparedness/standardized-emergency-management-system/)¹.

If your local jurisdiction does not have an SAP evaluator, there may be certified SAP evaluator(s), or ICC building evaluators within the county or neighboring jurisdictions.

¹California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, *Standardized Emergency Management System*, accessed May 20, 2025, <https://www.caloes.ca.gov/office-of-the-director/operations/planning-preparedness-prevention/planning-preparedness/standardized-emergency-management-system/>.

County Offices of Education, school districts, and school sites should maintain a list of all buildings with approximate costs for each structure, for each site. This information should be included in the SAP evaluation request sent to your OA.

Local governments and OAs **must** follow SEMS to be eligible for **response-related personnel cost reimbursement** under state disaster assistance programs.

The graphic below outlines the SAP evaluation process to follow for all local governments and OAs.

Request Process



1. The local jurisdiction notifies the OA regarding the need for a school-related safety assessment.



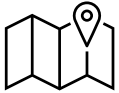
5. The Cal OES Region will review the request and forward it to the State Operations Center (SOC).



2. If able, the OA will conduct and complete the safety assessment.



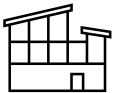
6. The SOC will task the Cal OES SAP Coordinator to facilitate provision of qualified SAP evaluators.



3. If unable to complete the assessment(s), the OA should request qualified SAP evaluator(s) through neighbor-to-neighbor mutual aid.



7. The Cal OES SAP Coordinator will partner with other state agencies to provide the needed resource(s).



4. When all options are reasonably exhausted, the OA will coordinate with the appropriate Cal OES Region for assistance in acquiring the needed resource.



8. Once tasked, the SAP evaluator will directly coordinate with the OA to fulfill the request and complete the needed safety assessments.

Contact

For more information on the Safety Assessment Program, visit:

[Safety Assessment Program | California Governor's Office of Emergency Services](#)

For more information on School Emergency Preparedness, visit:

[School Emergency Planning & Safety | California Governor's Office of Emergency Services](#)