Safety Assessment Program

Disasters create terrible consequences, forcing people out of their homes into temporary shelters and closing down communities. While productive individuals sit idle in shelters, or even move away, local building inspectors struggle to evaluate building safety in hundreds or thousands of damaged structures.

Experience in dealing with earthquakes reveals that the number of total inspections due to non-structural damage can be *more than three times* the number of red-tagged and yellow-tagged buildings. Threats also exist from other natural and man-made disasters, including floods, hurricanes, and explosions. Most building departments do not have the ability to perform multitudes of such inspections in a short period of time, so a strong need exists to have a cadre of trained professionals available to assist local governments, along with a program to manage this cadre.

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) Safety Assessment Program (SAP) provides experienced professionals who can quickly evaluate damaged structures, identifying those buildings that people can return to, while marking those that are unsafe or have restricted use. It accepts civil, structural, geotechnical, and architect licenses from any state, along with many ICC building inspector certifications. The program works in compliance with ICS, SEMS and NIMS, and has three trainings associated with it:

- **Evaluator Training** trains civil engineers, architects, and building inspectors to do field evaluations of buildings and other infrastructure for safety.
- **Coordinator Training** trains local government representatives, and others interested, on how to estimate the local needs for the Evaluators; how to request SAP support; and how to manage those deployed and the information they gather.
- **Train-the-Trainer** certifies individuals to be official trainers on behalf of SAP to provide their own Evaluator and Coordinator trainings. There are currently over 200 SAP trainers distributed throughout California and 26 other states.

SAP has been used successfully in responding to disasters, such as the Loma Prieta, Northridge, San Simeon, and Baja earthquakes in California, as well as in response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Cal OES SAP evaluators were sent to Louisiana and Mississippi to assist in building safety evaluation under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).

SAP covers a wider variety of topics than the ATC-20 and ATC-45 trainings. Included topics are worker's compensation, deployments, immunity from liability, and many types of disaster response in addition to post earthquake (floods, mud slides, snow load, hurricanes etc.)

More information on the Safety Assessment Program can be found at the Cal OES website. Link: Recovery Safety Assessment Program (ca.gov). This site contains upcoming classes, downloadable manuals, certified trainer list and other information.