



EARTHQUAKE ENGINEERING RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Press Information: Tel (510) 451-0905 ~ Website: www.eeri.org

Outreach Director: Victoria Costello, Ext. 19

Learning From Earthquakes Manager: Marjorie Greene, Ext 17



MEDIA ALERT

EERI POST-EARTHQUAKE RECONNAISSANCE TEAMS EN ROUTE TO ITALY AND ALASKA

November 7, 2002, Oakland, CA – By early next week, teams of volunteers from the Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI) are due to arrive at the scenes of two significant recent earthquakes in Molise, Italy and Denali National Park, Alaska to begin rigorous data collection missions. Their purpose is to bring back “lessons” relating to earthquake impacts on buildings, transportation, utility systems and emergency response efforts – valuable information that could mitigate damage and loss of life from future earthquakes in the U.S. and around the world.

EERI teams in Italy and Alaska will apply data collection protocols tested over a thirty year period by the Institute’s National Science Foundation-funded *Learning From Earthquakes* program. Starting with November’s two field missions, these protocols will be enhanced by GPS, digital photos and video and portable transmission devices to enable nightly transmissions of data to EERI’s Oakland headquarters - all for the first time.

With major differences in earthquake magnitudes, tectonic settings, locations and population densities, the research priorities for the Italy and Alaska teams are expected to differ widely. In Italy, where the relatively small October 31st earthquake and its subsequent aftershocks (up to 5.4 magnitude) caused a total of twenty-nine deaths and left a thousand homeless, the primary focus is expected to be building practices, building performance and seismic hazard mapping.

San Francisco earthquake engineer with AIR Worldwide and EERI Italy team leader, Paolo Bazzurro, explains, “We’ll look at all collapsed buildings, especially those that (because of their age) should not have failed. But we’re equally interested in nearby

structures, some centuries old, that withstood the same forces.” Bazzurro continues, “It’s important for us to get the whole picture since, from the point of view of loss estimation, the most important factor is the percentage of total buildings that do vs. those that do not fail.” Other U.S. members of EERI’s Italy Reconnaissance Team include structural engineers Joshua Marrow of Simpson Gumpertz & Heger, Inc., San Francisco, Joseph Maffei with Rutherford & Chekene, Oakland, CA, Sandro K. Kodama of ABS Consulting, Seattle, WA, and Barbara Foster, a Sausalito, CA-based emergency management consultant.

With the Alaska event’s relatively benign effects on buildings and population, the EERI team investigating the 7.9 magnitude Denali earthquake will focus its damage assessments on highways and the Alaska pipeline. Their main concern will be seismological, geological and geotechnical impacts from this very large strike-slip event, the largest strike-slip quake since the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. To assist data collection in the immense geographic area of Alaska where the earthquake occurred, the EERI team will have the benefit of recent data from ground motion instruments put in place along the Denali fault zone immediately after the region’s first reported earthquake of magnitude 6.7 (October 31st).

EERI reconnaissance teams work with their counterparts in local or host country government agencies, universities and research institutes to collect a wide range of data. Afterwards, team members compile and analyze their observations into a final “Learning From Earthquake” reconnaissance report. Reports are released by EERI to inform and catalyze efforts toward earthquake mitigation worldwide. Preliminary field reports and photographs will be available on the EERI web site: www.eeri.org

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The Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI) is a national, nonprofit, technical society of engineers, geoscientists, architects, planners, public officials, and social scientists working to reduce earthquake risk by advancing the science and practice of earthquake engineering, by improving understanding of the impact of earthquakes on the physical, social, economic, political and cultural environment, and by advocating comprehensive and realistic measures for reducing the harmful effects of earthquakes.

**EERI 499 14th Street, Ste. 320 Oakland, CA 94612
Tel (510) 451-0905 ~ Fax (510) 451-5411**

