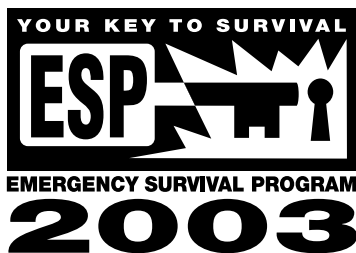


# ESP FOCUS

## Understand the Threat



## Knowledge is Power

As shown in the 1990s, emergencies and disasters can occur at any time in California. Although flooding and wildfires usually occur during specific times of the year, scientists and emergency officials cannot predict or prevent every one of them.

Emergency officials and the public can reduce the physical and emotional impacts of these and other emergencies by knowing the hazards their community faces and taking steps to prepare for them.

### Floods

Flooding and winter storms pose one of the biggest threats throughout the state.

From 1974 through 1998, flooding and winter storms claimed the lives of 103 Californians, injured approximately 600 others and caused more than \$61 billion in property losses. Winter storms in 1995 and 1997 alone combined to cause 36 deaths and more than \$3 billion in property losses.

During the El Niño storms of 1998, several cities, including Santa Barbara and Ventura, received record rainfall.

Californians can reduce their risk of death, injury and property losses by clearing debris and overgrowth from drains and rain gutters on their property prior to rainy weather, avoiding unnecessary trips and staying away from live electrical equipment in wet areas.

### Wildfires

It's no secret that California's warm, dry climate makes the Golden State vulnerable to wildfires.

Almost 10 years ago, California suffered one of the worst fire years in its history. Twenty-one separate wildfires raged in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura counties between October 26 and November 7. The blazes caused four deaths and 162 injuries. They also destroyed more than 1,200 structures and burned almost 200,000 acres.

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# JANUARY

To bring the blazes under control and prevent additional losses, more than 15,000 firefighters from around the state were deployed in the largest mutual aid call-out in California history.

Last year, more than 7,500 wildfires struck California, burning more than 491,000 acres.

Residents of foothill and mountain communities can reduce their risk of suffering a devastating fire by creating a “defensible space” around their homes, developing a family evacuation plan, installing smoke detectors and learning how to prevent small fires from becoming larger ones with a fire extinguisher.

## Earthquakes

Thousands of earthquakes occur in Southern California each year. Most are too small for people to feel, and only a few are large enough to hurt people or cause damage. The Northridge earthquake and others in the last 20 years caused significant losses of life and property. Scientists believe larger earthquakes are possible in the future.

Earthquakes are caused by sudden movement on faults. A fault is a thin boundary between two blocks of the earth’s crust. There are more than 200 faults in Southern California that can cause earthquakes large enough to cause major damage. When earthquakes occur, the shaking is usually most intense near the fault but can be strong further away too. So any area in the southern part of California can be shaken strongly by earthquakes.

Californians can reduce their risk of death, injury and property losses in future earthquakes by bolting their houses to their foundations, securing tall pieces of furniture to wall studs and securing computers, stereos and other valuables that could break or cause injury if they fall.

## Hazardous Materials Spills

Chemicals are a part of every day life in modern America. Each has the potential to improve the quality of life if it's handled, used and disposed properly. Each also can cause health and environmental problems if it's handled, used or disposed improperly or an accident occurs while it's being transported.

Major transportation routes are one of the most common sites of hazardous materials spills.

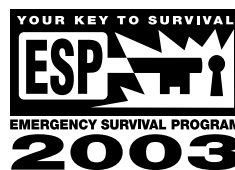
In 1992, the Seacliff train derailment closed Highway 101, cutting off the main access from Ventura to Santa Barbara, and forced the evacuation of more than 300 residents of Seacliff, La Conchita and Mussel Shoals for six days.

Four years later, a five-car train carrying dangerous chemicals derailed in San Bernardino County's Cajon Pass and caught fire. About 100 patrons of two nearby gas stations, a motel and a restaurant were voluntarily evacuated.

Hazardous materials aren't restricted to the highway, local refinery or manufacturing firm. Motor oil, paint, pool chemicals and other common household products could make your home the site of a hazardous materials incident.

Californians can avoid creating their own hazardous materials problems by using alternative cleaning products, storing household chemicals properly and utilizing the **LIES** concept:

- L**imit the amount of materials stored.
- I**solate products in enclosed cabinets and keep containers tightly covered.
- E**liminate unused or unneeded supplies.
- S**eparate incompatible materials.



This action sheet is produced as part of the Emergency Survival Program (ESP). ESP is an awareness campaign designed to increase emergency preparedness at home, in the community, at work and at school. ESP was developed by the County of Los Angeles. The California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (OES) and representatives from Southern California cities and counties assist in the development of campaign materials and coordination of the campaign.