

ESP FOCUS

Learn Light Search & Rescue



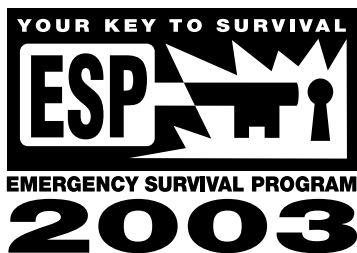
You May Have to Help in Rescue Efforts

A damaging flood, fire, earthquake or other emergency in a heavily populated area may overwhelm emergency response agencies, leaving residents, communities, businesses and school employees to put out small fires, provide first aid and conduct basic light search and rescue operations.

If members of your family, friends, coworkers or students were trapped behind doors, under debris or other heavy objects, could you help them without endangering them or yourself?

Light search and rescue operations are designed to provide an initial search of a building or to locate victims with minor or no injuries and help them exit from lightly damaged buildings. Government teams with special equipment and trained search dogs may conduct secondary searches, particularly of moderately and heavily damaged structures, since they often locate injured or unconscious victims that untrained rescuers cannot see or hear.

Forming a Light Search and Rescue Team is the next step in preparing for future emergencies. The reverse side of this ESP Focus sheet provides tips on conducting light search and rescue.



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Flyer funded in part by a contribution from:

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A U G U S T

Before the Next Emergency

The Planning Committee should select a leader and the members of the Light Search and Rescue Team. Once established, the Light Search and Rescue Team should:

- Prepare and frequently update a list of neighbors, employees, students, etc.
- Prepare a list of people with special needs and designate team members to check on them after the flood, fire, earthquake or other emergency.
- Train in basic light search and rescue. (Training in first aid and CPR is also recommended.)
- Determine signals such as red flags or "HELP" signs to indicate that help is needed and white flags or "OK" signs to indicate that help is not needed.
- Make sure that you have enough flashlights, work gloves, hard hats, sturdy shoes, ladders, crowbars, axes, sledge hammers and hand held radios or other communication devices.
- Obtain prior permission to search the homes of neighbors should they be presumed trapped.

After the Emergency

After the emergency, members of the Light Search and Rescue Team should:

- Assemble team members; determine if anyone is missing.
- Check buildings for anyone who is missing.
- If entering a private residence, use caution as pets may be present.
- Make sure that designated team members check on people who have special needs, provide help or tell a member of the special needs team where they are and what they need.
- Keep a list of those who are missing.
- Keep a log of all homes, buildings and rooms searched. Note major or minor damage. Include each address, the date, if the home was OK or needed help, and the help provided.
- Clearly mark each building that has been searched as a "preliminary search" and include the lead searcher's name or organization, the date and time.

Light Search and Rescue Guidelines

- Never search alone. Work with a partner. Plan your search; do not wander. Never use candles, matches or lighters, or switch on lights.
- Turn on flashlights before entering the building. Feel the top and bottom of each door with the back of your hand before you enter. Do not enter if it's hot. Open the door carefully if it is cool. Repeat this at every closed door.
- Watch for pets that may try to escape when you enter the building or another room.
- Check the door jams, walls and ceilings for cracks and splinters. Also check for other hazards. Broken glass and bowed structures, including windows, could mean that the building may fall down. Do not enter if it appears unsafe. Prepare for aftershocks if an earthquake has occurred.
- While you're in the entry way, sniff for the odor of natural gas. If you smell gas or hear it hissing, locate the gas line and turn off the gas. Open the front and back doors and as many windows as possible without going inside. Enter the building only when the odor of gas is gone.
- While still in the entry way, loudly call out, "Is anyone here?" Listen for an answer. If someone answers, ask where they are and the type of help needed. If you don't hear anything, ask that anyone trapped make some kind of noise. Listen for cries, moans, thumping, banging or other signs that someone needs help.
- If it's dark, slowly sweep each room with your flashlight before entering. Check the floor and ceiling for holes, falling beams, glass, and other hazards.
- Search each room carefully. Check under beds and stairs, behind furniture, inside closets, bathtubs and showers. Stay with your partner and communicate often.
- Maintain contact with the wall, if it's dark. Always follow the wall to return to the original door in case you become confused about where you are.
- If you find an injured person, determine, to the best of your ability, the nature of his or her injuries. Do not move a person whose arm or leg is under a heavy object; immediately seek qualified first aid and advanced life-support assistance if he or she cannot move on his or her own.

This Focus sheet was adapted from the OES publication "Organizing Your Neighborhood for Earthquake Preparedness."



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.