

# BUILDING BLOCKS

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## SAFETY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (SAP): DESIGN PROFESSIONALS GIVING BACK TO THE PUBLIC

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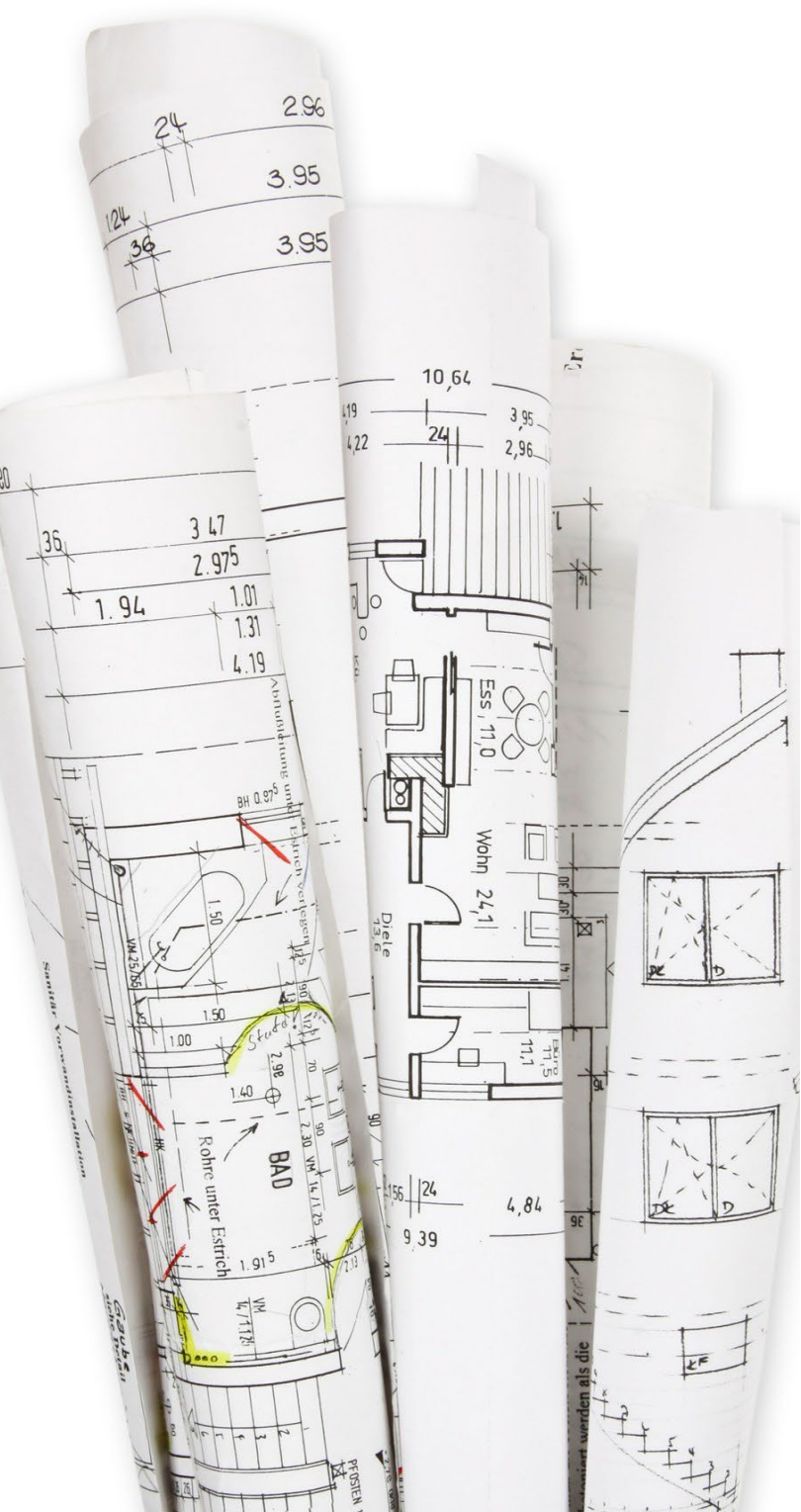


**Cal OES**  
GOVERNOR'S OFFICE  
OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

The "Safety Assessment Program," created by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services, was established to provide an efficient and quick evaluation of damaged structures after a disaster, identifying those buildings that people can return to, while marking those that are unsafe or have restricted use. The SAP addresses various disasters, where ever they occurred.

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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 natural and man-made disasters, including floods, large scale fires, tsunamis, hurricanes, tornados 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. It accepts **civil, structural, geotechnical, and architect licenses from any state**, along with many ICC building inspector certifications. (Emphasis added.)

<https://www.caloes.ca.gov/RecoverySite/Documents/SAP%20informational%20flyer%208.2019.pdf>

## HERE IS HOW THE PROGRAM GENERALLY WORKS

The SAP has trained volunteer professionals throughout the country to assess the needs of the public after a natural or man-made disaster.

- **Evaluator Training** trains civil engineers, architects, and building inspectors to do field evaluations of buildings and other infrastructure for safety. This training is approved by the federal Department of Homeland Security for grant funding, and for Continuing Education Units for refresher courses through the California State University. The state of California's Office of Emergency Services has taken the training "on the road" to offer the program across the country.
- **Coordinator Training** trains local government representatives on how to estimate the local needs for the Evaluators, how to request them, and how to manage them and the information they gather.
- **Evaluator Train-the-Trainer** certifies individuals to be official trainers for the program. There are currently over 200 SAP trainers distributed in many states, among them Indiana, Washington, Oregon, Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, New York, Georgia, Florida, Rhode Island, and California.

The 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, and many others. Cal OES SAP evaluators were sent to Louisiana and Mississippi to assist in building safety evaluation under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact EMAC.

## DETAILS, DETAILS

Immediately after a disaster, the first people at the site are there to aid the public are the medical professionals and "Good Samaritans," for the injured and others that have lost their lives—they are what we all know as the "First Responders." After this initial recovery of human lives, SAP volunteer professionals move in to efficiently and quickly perform their part of the disaster recovery—these volunteers are the so called "Second Responders."

The volunteers are such that—they are not compensated for the "giving back" to the public. They are reimbursed for their expenses, some time traveling considerable distance to arrive at a disaster site. However, hotel or other housing costs are not reimbursed—why not? Well, a SAP volunteer is not

there to take up the limited housing space for displaced persons, who have lost their homes. SAP volunteers have to utilize other options, such as a camper or a tent perhaps for several days.

“Good Samaritans,” depending up the state law where a disaster occurs, protects those who volunteer to aid the health, safety and welfare of the public related to a disaster. Due diligence is required to research the state law, but the Site Coordinator of the disaster recovery and building officials would inform the volunteers of the applicable law. By comparison, mostly if not every state has a “Good Samaritan” law to protect medical professionals, who arrive at a vehicle accident, so long as they are performing their aid within the standard of care of their profession or occupation. After all, medical personal should not be sued when they have come to the aid of a fellow citizen.

At a disaster site, a building code official would deputize SAP volunteers, and many times to form a team of three. Good team composition would include a building code official, a structural engineer, and an architect. Although, that is not always feasible, depending on the individuals available. SAP volunteers are not charged with providing cost estimates for repair or replacement of a structure. Their responsibility is to tag structures that must be demolished, are salvable, or a condition to re-occupy.



<https://www.aialosangeles.org/event/safety-assessment-program-sap-training/>

## CONCLUSION

More information on the Safety Assessment Program can be found at the Cal OES website. Go to [www.caloes.ca.gov](http://www.caloes.ca.gov) and perform a search for Safety Assessment. The site contains upcoming classes, downloadable manuals, and other information.

The author of this April Building Block risk management article is a trained SAP volunteer—at The Center for Architecture & Design in Columbus, Ohio chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

The back of the identification card states:

The person identified on the back of this card is a “Disaster Service Worker” assigned ESSENTIAL EMERGENCY DUTIES during times of disaster or emergency. It is important that he/she be granted reasonable access to place of assignment in order to carry out his/her prescribed duties. This card should be worn or displayed at all time of disaster or emergency.



## About the Author

*Eric O. Pempus, FAIA, Esq., NCARB has been a risk manager for more than 17 years with experience in architecture, law and professional liability insurance, and a unique and well-rounded background in the construction industry. He has 25 years of experience in the*

*practice of architecture, and as an adjunct professor teaching professional practice courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels for the last 35 years. As a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and AIA National Ethics Council 2021 Chair, he has demonstrated his impact on architectural profession. He has presented numerous loss prevention and continuing educational programs to design professionals and architectural students in various venues across the United States and Canada.*

*The above comments are based upon DesignPro Insurance Group's experience with Risk Management Loss Prevention activities, and should not be construed to represent a determination of legal issues, but are offered for general guidance with respect to your own risk management and loss prevention. The above comments do not replace your need for you to rely on your counsel for advice and a legal review, since every project and circumstance differs from every other set of facts.*

***Disclaimer:*** *The viewpoints expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and are not necessarily approved by, reflective of or edited by other individual, group, or institution. This article is an expression by the author(s) to generate discussion and interest in this topic.*

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## CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS:

### Speaking Engagements:



#### ***“Empowering Your Ethics in a Changing Architectural Culture”***

May 25, 2022

12:00 – 1:00 pm

AIA Cleveland, Columbus & Cincinnati Lunch & Learn  
Webinar, I HSW Approved



#### ***“Legal, Regulatory & Ethical Issues for Ohio Engineers”***

June 17, 2022

10:15-11:45 a.m.

Preventing and Defending Professional Liability Claims

12:15-1:15 p.m.

Complying with Rules of Professional Conduct

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# MEET OUR PEOPLE:



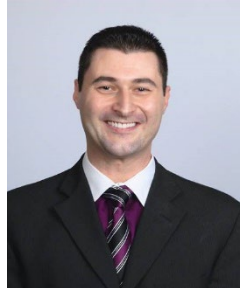
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