

POST-EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE AND ASSISTANCE AIMED AT THE REDUCTION OF LOSS OF LIVES

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ABSTRACT :

While the emphasis has been put on the prevention and mitigation of the earthquake disasters through the educational programs, introduction of Nation-wide Rural House Earthquake Safety program introduced in 2006, the upgrading of the standards of earthquake resistance for the existing buildings and facilities, the adoption of the laws for reducing the earthquake disasters, the moderate earthquakes have continued to claim more lives and cause the damages to the properties in the rural areas and parts of the urban areas in a disproportional way to the magnitude which other wise should have caused the little impact on society.

The reality that different economic developments exist between east and the west China, between the urban and rural area, thus resulting in the different capacity towards earthquake disasters, has justified the necessity of the emergency response and assistance which serves the affected governments and the population. Post-earthquake response and assistance is supported by the earthquake monitoring and the powerful data base consisting of the regional information including the status quo of the existing buildings and the facilities. Earthquake monitoring pinpoints the accurate information of where and how big the earthquake event is, and the disaster loss model will provide estimated loss of lives and the distribution to the government. The information could be used to mobilize the resources and forces for effective response.

The service of post-earthquake response and assistance was launched formally in 2006 with the creation of a new department of earthquake disaster and emergency management within China Earthquake Administration. The mission of the department is to deliver the professional service to the affected governments for the maximum reduction of the loss and the control of potential secondary disasters. The instruments and tools available for the purpose include the earthquake response plans, the commanding systems, the professional search and rescue teams, emergency shelters etc.

The prompt advice to the government on the disaster situation was crucial in the government's disaster relief effort in Great Wenchuan earthquake. The Earthquake response plan, though its suitability has been under question since then, provided a framework for decision maker in the initial hours of the disaster. The professional teams, small they were in terms of the size, were the major forces to recover the survivors deep in the shaky rubble fields. The concept of the emergency shelters was proven useful in accommodating the millions of the affected people.

Post-earthquake response and assistance is the last mile for the scientific community to deliver the life-and-death advice to the emergency officers. As long as they know where the earthquake is, how severe it will be, and what resources and tools are available, the loss of lives and the potential impact will be reduced to the minimum.