



# CALTRANS NEWS

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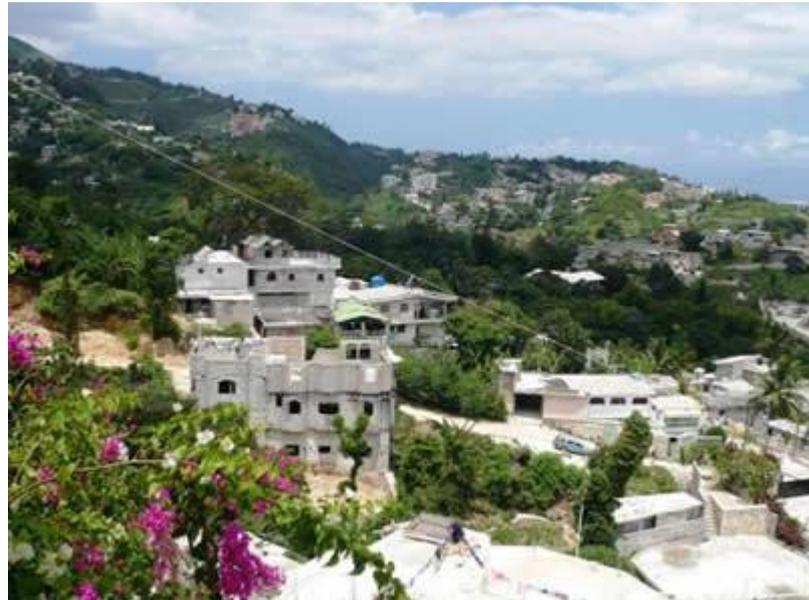
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## News

### Caltrans Employees Step up to Help Rebuild Haiti

*By Herby Lissade, Chief, Office of Emergency Management*

On January 12, 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck the island nation of Haiti. The epicenter was located about 10 miles west of Port-au-Prince. This enormous earthquake caused death and destruction that our part of the world had not seen in recent history. A tsunami, caused by the earthquake, also claimed lives along Haiti's coast.



Pre-earthquake concrete homes under construction. These homes, located outside of Port-au-Prince, withstood the earthquake. However, the quake destroyed many concrete structures within the city.

More than 200,000 people lost their lives in the January 12 earthquake, almost all due to substandard building construction. Those who survived but had serious injuries, such as crushed limbs, soon succumbed to their injuries due to inadequate or nonexistent health care. Since the earthquake hit, the death toll has climbed to more than 300,000.

Help has poured in from all over the world to assist the people of this little island, including employees at Caltrans who would like to go to Haiti to help. The Caltrans Office of Emergency Management has received many inquiries from Caltrans employees of all classifications who want to assist Haiti in some way.

Caltrans cannot officially deploy employees to Haiti unless the California Emergency Management Agency (CalEMA) mission tasks the Department. CalEMA has done a great job preparing state agencies and departments for possible events in California similar to the one in Haiti. Caltrans has plans in place to respond to such an event, if one occurs here and affects our transportation system. CalEMA may also task Caltrans to assist beyond the limits of our transportation system. In the case of Haiti, Caltrans was on standby to provide equipment operators for debris

removal and registered engineers, architects, and geologists as part of CalEMA's Safety Assessment Program (SAP). The SAP sends groups of professionals, postdisaster, to assess infrastructure for recovery efforts, or simply put, to get people back into their homes as quickly as possible.

Caltrans has adopted the SAP as part of its Continuation of Operations Plan, commonly known as COOP, to help assess our infrastructure for all hazards we may encounter. The recent earthquake in Haiti was a reminder that California may experience a similar event. Caltrans took this as an opportunity to expand our SAP cadre. This is essential in predisaster planning for postdisaster recovery. It's our goal to have every registered professional at Caltrans trained in the program.

As private citizens, many of us have donated money to Haitian relief funds, such as the International Red Cross. These nonprofit, nongovernment agencies are doing a great job feeding Haitians and providing them with much-needed health care. Some of you have expressed a desire to do more and apply your training and skills to assist the people of Haiti. So, Caltrans employees and professionals in New York and Florida, as private citizens, came together to form Haiti Engineering, Inc.

The engineers, planners, and others who make up Haiti Engineering do so for the greater good. Haiti Engineering is a nonprofit organization with highly skilled professionals who donate their time and expertise to assist the people of Haiti. We are here for the long haul. We partner with engineers and other professionals in Haiti to bring positive change.

Haiti Engineering's *vision* is to help reconstruct an island nation not to pre-earthquake conditions, but to one that can sustain its people at levels that are acceptable in a modern nation.

While our *mission* is ambitious, we think it is achievable. Haiti Engineering's mission is to bring together a group of professionals to develop a plan to help restore the infrastructure throughout the island nation of Haiti. We are planning to prepare the island for all hazards that they might encounter by using emergency management techniques and methods. We hope to instill in the people that they are the most important resource on the island, the "Human Capital."

Finally, our *goal* is to create a 10-year master plan to help reconstruct the infrastructure in Haiti. The goal is to make the efforts sustainable for the island inhabitants for generations to come.

I would like to share what helped create Haiti Engineering, Inc. Shortly after the earthquake, Director Randy Iwasaki contacted me. He asked me how the quake impacted my family and if Caltrans had a plan to help Haiti that the Department could send to the Governor's Office. It's no surprise that our state was so responsive and wanted to help. California is earthquake country. We live with and prepare for these events. The Governor was sending urban search and rescue teams from California to Haiti as part of the first responder contingent. To paraphrase Director Iwasaki, technology exists that could mitigate the impacts of such an event. Caltrans has used that technology throughout our state, to harden our transportation infrastructure, and that technology could easily be applied to Haiti. Engineering techniques and construction inspection could have lessened the loss of life from the quake. Those Proven engineering methods have saved lives in California and will continue to do so if, or when, a major earthquake hits us here.



This movie theater in Port-au-Prince is an example of the common concrete structures throughout the city.

The earthquake in Haiti has affected my family and friends; I lost family members in the quake. It's been a wake up call that life is precious and short. I plan to visit Haiti during March to reconnect with family members who I haven't seen in years. I am going to take the opportunity to assess the quake's damage first hand and assess which projects Haiti Engineering can try to fund through donations and deliver help. I will also see how Caltrans can apply the lessons learned from the Haitian response efforts to strengthen the Department's response in a similar event.

In the end, Haiti Engineering hopes to help build structures, make recommendations to aid in rebuilding Haiti's infrastructure, and assist where we can. In doing so, we hope to not only enrich the lives of those in Haiti, but enrich our own lives.

Caltrans employees are stepping up to lend a hand, not just within our state or across our great country, but between nations—something for which we can be truly proud.

You can visit the Haiti Engineering, Inc. Web site at [www.HaitiEngineering.org](http://www.HaitiEngineering.org).

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