



CALTRANS NEWS

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News

Caltrans Employees Help Create Nonprofit Organization

By Herby Lissade, Office of Emergency Management Chief

Editors note: Herby Lissade wrote an [article](#) in the March 2010 issue of CT News about the January 2010 earthquake that struck Haiti and how Caltrans employees were volunteering their expertise to help rebuild the country. This is a follow-up to Herby's March article.

District 5 Deputy Director of Maintenance and Operations Steve Price and I took a week-long vacation and visited Haiti in early-April to assess damage caused by the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010. We visited on behalf of [Haiti Engineering](#), a nonprofit architecture and engineering group that provides professional predisaster planning, postdisaster recovery, and professional engineering assistance to the victims of the quake. Caltrans' employees, through Haiti Engineering, are working with the Haitian government by sharing the Department's world-renowned seismic expertise and emergency response.

Our team arrived in Port-au-Prince on March 31, 2010. Displaced Haitian citizens were living in tents everywhere—not even a mile from the airport.



Displaced Haiti citizens who lost their homes seek refuge in tent cities, like this one outside of the Port au Prince airport.

The most difficult part of the trip was finding an exit route out of Port-au-Prince to make our way into the city of Leogane, where we chose to set up our office. Leogane was ground zero for the earthquake. The quake destroyed 80 percent of all structures, and 25 percent of the population perished. No numbers are available on how many people suffered physical injuries in Leogane, but almost everyone experienced post-traumatic syndrome, as witnessed in peoples' reactions to many of the

quake's aftershocks.

The earthquake damaged much of Haiti's infrastructure and interrupted communications throughout the country. Soil liquefaction, landslides, rockslides, and road embankment failures contributed to extensive damage in Port-au-Prince and other areas. Although cellular service was operational shortly after the earthquake, landlines continue to be problematic, and Leogane is still without electricity.



In addition to damage to structures, roads also suffered damage from the earthquake.

The Haitian Ministry of Statistics and Informatics reported 82 percent of ordinary, one-story houses have roofs made of sheet metal, and 71 percent of multistory houses and apartments have roofs made of concrete. Ordinary house and apartment walls were made predominately of concrete, blocks, or stones, which performed poorly during the quake. Structures with light (timber or sheet metal) roofs performed better than structures with concrete roofs and slabs. The lack of attention to seismic safety in design and construction standards contributed significantly to the widespread damage to buildings.



A concrete structure (left) and a wood structure (right). Everyone in the house on the left perished when the earthquake hit. The building on the right is centuries old. It survived the earthquake and the many hurricanes throughout the years and sustained only minor damage.

Multi-span bridges on primary routes experienced some damage, but they are still serviceable. Fortunately, we found no evidence of bridge collapses attributable to the earthquake. However, Port-au-Prince's most important port suffered extensive damage, which has inhibited delivery of relief supplies.

Loss of facilities, personnel, and records critically deteriorated Haiti's government operations and social services. Such losses occurred in many clinics, hospitals, police stations, schools, universities, palaces, ministries, and churches, which have hindered recovery and reconstruction efforts.



Haiti's National Palace sits in ruins after the January 12 earthquake.

The quake destroyed 22 churches in Leogane, and more in Port au Prince. It will take millions of dollars to restore them. Many of these churches provide health care, schools, and other social services to their communities. Poor Haitian workers, who barely have enough to eat, make up most of the Leogane and Port au Prince communities. It took generations to accrue the funds to build the original churches.



The earthquake destroyed the St. Rose De Lima church, shown here before the earthquake. The church would have been 500 years old this August. It was the oldest church in Haiti and one of the oldest in the new world.



From left to right: Herby Lissade, Father Marat Guirand of Haiti, Fallieres Abdallah of Quantum Technologies International, and Steve Price discuss the quake's impacts to Leogane's churches.

The home in which we were going to stay sustained earthquake damage. As a result, we made a rooftop campsite for the duration of our trip. During that time, Steve Price designed a transitional shelter and storage building for the family of the damaged home. The transitional shelter should withstand earthquakes and the pending hurricane season.

Our visit allowed us to explore about how Caltrans can use the lessons learned from the Haiti earthquake to improve the Department's response if a similar event happens in California.



We had constant visitors to our rooftop campsite, including these little girls. They are pointing at Steve Price's tent and asking, "Where is the doll?" The tent had a low profile, and they thought it was a dollhouse tent for play. They made our day!

Caltrans employees of all classifications and diverse backgrounds have come together to help bring Haiti Engineering to life: I would like to thank the following Caltrans employees for their generous assistance and donations:

Srikanth Balasubramanian, Equipment Division*
 Edward Davis, District 9*
 Ferdinand de la Cruz, District 8*
 Cecilia Faust, Engineering Services Division
 Francisco Gonzalez, District 6*
 Dana Hendrix, District 7
 Daniel J. Irvine, Maintenance Division*
 Randy Iwasaki, former Caltrans Director*
 Mark Jones, retired Caltrans employee*
 James Lawrence, Equipment Division
 Ron Longazo, District 7*
 Ferdinand Milanes, Maintenance Division
 Manual Morales, Maintenance Division
 Dario Moreno, Maintenance Division
 Godson K. Okereke, District 7
 Steve Price, District 5
 Silvia Reynoso, Maintenance Division
 John Rizzardo, former Caltrans employee*
 Agustin Rosales, Maintenance Division*
 Edda Rosso, former Caltrans employee*
 Alphonso Sanchez, District 7
 Jim Sanders, retired Caltrans employee*
 H. Schmieder, District 8*
 Casey Skinner, former Caltrans employee
 Angela Tillotson, Public Affairs

**Denotes volunteers who donated funds to help Haiti Engineering file its 501(c) (3) nonprofit status, which was approved on June 29, 2010. Without their generosity, this would not have been possible.*

Many parts of the world have no plan "B" if tragedy strikes.

Thanks to Caltrans employees reaching out, we assist people in a distant land who could not help themselves because of factors outside of their control.

This is the beginning of great things to come, and Caltrans employees are making them happen.

Please visit us at the HaitiEngineering.org.

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