

# NERT Position Description: Emergency Responder – Team Member, Damage Assessment

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All NERT members should perform Damage Assessment as they walk from their current location to the NERT Staging Area. This will help eliminate the number of teams that need to be sent out for assessment and preserve more NERT responders for other field response activities.

## **Field Teams**

All volunteers participating in NERT response activities share these responsibilities:

- Carry out the tasks assigned safely. Be aware of the safety of those you supervise and help.
- Understand the tasks you are asked to perform. Be aware of your abilities and available resources.
- Acquire the tools and materials needed.
- Organize and brief team members.
- Use and follow scene size-up before taking action.
- Always record actions taken and report to the team or section leader after completing your tasks.

## **Team Members**

**Team members** report to the Team Leader and adhere to NERT principles, staying within the scope of their training to effectively respond to a situation. Team members work under the direction of the Team Leader as a cohesive team. They help plan and carry out all team functions. Every team member is responsible for the actions of their team.

## **Team Assignments**

When activated for an emergency response, the team assignments will follow the guidelines below. Every field team will have a Team Leader and a Safety Officer. Depending on the assignment, you will need additional field team members.

### **Damage Assessment Team - Minimum Team of Two (2)**

#### **Safety Guidelines**

- Walk, do not run.
- Ask yourself, “Is there anything I hear, see, or smell that can endanger me, or anyone nearby?”
- Observe the scene from the sky to the ground:
  1. Look above: downed power lines; downed trees; tall, unstable structures; or anything else that can fall on your head; what will you be walking under?
  2. Look to the middle: what’s the condition of the structure you are approaching; is there smoke or fire; is there a gas leak; cracked walls; what will you be walking into or up to?
  3. Look on the ground: water or chemical spills; are there victims down; are there power lines down; what kind of debris is in the way; what will you be walking through or tripping over?

### BIG PICTURE ASSESSMENT

Any hazard that could spread, such as fire and flood, should be reported as soon as possible to the Planning Section and the SFFD. Find a good view and look up and down the block for obvious major hazards, including:

- Smoke or fire – if night, look for unusual glow or flickering
- Road blockages
- Flooding

Note critical information on the Damage Assessment Form: location, type and extent of hazard, speed at which it is changing or growing.

### QUICK ASSESSMENT

To the extent that it is safe to do so, walk the assigned block, looking over each structure as well as the roadways. At each house or structure do the following:

- Conduct an exterior structural assessment, based upon what can be seen from the curb or sidewalk.
- Identify obvious hazards and structural damage.
- Use caution tape to rope off the approaches to any property that appears hazardous.
- Talk to and observe any victims or bystanders that can be seen. Try to find out the number of people involved and their condition. Ask about any interior damage or other problems at the site.
- Advise the victims what they should do while waiting for more help.
- Document findings on the Damage Assessment Form and, depending upon the priority and need, report the findings to the Staging Area.

### DETAILED ASSESSMENT (HOUSE BY HOUSE)

After the Quick Assessment has been completed, communicate with the Staging Area to see whether you are needed to perform quick assessments on other blocks or other tasks. If you are not immediately needed, cannot contact the Staging Area immediately, and are able and willing to do so, perform a detailed assessment of each structure on the block concentrating on those for which you could not get information from the residents, as follows:

- Walk up to each structure as close as you feel it is safe to do and look for additional damage.
- Peek around the corners to see more than can be seen from the curb.
- Identify any visible hazards.
- Mitigate hazards by turning off gas, water, or power as needed, and putting out small fires.
- If there are no people outside the house, pound on the door and shout for a response. Without entering, try to find out the number and condition of people inside.  
**Remember:** Do not enter any structure without a complete rescue team and proper size-up.
- If necessary, use caution tape to rope off a structure at the property line or around specific hazards.
- Document findings on the Damage Assessment Form and report the information to the Staging Area.