

First International Forum on Earthquake-Related Casualties, Madrid, Spain, July 23, 1992

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The first International Forum on Earthquake-Related Casualties was held in Madrid, Spain on July 23, 1992 in conjunction with the 10th World Conference on Earthquake Engineering. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Eric K. Noji of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and recorded by Dr. Nicholas P. Jones of The Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Walter Hays of the U.S. Geological Survey served as secretariat for the forum. The forum was cosponsored by: Centers for Disease Control; Federal Emergency Management Agency; National Institute of Standards and Technology; Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance; national Science Foundation; U.S. Geological Survey.

It is clear that the past 5 years have resulted in a more coordinated approach to the study of earthquake-related casualties. The subject clearly presents a strong multidisciplinary challenge (including seismology, engineering, medicine, epidemiology, architecture, social sciences, etc.) where all participants are indeed working at the margins of their disciplines. Despite this difficulty, the future of the field looks promising, as a number of national and international organizations have identified casualty research as a critical component of their efforts in the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). Now is clearly the time to begin an effort to foster international cooperation and collaboration. An International Working group is necessary to assist in the organization and coordination of this activity.

The U.S. Working Group on Earthquake-Related Casualties met in Washington, D.C. on 10-12 May 1992 and developed a draft charter. It was felt that this charter may form a starting point for the development of a charter of the international group, as discussed below.

Participants of the First International Forum on Earthquake-Related Casualties recommended the formation of an International Working Group under the umbrella of the IDNDR to promote the interdisciplinary study of natural-disaster-related casualties. This group will serve as a resource to foster the sharing of research results, the provision of technical advice to the international community, and to promote the development of resources for relevant studies. Significant effort will be made to ensure close collaboration and cooperation with all relevant institutions and organizations participating in the IDNDR, and groups involved in the study of disaster-related casualties. In particular, cooperation with the International Association of Earthquake Engineering's new World Seismic Safety Initiative (WSSI) and IASPEI Working Group on Earthquake Casualties will

be encouraged. While it is envisaged-based on the current knowledge of casualties in past natural disasters-that earthquake casualty will form the major initial emphasis, it should be noted that the scope of the Group covers all natural hazards.

The first and primary role of this group will be identification of an communication with relevant personnel in individual countries or regions. The goal of this first contact is to encourage, support and assist the formation of national and regional working groups. A listing of relevant expertise and personnel--from both the research and practitioners or end-user communities--will be compiled and distributed to those representatives.

Individual groups will be invited to prepare and submit their charters to the International Working Group, from which a draft charter will be prepared for distribution and approval at the 2nd International Forum on Natural-Disaster-Related Casualties tentatively planned to be held in conjunction with the U.S. Working Group on Earthquake Casualties Meeting scheduled for early 1993.

Early goals will be:

1. Publication of a summary of the proposed activities of the group for inclusion in the STOP Disasters newsletter of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.
2. Development of a compendium of research results and procedures.
3. Development of a "chapter" for a post-earthquake investigations handbook specifically addressing the gathering of data relevant to earthquake morbidity and mortality.

The objectives of the Second Forum on Natural-Disaster-Related Casualties will be:

1. Approval of a draft chapter.
2. Identification and enlistment of relevant expertise to perform specific research tasks.
3. Initiation of a program of technology transfer and tools. For example: Discuss the format and issues for a workshop on earthquake injury epidemiology, possibly as a follow-up to the Johns Hopkins Workshop in Baltimore (July 1989). Formation of task committees on specific topics such as injury classification, data sharing protocols and procedures, structural classifications, epidemiologic techniques, etc.

For further information, please contact: Dr. Eric Noji, Centers for Disease Control; Dr. Walter Hays, U.S. Geological Survey, or Dr. Nicholas P. Jones.