

Partner Profile - The Earthquake Engineering Research Institute
An interview with Heidi Tremayne, Executive Director, EERI

FLASH: What is the background and history of your organization?

Heidi: The Earthquake Engineering Research Institute (EERI), established in 1948, is a nonprofit, multi-disciplinary technical society of experts dedicated to reducing earthquake risk. EERI members include engineers, geoscientists, architects, planners, public officials, and social scientists. Members are researchers, practicing professionals, educators, government officials, and building code regulators. Volunteer members are organized into chapters, committees, and projects that conduct activities to achieve the EERI mission.

EERI's mission is to:

- * Reduce earthquake risk by advancing the science and practice of earthquake engineering,
- * Improve understanding of the impact of earthquakes on the physical, social, economic, political, and cultural environment, and
- * Advocate for comprehensive and realistic measures to reduce the harmful effects of earthquakes.

FLASH: How did you get interested in research, disaster safety, response, recovery, and resilience?

Heidi: As an undergraduate at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, I joined EERI as an intern and helped the Institute test field data collection tools for reconnaissance in Parkfield, California. At the same time, I was doing research on various earthquake retrofit methods for adobe buildings, so I got involved in EERI's World Housing Encyclopedia project and traveled to an adobe conference in Peru. I was hooked!

FLASH: What do you see to as the future of earthquake science, engineering, research, outreach, response, and recovery to increase resiliency? What do you think is moving the cause of resilience forward?

Heidi: Passionate earthquake experts in many disciplines must continue to find opportunities to work together, speak with a common voice, and disseminate their knowledge and expertise to communities at risk in clear and actionable ways.

FLASH: Can you tell us about a specific project your organization is working on in earthquake safety, science, engineering, research, resilience, and outreach?

Heidi: The Learning from Earthquakes (LFE) Program has been EERI's flagship earthquake reconnaissance program for nearly 50 years. It brings multidisciplinary teams together in an effort to learn lessons from damaging earthquakes that can improve earthquake engineering and risk management. In the last few years, EERI's LFE Program has been exploring several new and innovative directions. One new path is an expansion of our traditional reconnaissance model to include the concept of resilience reconnaissance. This idea involves reconnaissance work that observes communities over time, in the weeks, months, and years following earthquakes. It also emphasizes observation of vital community functions and services such as healthcare, housing, business, and education in addition to discipline specific topics including buildings, bridges, and ground failure. Another new direction is our new LFE Travel Study Program for young members to document recovery and learn reconnaissance skills. Its aim is to grow a cohort of young professionals and researchers knowledgeable about earthquake resiliency that values multidisciplinary collaboration. A pilot trip took place in January when 16 young practitioners and graduate students from a variety of disciplines participated in a six-day resilience training activity in Chile. It involved field data collection, tours of locations impacted by recent earthquakes, lectures, and interactive group projects.

Another great program is EERI's School Earthquake Safety Initiative (SESI) that mobilizes our members to promote safe buildings for school children. SESI is a global and collaborative network of diverse, expert, and passionate professionals committed to creating and sharing knowledge and tools that enable progressive, informed decision making around school earthquake safety. Several subcommittees are working on this goal by conducting outreach to schools and local governments, encouraging seismic screening of schools for earthquake risk, producing educational curriculum on earthquake safety, and advocating for policies that support earthquake safety in schools.