

LAFD

#135987

# Are You Prepared?

The recent earthquakes in the South Bay remind us to be prepared for a disaster.  
The LAFD offers group safety classes. Sign up for one!



*Jayson "JJ" Johnson has been a member of the LAFD for more than 18 years. Jayson is an active-duty member and often works on fire and rescue apparatus, but his focus is teaching disaster awareness and preparedness strategies to the citizens, students and employees in Los Angeles.*

*Story by Jayson A. Johnson, Firefighter/Paramedic, LAFD; Photos by Juan Guerra.*

Are you ready for a major disaster? The recent earthquakes in the South Bay remind us all that there might not be time after a disaster to prepare. The time to get ready is now.

The good news is that the LAFD offers safety classes for groups. Look at the bottom for contact information to get a class arranged for your group.

Are you prepared for disasters like these?

## 1992

After the infamous Rodney King verdicts were read, riots broke out in South Los Angeles. Many in the area had to survive for several days on the food they had on hand. Essentials including diapers, baby formula, water and sanitation supplies had to be rationed until calm was restored.

## 1994

In the predawn hours of Jan. 17, a magnitude-6.4 earthquake lasting close to 20 seconds rocked the San Fernando Valley. The Northridge Earthquake caused the collapse of several freeways, close to 9,000 injuries and 57 recorded deaths (some say as many as 72 deaths can be directly attributed to the Northridge Earthquake).

## 2001

The sobering images of passenger jets being used as weapons and flying into the Twin Towers

of New York and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. on Sept. 11 are images that I will never forget. The subsequent collapse of the Twin Towers put a horrible exclamation point on the day.

## 2005

On Aug. 28, a category-five hurricane trampled on everything in its path and left a trail of destruction in Florida, Mississippi and finally New Orleans that to date still has not seen anything close to a full recovery. Katrina claimed more than 1,800 lives, and the number of lives adversely affected cannot be measured.

## 2008

The San Fernando Valley had a very tough 2008. In September, the residents of Chatsworth witnessed one of the worst commuter train accidents in U.S. history. This accident saw a Metrolink commuter train run into a Union Pacific freight train, killing more than 20, including Club Counselor Howard Pompel. Because of the location, many injured passengers had to help themselves until first responders could get to them.

In November, the northwest area of the San Fernando Valley had the Sylmar and Sayre fires, which saw the destruction of hundreds of homes and the displacement of thousands of residents, many of who are still trying to put their lives back together.

## Organize a Class

You never know when the tentacles of disaster will touch you or a family member until it happens. The time to prepare is now.

The LAFD offers classes in several areas of preparedness. The most basic is the DAC (Disaster Awareness Course). The DAC can be tailored to the needs of your group. In general, a DAC can be from one hour up to three hours. The DAC covers basic disaster preparedness, a brief history of earthquakes in Southern California, and tips to help prepare your home/office before the earthquake.

The more detailed and complete training is our CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) class. The CERT class is a seven-module class with 18 hours of education that covers many topics from earthquake preparedness, fire suppression, first aid, search and rescue, team building and terrorism.

These classes are offered free and provide students with tips, suggestions and materials that can assist in the increased preparedness of the students and their families.

The LAFD also offers an additional class on the use and operation of fire extinguishers. This class covers the proper use and identification of the class A, B, C extinguishers as well as an opportunity to have practical/hands on application of the information and put out live fires. This class has some specific requirements, and people seeking this class should call the Disaster Preparedness Section and ask for the Fire Extinguisher Demonstration/Presentation form.

## Static Display/Booth

The DAC Unit can also provide a static display or booth if you, your company, your community group, block club or your house of worship is sponsoring an event such as a street fair, health and safety fair, picnic or gathering that will offer people a chance to come and ask one on one questions regarding disaster preparedness. Our goal is to reach as many citizens as we can, to afford Los Angeles the highest disaster preparedness IQ as possible.

## No Cost to You

The classes offered are free. We request that organizers have a minimum of 20 students, an area/room to accommodate the group and a slide/PowerPoint presentation, and come with an attitude for learning. Please also note that some classes, such as the first aid and search and rescue portions of CERT, may require adequate space to practice the techniques.

To learn more about what CERT and DAC have to offer, click on [www.cert-la.com](http://www.cert-la.com).



Firefighters from Fire Stations 60 (North Hollywood) and 7 (Arleta) transport an actor portraying an earthquake victim, as part of the ShakeOut exercises last year.

I also invite you to check out my blog at [www.yourhouseinorder.blogspot.com](http://www.yourhouseinorder.blogspot.com). To contact the LAFD's Disaster Preparedness Section office directly, call (818) 756-9674 or email [jayson.johnson@lacity.org](mailto:jayson.johnson@lacity.org). You can also follow up to the moment activities and updates on

Twitter: [RescueJayLAFD](https://twitter.com/RescueJayLAFD)

For an excellent start on your preparedness journey, download the LAFD's Emergency Preparedness book at: [www.cert-la.com/2007EmergPrepBooklet.pdf](http://www.cert-la.com/2007EmergPrepBooklet.pdf).



Last year, a military helicopter soars over the athletic fields at Bishop Alemany High School, as part of the disaster simulation.

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