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## Organizational Structure

Federal agencies initially were handicapped in coordinating their efforts because the federal response plan was not activated. With telephone systems overloaded, emergency personnel had to rely on cellular phones. FEMA had difficulty coordinating all the agencies with emergency support functions and gaining reliable damage information until it established a disaster field office under the direction of the federal coordinating officer (FCO) in Mountain View, California, on 23 October, the Monday following the earthquake. The Plan for Federal Response to a Catastrophic Earthquake outlined 11 emergency support functions. The federal coordinating officer dispensed with the emergency support function designations after the first week of the disaster field office operations. Clearly, this was primarily a recovery operation that did not require the full participation of all federal agencies identified in the federal response plan.<sup>38</sup>

Decisions on how to organize the Corps' response were not based on any previous plan because the earthquake was not as catastrophic as the plans had envisioned. General Sobke made his decisions on an ad hoc basis using the recommendations of his staff. He quickly divided responsibilities roughly down the center of San Francisco Bay because damage to the Bay Bridge effectively isolated the Corps in an east/west direction. The Sacramento District would do preliminary damage assessment in the eastern half, primarily in the Oakland area, and the San Francisco District in the western half. The general also placed the Sacramento District's Monterey office under the San Francisco District.<sup>39</sup> The loose structure generally worked well.<sup>40</sup> Corps officials modified their organizational structure as their missions became clearer and as FEMA refined its own organizational structure.

On Saturday, 21 October, after getting word that FEMA planned to establish a disaster field office, Edward Hecker drafted a structure for Corps operations at that office, which

Dave Fulton briefed to General Sobke the next morning. Under the plan, the Corps ESF #3 organization at the disaster field office would consist of three cells: a command and control cell staffed by the division; an individual assistance cell staffed by the Sacramento District; and a public assistance cell staffed by the San Francisco District. After Sobke approved the plan, division officials quickly drove to Mountain View.<sup>41</sup> Before setting up operations at the disaster field office, Corps personnel met with FEMA officials, Bob Vickers, Bruce Baughman, and Bob Brussard, who directed FEMA's individual assistance and public assistance programs. They explained to FEMA the Corps' capabilities and its plans for responding to possible missions.

When Edward Hecker, Rich Young, and other Corps personnel arrived at the disaster field office, they found an empty facility with no phones, furniture, partitions, or tables. Based on the anticipated workload, they requested space for 70 people: 30 from each district and 10 from the division. The South Pacific Division would draw personnel from Corps engineering, construction and operations, planning, human resources, information management, and real estate offices to staff the disaster field office, plus clerical and administrative personnel.<sup>42</sup>

As the disaster field office began operations, General Sobke expanded on his initial concept of operations and laid out the organizational structure on 23 October in a five-paragraph field order, Earthquake Operations Order #2. The division's mission, he explained, was to—

- Implement ESF #3 (construction management) of the federal earthquake contingency plan.
- Support the Sixth Army commander in ESF #9 (urban search and rescue).
- Support FEMA in other assigned tasks.
- Assist other federal agencies directly on a reimbursable basis under their authorities.
- Provide authorized flood emergency services under Public Law 84-99 (Flood Control and Coastal Storm Emergencies).
- Support defense installations.

The division would establish policy, coordinate Corps efforts, and accept missions; and its commander would continue to direct the operation. The division's crisis manager would serve as the link between the districts and other federal agencies and would assign the missions to the districts. The districts would provide preliminary damage assessments for the affected areas (San Francisco District for Santa Clara, Monterey, Santa Cruz, San Benito, San Mateo, and San Francisco counties and the city of San Francisco, and the Sacramento District for Alameda County). The San Francisco District would manage support to FEMA in conducting damage survey reports, while the Sacramento District would manage the individual assistance program.<sup>43</sup>

Recognizing the importance of the response effort, Sobke placed his own deputy, Colonel Culp, at the disaster field office to establish procedures, clarify policy, and determine the scope of Corps missions there. Colonel Culp and his small staff functioned as a command and control element that coordinated the activities of San Francisco and Sacramento districts and oversaw the Corps' public assistance and individual assistance offices at the disaster field office. Culp's command and control cell screened FEMA taskings to determine which district was in a better position to respond, based on its staffing resources and expertise, and then forwarded the taskings to appropriate district personnel for action. The command and control cell also kept Corps headquarters, the division, and the district emergency operations centers informed of the status of operations in the field.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, the command and control cell functioned as the FEMA liaison, a staff element for FEMA's ESF #3. Colonel Culp or one of his staff attended daily briefings with FEMA officials and kept them informed of the status of the Corps activities. During these meetings, Bruce Baughman or Bob Brussard gave the Corps verbal instructions regarding new missions or changes in missions. Together, Corps and FEMA officials prepared a scope of work that became the Corps' formal mission statement.<sup>45</sup>

The Corps' command cell at the disaster field office included Culp, Hecker, and Mike Grebinski, along with a small support staff. Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Mason headed the individual assistance cell and Lieutenant Colonel Coffey

directed the public assistance cell. The lean three-cell structure at the disaster field office worked well, though Culp observed that he could have used a few more people, particularly one from resource management to set up cost-accounting procedures quickly.<sup>46</sup>

Initially, all taskings flowed into the South Pacific Division's emergency operations center where officials screened them and assigned them to the districts. After the Corps established its command and control cell at the disaster field office, the cell gave taskings directly to the regional headquarters that Sacramento and San Francisco districts had established in Mountain View. After the regional office received a tasking, it set up its own procedures to execute the mission. Except for reporting, the regional office became a relatively independent operation under the auspices of the district commander. The Sacramento District's regional office in turn established seven area offices, while the San Francisco District's regional office established three. Only taskings outside the individual and public assistance missions were forwarded to the division headquarters.<sup>47</sup>

Although many command and control responsibilities shifted from the division headquarters to the Corps' command and control cell at the disaster field office, some remained at the division's emergency operations center. General Sobke remained the final authority on accepting or declining missions. Dividing command and control responsibilities between the disaster field office Corps cell and the division headquarters occasionally presented problems. Corps people at the disaster field office often could respond more quickly than those at the division and better understood the urgency of the situation. They sometimes needed to make immediate decisions, and passing issues up to the division commander could be time consuming.

Later, as the work became routine, division officials deactivated their emergency operations center, and Fulton replaced Culp in Mountain View. Officials also deactivated the district emergency operations centers, and district elements working on the earthquake response came directly under Fulton.<sup>48</sup>

With its organizational structure now firmly in place, the Corps could more effectively pursue its missions in support

of FEMA and other agencies. The largest and most significant Corps missions were preliminary damage assessment, individual assistance, public assistance, direct federal assistance, and technical assistance. The Corps also provided support to other agencies such as the California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS) and did work such as levee repair on its own authority. As the following sections illustrate, each mission presented unique challenges.