



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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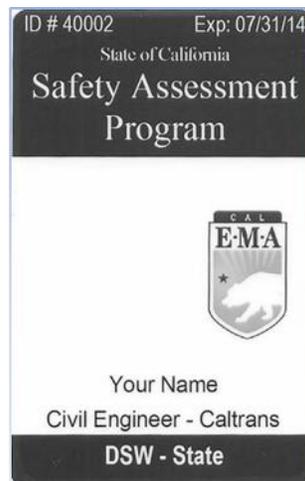
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Cal EMA Secretary Urges Residents of Imperial County To Be Wary of Phony Safety Assessment Evaluators

SACRAMENTO – In response to reports that people posing as safety assessment evaluators are advising business owners in Calexico that they cannot operate without a safety assessment and then charging the businesses for the service, the Secretary of the California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA), Matthew Bettenhausen, today cautioned residents of Imperial County to exercise caution in dealing with people offering services.

“It’s unfortunate that people who have seen their lives and businesses turned upside down by last Sunday’s earthquake now have to worry about people taking advantage of their situation,” said Bettenhausen. “Because safety assessments are one of the most essential services provided by government after a disaster, they are conducted without charge.”

Bettenhausen urged homeowners, renters and business owners throughout Imperial County to ask to see a picture ID of anyone offering to conduct a safety assessment and to immediately report to their local building officials anyone who does not have an ID similar to the ones issued by Cal EMA and pictured below.



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Usually, conducting safety assessments after an emergency is the responsibility of the affected cities and counties. If needed, additional help is available from approximately 6,500 building officials, architects and engineers from local government and the private sector who comprise the state's Safety Assessment Program, which is coordinated by Cal EMA.

To support ongoing safety assessments in the wake of the earthquake, Cal EMA has deployed two SAP coordinators to the Imperial County Emergency Operations Center and four evaluators to support field operations within the county.

While they are deployed, members of the Safety Assessment Program will help local officials determine whether buildings in the affected area are safe for immediate occupancy and whether lawful entry should be allowed, restricted or prohibited.

The program, which was initiated after the 1971 San Fernando earthquake as part of a cooperative effort between the Governor's Office of Emergency Services and the Structural Engineers Association of California, has since become a model for other states.

Bettenhausen also encouraged homeowners, renters and business owners affected by the earthquake to report any damages they have sustained to their insurance carriers, local building departments and offices of emergency services.

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