

The Geotechnical Extreme Event Reconnaissance (GEER) Association advances engineering knowledge through documentation and dissemination of the geotechnical and associated consequences and effects of extreme events.

SYNOPSIS

GEER seeks to inform on the potential consequences and effects of future extreme events by identifying and reporting the critical observations needed to advance science and engineering knowledge including the design procedures and performance of geotechnical systems. Its ultimate objective is to aid in the design of more resilient communities and infrastructure. The planning, conduct, and reporting of extreme event reconnaissance activities should be open and transparent to the GEER community, engineering profession, response organizations, policy makers, and public.

Participants of GEER reconnaissance efforts are the representatives and the face of the Association and the National Science Foundation, and as such are expected to follow high standards of professionalism, and be respectful of local customs, traditions, privacy, and rights of affected individuals. GEER participants should make every effort to be respectful of the community under investigation. In addition to recognizing and being sensitive to their everyday customs and cultural norms, GEER personnel are cognizant that colleagues and individuals living or working in the impacted zone may also have been personal victims of the event and thus are operating under abnormal conditions. Lastly, GEER personnel will seek to inform and guide the behavior and actions of other reconnaissance personnel and teams to the need for appropriate ethical considerations.

Field activities should never interfere with the humanitarian effort of a disaster response. Field teams should always seek to minimize risk of injury of participants or others. GEER efforts are intended to gather the perishable information essential to future efforts in developing more effective mitigation strategies and response. In this sense, efforts should be taken to ensure that allocation of reconnaissance resources are used to identify the critical lessons to be learned in any extreme event. GEER participants should allocate resources to best document key effects to develop critical lessons, without regard to the particular research areas of interest of the participants.

PRINCIPLES

The *Fundamental Principles* of GEER guide its leadership and members in performing their duties at all times. The Fundamental Principles are operational and aspirational. They serve both as a guide for action and as the organization's common identity and purpose.

Voluntary Service

GEER is dependent on the voluntary contribution and expertise of its members. Neither the Association, nor its members, should be motivated to participate in any manner by the desire for personal gain.

Impartiality

Observations made during GEER reconnaissance seek to advance the research and practice of geotechnical engineering and related fields. Participants honor the need to make unbiased observations across all relevant topics.

Common Good

GEER develops a coordinated response for geotechnical engineers and other professionals following a disaster. It works with collaborators in a mutually beneficial and respectful manner. GEER employs innovative technologies to improve the data quality of post-event reconnaissance and facilitates

members' access to equipment required for data collection. Participants pledge to work on topics and areas prioritized by team leaders regardless of personal research interests or expertise. All agree to disseminate *publically* available web-based reports and data that are *timely* and *accurate*.

Educational Development

GEER advances the talents and capabilities of its members including the training of individuals to perform safe and effective post-event reconnaissance.

Team Unity

There is only one GEER Association reconnaissance activity for a particular disaster occurrence and thus one team leadership structure. Individuals invited to participate on a GEER team undertake activities under the guidance of and with approval of the team leader. This is to adhere to an agreed to set of technical objectives for the reconnaissance as well as ensure team safety at all times. However, GEER team members should feel free to communicate potential issues with the GEER Steering Committee if they cannot be resolved by the team leader. The team lead has the authority to request augmentation of the scope of the reconnaissance activities as additional information becomes available in the field.

Universality

GEER has equal status and shares responsibilities and duties of equal weight with other post-disaster reconnaissance efforts, societies, and agencies unless stipulated by the GEER Steering Committee as a result of other agreed to coordination efforts. The Association is constantly re-examining and refining the way in which it works to ensure that its actions are in the best interests of the geotechnical and allied communities it seeks to serve.

Scope and Focus

While the scope and focus of this *Code of Conduct* is generally on the activities of a GEER Association team responding in the immediate aftermath of an extreme event, it has to be recognized that in some cases, individuals who were initially involved as a member of the GEER team will continue their studies and activities in the impacted area with funding and support from other agencies and sources. While GEER has no oversight role or responsibility for those follow-on activities, it strongly encourages individuals who originally participated as GEER team members to continue to adhere to the GEER *Code of Conduct* in the subsequent activities, both because they are considered to represent good practice as well as because of the likelihood that they may be continued to be perceived as a representative of the GEER Association.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The ethics of GEER reconnaissance activities are articulated in a *Code of Conduct* so as to set standards for conduct of extreme event reconnaissance operations. It reasserts the basic principles above and incorporates concepts such as respect for culture, participation, accountability, and human dignity. The Code of Conduct, like most professional codes, is a voluntary one, but adherence is essential to maintain one's membership in the GEER Association. It delineates principles that all participants should adhere to in their post-event reconnaissance work. The code is self-policing. Participants in GEER reconnaissance activities who violate the Code of Conduct understand and accept that the GEER Association has the right to remove members from field activities and teams, and GEER may remove a member from the Association.

GEER Code of Conduct for Post-Event Reconnaissance

- The humanitarian imperative always supersedes the GEER reconnaissance efforts. GEER activities must take a secondary role and not interfere with the primary disaster emergency response focused on saving lives.
- Reconnaissance team members will obey local laws, U.S. laws, and international laws.
- GEER participants respect the culture, custom, dignity, and circumstances of the communities that it surveys and the potential personal challenges being faced by local scientists and engineers collaborating with GEER.
- Participants will carefully and thoughtfully perform their field activities in a manner that promotes personal and team safety.
- Participants will act in service of the GEER Association's goals and not their own objectives.
- Reconnaissance is organized to document geotechnical and other disaster-related effects. Response priorities are assessed on the basis of the potential significance for advancing geoscience and engineering research, policy, and practice.
- Reconnaissance activities will not be undertaken to further a particular researcher's methodology or for personal gain; instead, they will document effects in an unbiased way.
- GEER participants will collaborate in a manner that is neither discriminatory nor disrespectful to other team members or to individuals of other organizations.
- GEER team members should respect the interests and obligations of potential collaborators, which can be especially demanding in the period following an extreme event. This includes being sensitive to the needs of potential local collaborators who may also be personally affected by the disaster.
- While each GEER team member retains their inherent right to free speech, they agree to share observations with each other and to outside parties in a coordinated manner through the team leader. Interactions with media of any form will be coordinated through the team leaders and Steering Committee Coordinator.
- Once the GEER report is published, team members are free to work on aspects of the disaster as individuals; however, they must make it clear that their views and actions do not represent GEER.
- GEER participants will protect the privacy of individuals' personal information (e.g., passport and phone numbers, and street addresses). Confidential information will not be shared with others.
- All non-confidential data and information gathered by GEER reconnaissance teams are to be shared with other GEER reconnaissance team members and made publically available in a timely manner. Reporting of observations should be thorough, transparent, and unreserved.
- Participants have professional and financial accountability to the GEER Association, National Science Foundation, and public users of the event reports.
- Potential conflicts of interest and serious issues will be brought forth to and evaluated by the GEER Steering Committee.