

Guidance for Barricading, Cordoning, Evaluating and Stabilizing Buildings with Substantial Damage in Disasters

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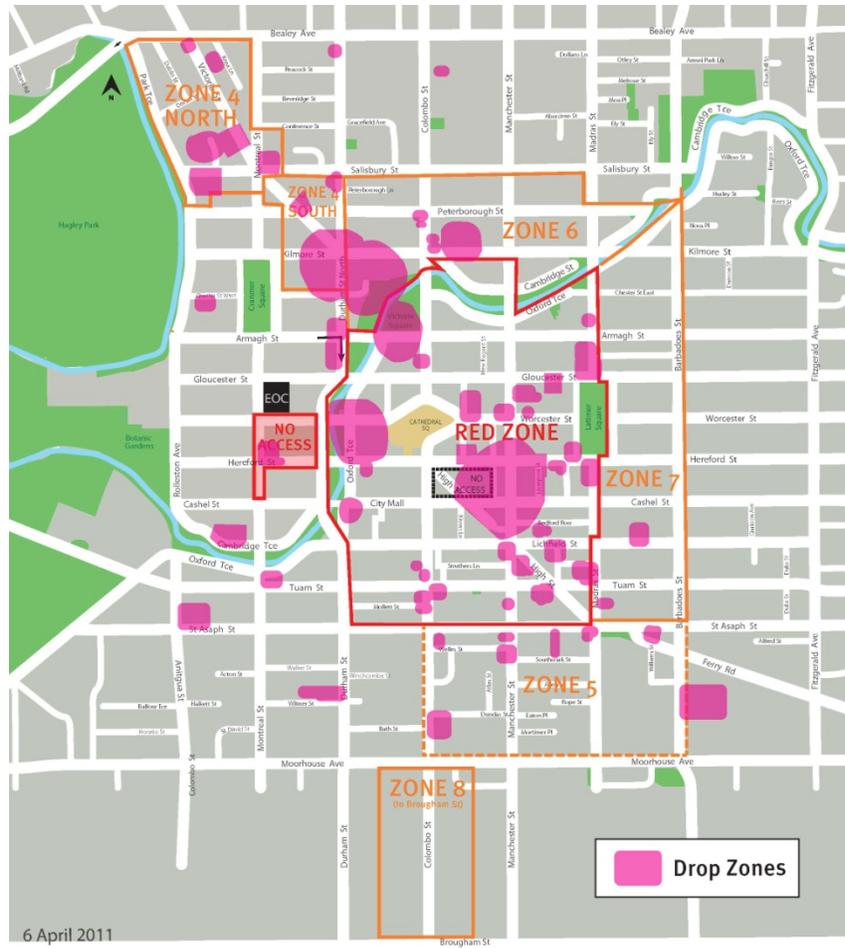
The unfortunate collapse of a balcony in Berkeley, causing six deaths and serious injuries, refocused the public's attention on the most critical responsibility of Building Departments. Our profession's top priority is regulating new building construction, alterations and repairs to prevent collapse.

From a litigant's standpoint, this test is typically posed: What would a reasonable person do to ensure the public's safety? Our codes, standards, certifications, licensure, continuing education and other guidance represent our collective consensus on what reasonable jurisdictions require. After crises, the public evaluates how individual Building Departments respond. Inevitably this scrutiny influences perceptions, priorities, policy changes, and the future of our profession.

We know how just one collapse will shift our focus for weeks. Yet jurisdictions could face hundreds of buildings at or near collapse after major disasters for many months and years. CALBO's Structural Safety and Emergency Preparedness Committee have been working jointly to develop guidance on what is reasonable for Building Officials to implement after major disasters. Interim guidance is now available at www.calbo.org/resources/emergencypreparedness/ for our mutual use and refinement. The Committee strongly encourages you to incorporate this guidance into your agency's emergency response plans. Use it to train and challenge your staff. Engage other agencies and policymakers in your jurisdiction through dialogue and table-top exercises using a ten-point checklist. The Committee also welcomes your feedback on this guidance, so that CALBO members work together to improve it.

The primary recommendations in CALBO's interim guidance are:

- 1) Erect barricades initially at a generous distance of up to 1.5 times the height of buildings that are vulnerable to collapse until they can be further investigated.
- 2) In neighborhoods with multiple collapse risks, it may be prudent to cordon off entire blocks until such time that individual buildings can be evaluated and stabilized.
- 3) Work with other agencies to clarify roles and responsibilities of the Building Department and how multiple agencies can best work together to speed recovery safely.
- 4) Develop capabilities for transitioning from temporary to long-term barricades including awareness of options such as hard barriers and safe transitions for pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- 5) Understand short-term stabilization procedures for damaged buildings.
- 6) Grasp liability aspects.



Map Caption: Red zone cordons and drop zones around damaged buildings that prevented public access in Christchurch’s Central Business District 43 days after the M6.3 Aftershock.