



# News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**MEDIA CONTACTS/RESERVATIONS:**

OES Sheryl Tankersley/Greg Renick  
(916) 997-8309 / (805) 577-8503  
CGS Ed Wilson/Don Drysdale (916) 323-1886

## **Columbine Tragedy, Terrorism to be Discussed at Disaster Resistant California Conference**

SACRAMENTO – What were the challenges facing emergency responders during the 1999 Columbine High School shootings? The incident commander for the local fire department will discuss his experiences, highlighting Tuesday's program at the fifth annual Disaster Resistant California (DRC) Conference.

William Pessemier, former fire chief of Littleton (Colo.) Fire Rescue, will be one of two dinner speakers following a day of panels, workshops, demonstrations and courses designed to help improve public safety in the event of disasters. Pessemier's department was recognized for its lifesaving work during the Columbine tragedy, in which 15 people were killed and another 25 wounded. Ken Thompson, Director of External Affairs for the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, is the other featured dinner speaker.

"Unfortunately, we live in a world where we not only have to plan for natural disasters, but human-caused ones, too," OES Director Henry Renteria said. "Part of our job is to hope for the best, but plan for the worst. That's what Disaster Resistant California is all about."

Breakout sessions on Tuesday will cover a wide range of topics, including strategic risk reduction; the use of technology in disaster planning; mass emergency notifications; school preparedness; landslides and earth movement; a review of California's hazards, vulnerabilities and mitigation strategies; and planning for animal management.

Wednesday's program features a plenary session about tsunamis moderated by Richard McCarthy, executive director of the California Seismic Safety Commission, with a panel of experts from California, Washington and Japan. Another plenary session is entitled "Health Care: Shielding and Protecting the Public's Health – Lessons Learned." Rebecca Rozen, vice president of the Hospital Council of California, will serve as moderator.

The DRC Conference runs May 16-18 at the Hyatt Regency. Sponsored by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) and The Collaborative for Disaster Mitigation (CDM), the conference brings together more than 500 emergency management professionals and 80 exhibitors to share ideas, technology and resources for the purpose of improving disaster planning, preparation, response and recovery. DRC's goal is to increase coordination between federal, state and local governments as well as non-profit organizations and the private sector in the implementation of hazard mitigation measures in the California.

The conference is partially funded by a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and sponsorships. For more a complete schedule and list of sponsors, visit [www.oes.ca.gov](http://www.oes.ca.gov), and click DRC in the right column.

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