

How to fill out a Damage Assessment Form for CERT DA teams

According to our new protocol, Damage Assessment (DA) teams in the field will carry and fill out Damage Assessment Forms. This serves two purposes. First by using the form, the information can be called in to the Command Post (CP) in a terse, yet clear format that saves radio time. Second, it means that not every incident needs to be called in immediately. This way low priority incidents may be delayed to make room to report more high priority incidents quicker.

The latest version of this form is always available at this link:

<https://www.mountainview.gov/documents/MVFD/Damage%20Assessment-General%2011-19.pdf>

Download a copy and use it with this write-up to see how to fill in the form as a DA team.

The back page of the form has instructions that are generalized to all potential users of the form. Not all the information there is applicable to, or used by MLN-CERT. This document will hopefully clarify everything DA teams need to know.

The top line, DATE, EVENT and PERSON RECORDING / ID# should be filled in before leaving the CP. The DATE field is obvious. EVENT is the name of the event, most often a drill. If a formal name is not given, use a descriptive one, like "Earthquake of 5/13/2020" or "CERT Drill 6/12/2021". For PERSON RECORDING / ID# use the tactical call sign of the DA-team, usually something like "DA-alpha".

Each incident is recorded on one line of the form. Each column will be referred to as a field. On the form these fields are grouped in categories. For example, the fields BURNING and OUT fall within the category of FIRE. Each of the fields is used as follows:

- INCIDENT# - The incident number is given to the field team by the Net Control Operator (NCO) who is recording the incidents at the CP.
- TIME - is the time the incident was found. This is NOT transmitted to the CP. The NCO will record the time the incident was received on their copy of the form. Both are important when reconstructing the event of an emergency.
- REPORTED - At the CP, this field is used to record which DA team reported the incident. Since only one field team will be using each form in the field, there is no need to record, or report this field. However, the field team should mark this field with a check or "X" when the incident is called in. If reporting is not done immediately, mark this field with "D" or "O" (delayed or omitted) as a reminder of which incidents need to be either called in later, or taken care of on return to the CP.
- PRIORITY - This is the incident priority. Use 1 for threats to life, this would be people trapped in an unstable structure, or with severe injuries. Also, use this for expanding events like fires that are spreading. Priority 2 is for threats to property. This might include a small structure fire, or a downed power line in a back yard. All lesser incidents are Priority 3. In practice Priority 3 is not explicitly written down or used in calling the CP. When reporting a Priority 1 or 2 incident, the call should be "Control, DA-alpha with priority 1 (or 2) incident". That lets the NCO know that you have a message that should take precedence over priority 3 messages.
- LOCATION - If at all possible, give the street number and full street name, including Avenue, Street or whatever. Remember we have Parker Avenue, Parker Court, Thompson Ave, Thompson Circle etc. If a house number can't be found be as descriptive as possible to identify the house.

The remaining fields describe the nature of the incident being reported. For each of these fields mark them with a 1 if the condition is present. The exception is under the category of PEOPLE. Here write the

number of people in each field. Examples will be given below. For any category where an entry is made, put zeros in the fields not otherwise filled in. This will aid in correct reporting. If a category has nothing to report it should be left blank, and not mentioned when reporting the incident to the NCO.

- FIRE (BURNING/OUT) - If there is a fire, mark burning with a 1. The OUT field is used if you later need to report that the fire has been extinguished. When reporting a change in status for an incident give the incident number assigned when that incident was called in and report the new status. See the section “Changing the status of an existing incident” below for more on updating incidents.
- HAZARD (GAS LEAK/WATER LEAK/ELECTRICAL/CHEMICAL)- For each of these types of hazard report 1 if present.
- BUILDING DAMAGE (LIGHT/MODERATE/HEAVY)- Assign building damage using the criteria given in the DA team briefing. Note on the back of the form there is a table giving the characteristics for each level of damage.
- PEOPLE (IMMEDIATE/DELAYED/TRAPPED/DEAD) - IMMEDIATE and DELAYED refer to the triage terms. IMMEDIATE is for injuries that can’t wait for treatment, and DELAYED for injuries that can. Look up triage training for more details. TRAPPED may refer to someone in a structure or vehicle that can’t be opened, or it may be a person pinned under furniture, a structure, or a vehicle - i.e. any condition where they cannot be removed from the area without further injury. DEAD is self explanatory.
 - When recording an incident, put the number of people in each field, but don’t double count. For example, if there are two people trapped in an overturned car with minor injuries record two people trapped, and none under delayed. Note in the comments that the trapped people are delayed.
- ROAD (ACCESS/NO ACCESS) - If a street is completely blocked with no way around the blockage, put a 1 in NO ACCESS. If the road is partially blocked, meaning an emergency vehicle could get around the blockage, put a 1 under ACCESS.
- OTHER - OTHER is for any incident that doesn’t fit one of the previously listed categories. If you see something and think “Somebody needs to know about this, but I don’t know where to put it on the form...” it goes in OTHER. Add a brief COMMENT to explain what it is.
- ASSIGNED/COMPLETED - This field is used to indicate if an incident has been assigned to a team to resolve (put a “/” in the box). When an assignment is completed, a “\” is added to make an X and show the incident has been resolved.
 - Generally a DA field team will not get involved with this, as they are surveying the neighborhood. The NCO will be using this when an incident is assigned to a First Aid or Search and Rescue team. It is possible that a DA team could be assigned an incident, in an unusual circumstance (eg. The neighborhood is 95% surveyed and you come across a gas leak that can be turned off at the meter). Know the procedure just in case.
- COMMENTS - Use this field to explain an OTHER incident, or supply important details about the incident. Be as brief as possible while getting the needed information across.

How to report an incident to the CP

- Follow proper radio procedures to contact the NCO, state if Priority 1 or 2
- Give Priority and Location, then wait for NCO to prompt you to continue
 - When giving the address (or any other number) say each digit individually. For example, 1632 would be reported as “one six three two”, not “sixteen thirty-two” and definitely not “one-thousand six-hundred and thirty-two”.
- Give the incident as category (FIRE, HAZARD, BUILDING DAMAGE...) followed by the string of numbers for the entries in each field of that category. Do not report categories that have no entries (ie. don’t even mention a category where the fields would all be zero).

CERT - DAMAGE ASSESSMENT FORM

DATE: 5/8/21		EVENT:		PERSON RECORDING / ID#: DA-C										PAGE #: 1 of									
Incident #	Reported	Priority	BURNING	OUT	GAS LEAK	H2O LEAK	ELECTRIC	CHEMICAL	LIGHT	MODERATE	HEAVY	IMMEDIATE **	DELAYED	TRAPPED	DEAD	ACCESS	NO ACCESS	OTHER	ASSIGNED	COMPLETED			
#	TIME	By	LOCATION	FIRE	HAZARD	BUILDING Damage	PEOPLE	ROAD	X	COMMENTS													
1	1021	C	1	283 Diablo Ave		1	1	0	0				0	0	2	0							trapped people are Immediate
2				121 ...																			Small fire in garage

For example, the figure above shows a portion of the DA form for DA-charlie. The radio traffic to call this in would be something like:

DA-C - "Net Control, D A charlie with priority 1 incident"

NCO "D A charlie, go ahead"

DA-C - "Priority 1, location two eight three Diablo Avenue"

NCO - "D A charlie, continue"

DA-C - "Hazard: one, one, zero, zero, People: zero, zero, two, zero"

NCO - "D A charlie go"

DA-C - "Comments; both trapped people also immediate, end of report"

NCO - "D A charlie, copy. Your incident number is twelve, figures one two"

In this exchange, the field team (DA-C) calls the NCO, to let them know they have priority one traffic. Following good procedure, they say first who they are calling, then who they are, and that they have something that should take precedence over lower priority traffic. They don't try and give any more information until they know the NCO is ready to listen. All too often an inexperienced operator will just go on to give the full report without waiting to find out if the NCO is even listening. This can waste a great deal of time in repeating information.

When the NCO comes back with "go ahead" that indicates s/he is now ready to take the information. DA-C pauses after the LOCATION so that the NCO has a chance to write the information down. Writing addresses can take a bit of time, so this is a good place to pause.

When reporting what things are going on in the incident, DA-C only reports the categories where there is information (HAZARD and PEOPLE in this case). There is no need to list unused categories. Under HAZARD there is both a gas and a water leak, so those both are marked with a 1. The unused ELECTRICAL and CHEMICAL fields are reported as zero. While it is possible to report the whole set of FIRE to OTHER in one transmission, many categories may not be used, and thus the information is easier to record by the NCO if only categories with incidents are reported. Pausing before giving the comments is good because it makes sure the NCO is ready for more writing. Also, DA-C stating "end of report" makes it easy for the NCO to know they are done. The NCO reply of "copy" means s/he got everything and doesn't need any parts repeated for clarity. The NCO should then tell DA-C the incident # for the report just made.

Reporting only high priority incidents

There may be times when the radio is very busy, or DA teams are moving very quickly and don't want to report low priority incidents. It is possible to simply record the incidents as they are found, but only those with priority 1 or 2 will be called in. When the DA forms are turned in after the survey, the unreported incidents will not have an incident number, so they can be identified when the forms are checked at the CP.

The NCO may be the one to call for field teams to report only priority 1 and 2 incidents if the workload is getting too high. Field teams may also decide to limit what they report depending on the circumstances. It is always necessary to report priority 1 and 2 incidents as soon as possible.

Delaying reporting during busy times

The goal of the initial DA survey is to cover the whole neighborhood as quickly as possible. If it is not possible to immediately transmit an incident to the NCO, the field team can write down the incident on the DA form and continue the survey. They would then make the report by radio as soon as possible, potentially having multiple incidents to report. If too many incidents get backlogged, it may be time to begin reporting only the priority 1 and 2 incidents. Don't forget to mark the REPORTED field appropriately.

Changing the status of an existing incident

Several kinds of incidents, like fires, gas and water leaks and people trapped have the potential to be resolved. If, for example a small fire is put out, that change in status should be conveyed to the CP. The way to do that is to tell the NCO that you have an update to incident number XXX referring back to the original incident number from when it was initially reported. Note, a new entry is made on the DA form with the original incident number, the time the change in status was discovered and the current condition of the location. On the original entry add a comment that the entry has been updated and give the time of the new entry.

To continue the fire example, if a house was burning, and was otherwise damaged to a condition of moderate the initial report would have been "FIRE: one, zero. BUILDING DAMAGE: zero, one, zero". For this example, the incident number was 123. If the fire gets put out, say by helpful neighbors, and the DA team finds this out during the continuing survey, they would call this in to the CP:

DA-C - "net control, D A charlie"

NCO - "D A charlie, go ahead"

DA-C "update to incident one two three"

NCO "D A charlie, continue"

DA-C" Time: 1240, FIRE: zero, one, BUILDING; zero, zero, one, end of report"

NCO "Copy D A charlie"

The time (1240) is the time the change was recorded. The new FIRE status is OUT and BUILDING DAMAGE has been upgraded to HEAVY. The CP now knows that the fire is out and resources that might have been sent

to this incident can now be used elsewhere. The NCO needs to mark the forms at the CP to reflect new totals. In this case a -1 to FIRES BURNING and +1 to FIRES OUT.

The DA team does not reexamine incidents with the intent to update them. If it comes to their attention because they pass by the incident again on their rounds, or a neighbor brings the change to their attention, then they would report the change in status. Most often a follow-up team (such as Search and Rescue or DA on a subsequent survey of the area) will find changes in status.