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Fritz Institute to study community-based disaster relief

We left our heart in San Francisco years ago, and frankly we are not too interested in returning to find it. Nevertheless, the next time we are in The City we will sleep easily knowing that the city is making some innovative strides in private-public disaster recovery planning. In the latest example, the city has teamed up with the **Fritz Institute** -- a well-respected non-profit group that focuses on professionalizing disaster preparedness -- the United Way, and the Red Cross to study the disaster response capacity of community-based and faith-based organizations in San Francisco.

As Hurricane Katrina demonstrated, the most vulnerable become even more vulnerable when their lives and communities are disrupted by disasters. For many of these individuals, community- and faith-based organizations provide a vital safety net under ordinary circumstances; unfortunately, social scientists know little about how such groups do and could assist in an emergency.

Funding for the study was provided by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation -- which provided a \$1 million grant to the Fritz Institute -- the Pacific Gas & Electric Company, the San Francisco Foundation, and the Walter and Elise Haas Fund.

The research will be led by Professor Kathleen Tierney of the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado at Boulder and one of the nation's foremost experts on the social science aspects of hazards preparedness.

"We believe that Fritz Institute's unique approach, encompassing the private sector, local government and philanthropies, represents a valuable step forward in disaster preparedness for San Francisco," said the Hewlett Foundation's Paul Bres.