





Following the earthquake, Lisbon was hit by a tidal wave and then a fire that burned for six days. Many in the clergy believed that people were being punished for their sins. Image: 1755 German copperplate image, "The Ruins of Lisbon" Wikimedia Commons, public domain



Portrait of Marquês of Pombal (1699-1782) by Van Loo (1707-1771), Museu da Cidade, Lisbon. Image: Wikimedia Commons, public domain

able to continue with the rituals and celebration of mass and the sacraments: the others were burnt or destroyed.

### Situation after the disaster

Although news quickly reached other countries, the UK aid package agreed in parliament two weeks after the disaster did not arrive in port until February due to transportation and customs issues. Spain and France also sent aid, but the initial relief operation was in the hands of the Marquês of Pombal (Paice 2008). Pombal was the then Minister of State and Foreign Affairs and was considering the reconstruction operation at the same time as the emergency response.

The Church provided a great deal of support and the level of cooperation between Church and State was good considering ongoing tensions between the two. Some religious leaders claimed that the city had been punished by God due to its lack of faith (Paice 2008) while many working in government had embraced Enlightenment thinking, and wished to reduce the influence of the Church.

It appears that despite the magnitude of the disaster and the level of need following it, no-one died of hunger. Those whose properties were still intact assisted those in need, housing people in their homes and on their farms (Francisco 2006)

and food in granaries belonging to the King, the Church and the nobility, was distributed.

By royal order, a monastery was set up as a hospital for wounded civilians, while a convent was converted into a military hospital (Francisco 2006). Priests set up local infirmaries in tents and distributed medicine, food and sangria (diluted wine).

Not much information survives on how people coped in the aftermath of the disaster, though the poorest experienced the worst conditions.

Those that had lost their homes camped in the squares, on land owned by convents, and on the beaches. The king ordered a distribution of canvas from the large stockpiles in the royal warehouses, so many people erected makeshift tents. Some supplies were donated by merchants and traders (Francisco 2006).

In the first six months after the quake, it has been estimated that 9,000 wooden buildings were constructed, with settlements developing on the east and west sides of the city. As timber was scarce, much of the lumber had to be brought in from outside (Kendrick, 1956).

Many of the wooden huts were erected as part of government initiatives, others by the church and others by wealthy individuals sheltering those they had immediate responsibility for (Paice 2008). The most famous inhabitants of these wooden

huts was the Royal Family who were sheltered in Royal wooden barracks.

Despite control measures to prevent citizens from leaving it was not until the 1780s that the city's population returned to pre-earthquake levels.

### Shelter strategy

Decision-making power was concentrated in the hands of the Marquês de Pombal, whose management of the recovery has been described as "despotic planning" (Mullin 1992).

Pombal immediately passed a series of laws, announcing the death penalty for looting and forbidding people from deserting the city or settling in unplanned camps.

By the end of November 1755, Pombal had commissioned a survey of the damage, and of land ownership, to avoid later disputes over land tenancy (Paice 2008). In December he passed two construction laws, banning construction outside of the city walls or in unaffected areas to prevent unlawful land occupation and low-standard reconstruction. The army was employed to patrol the city and enforce the regulations.

Any temporary building was prohibited until all the debris was cleared and plans for rebuilding were completed. To prevent inflation, construction salaries, rents and the prices of construction materials were all frozen.





A model showing the Pombaline cage design. The design is said to have been tested by getting the army to walk up and down on the roof of a full-size model.

Photo: Galinhola, 2008. wikipedia. [org/wiki/File:Gaiola\\_pombalina.jpg](http://org/wiki/File:Gaiola_pombalina.jpg)

the initiation of the reconstruction process.

The design was apparently tested by running a stress-test on a full-scale model in the city's main square. The military were ordered to march in uncoordinated, uneven rhythms on top of the building to simulate the tremor conditions of an earthquake (Mata dos Santos 2008).

### Issues today

Recent studies by some Portuguese engineers (Cardoso, Lopes and Bento 2004, and Ramos, Lourenço 2000) suggest that many of Pombaline Cage buildings in the Baixa have been profoundly altered, driven mainly by commercial interests and changes in building use. This would suggest that some parts of the city might now be more vulnerable than they were 200 years ago.

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