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## **A Disaster Mitigation Success Story**

### ***Making Residents of Tallahassee's Greater Frenchtown Front Porch Community Disaster Resistant***

When Hurricane Helene struck Florida's panhandle counties in September of 2000, 27 homes in Tallahassee's Greater Frenchtown Front Porch Community received minor flooding due to the storm's heavy tropical rains. As part of the disaster response activities associated with Hurricane Helene, the Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross began a partnership with the Greater Frenchtown Area Revitalization Council. The mission behind the creation of this partnership was and to this day remains "To Make Individuals and Families Living in the Greater Frenchtown Front Porch Community - Disaster Resistant".

### **Building A Disaster Resistant Neighborhood**

In the spring of 2001 neighborhood leaders from the Greater Frenchtown Front Porch community came together in partnership with the Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross to launch the Disaster Resistant Neighborhood initiative throughout the area. This initiative helps neighborhood residents to identify the disaster hazards they face, and then provides disaster educational materials to each resident. These materials provide information on how to prepare for the next disaster as well as how to reduce an individual's disaster threats.

Neighborhood groups within the Greater Frenchtown Front Porch community were enlisted to help distribute the disaster education materials in a door to door campaign.

### **Fire House and Fire / Weather House**

Beginning in the summer of 2001 in an effort to teach young people of the Greater Frenchtown Front Porch community home fire prevention and weather safety, the Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross began participating in all community events held at the Lincoln Neighborhood Service Center. A focal point of the Capital Area Chapter's participation was the presence of the Fire House. This unique disaster education trailer contains a wide variety of disaster preparedness tools such as Smoke Alarms, NOAA Weather Radios, Fire Extinguishers and Carbon Monoxide Alarms. In participating in the training conducted using this unique disaster training trailer, young people receive hands on disaster learning opportunities which are designed to help participants to become prepared for the next disaster and reduce the occurrences of home fires.

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*(cont'd)*

### **Make A Difference Day**

In October 2002 the Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross recruited several community organizations to come together to launch the next phase of the Disaster Resistant Neighborhood initiative. On a bright Saturday morning, 49 volunteers came together in the Goodbread Neighborhood, within the Greater Frenchtown Front Porch community, as part of Make A Difference Day activity to install Hurricane Shutters on one (1) home within that neighborhood. In completing this installation, the first of many homes in the Greater Frenchtown Front Porch community became disaster resilient.

### **Hazardous Tree Removal**

Working with the City of Tallahassee, the Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross was able to access \$260,000 in State Housing Initiative Program (SHIP) to continue to straighten the Greater Frenchtown Front Porch community's Disaster Resistant Neighborhood activities. While SHIP funding is primarily used by cities and counties throughout Florida to up-grade substandard low income owner occupied housing, the Capital Area Chapter was able to prepare a plan to provide \$1,500 mini-grants to low income homeowners within the Greater Frenchtown Front Porch community to have hazardous trees removed.

The threat of lay down hazardous due to aging, diseased and dead trees during high wind events like hurricanes, thunderstorms and tornadoes is a severe threat throughout Leon County.

### **Making Homes Safer**

In the spring of 2003 the City of Tallahassee provided \$55,000 in Residential Construction Mitigation Program funding to the Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross to undertake additional disaster structural mitigation activities within the Greater Frenchtown Front Porch community. To strengthen the partnership with the Greater

Frenchtown Revitalization Council, the Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross was able to open and staff an office in the Lincoln Neighborhood Service Center with one (1) of its Disaster Mitigation Specialists. The Lincoln Neighborhood Service Center is located in the heart of the Greater Frenchtown Front Porch community.

In an effort to maximize the Residential Construction Mitigation Program funding, the Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross brought in three (3) National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) teams to help with the man-power needed to install hurricane shutter on 50 homes. During the months of March through June, 27 NCCC Members logged 5,371 hours of volunteer time installing hurricane shutters.

### **Masters of Disaster and Facing Fear**

To strengthen the interface with the youth of the Greater Frenchtown Front Porch community, and to help young people become better prepared for a disaster, the Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross undertook a project to enhance the usage of the school disaster safety curriculum Masters of Disaster and Facing Fear in Riley Elementary School and Rudiger Elementary Schools.

These disaster based lesson plans help teachers to instruct their math, English and science classes while providing a learning opportunity for young people to become prepared for the next disaster.

To pull this project together, members from the Capital Area Chapter's Domestic Preparedness and Response Corps, worked directly with the teachers and students of the these elementary schools.

### **Adopt A Drain - Prevent A Flood**

Much of the flooding problem in the Greater Frenchtown Front Porch community is due to storm water drains and ditches becoming clogged with leaves, sticks and other debris. In

an effort to reduce future flooding problems, the Greater Frenchtown Revitalization Council and the Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross came together to launch the Adopt A Drain - Prevent A Flood campaign. This campaign is designed to encourage residents of the Greater Frenchtown Front Porch community to adopt a storm water drain or ditch close to their home and monitor it. If the drain becomes clogged with debris, the resident is instructed to contact the City of Tallahassee to have it cleaned out.

### **Installing Sewer Backflow Valves**

In an ongoing effort to make homes throughout the Greater Frenchtown Front Porch community as flood proof as possible. The Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross was provided with \$45,000 in Local Mitigation Strategy Funding from Leon County to provide mini-grants to low-income owner occupied residents to have Sewer Backflow Valves installed. As part of the community's powerful Disaster Resistant Neighborhood initiative 29 homes are being made flood proof.

*[The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect official TACDA policy nor points of view held by TACDA or any of its officers.]*

## **Focus on Emergency Management and Public Safety**

### **Emergency Inspectors Sent Across China as SARS Fears Return**

BEIJING (AFP) Apr 26, 2004 China is rushing emergency inspection teams around the country to check if health guidelines are being followed, state press said Monday, as fears rise that a SARS outbreak could quickly become an epidemic.

Experts from the ministry of science and technology and the ministry of health are fanning out across the nation, Beijing News reported. The move follows the closure of China's top laboratory on the SARS epidemic due to the widespread belief that the latest outbreak of the respiratory disease started at the Beijing-based Institute of Virology. The World Health Organization is also sending a team to China to investigate how the infection happened and to check whether internationally accepted bio-safety guidelines were compromised.

Chinese authorities say a researcher at the institute contracted SARS and infected a nurse who took care of her at a Beijing hospital. The respiratory ward at the hospital has also been closed.

So far there are six suspected and two confirmed cases, while 337 people have been isolated in Beijing and 133 in Anhui province. While the threat is not yet considered serious to public health, there are fears the disease may have spread widely through the rail network, the World Health Organization (WHO) said.

The WHO is concerned that the outbreak could turn into an epidemic because the medical researcher had taken long train journeys after contracting the disease.

"Because of the long train journey it is not so easy to trace all of the possible contacts," WHO Western Pacific regional director Shigeru Omi told a news conference in Manila.

"From our experience with SARS last year we know hospitals have a tendency to amplify the infection." But he said: "We do not see this yet as a serious public health threat."

Last year SARS killed nearly 800 people and infected more than 8,000 worldwide, with China being the worst hit country, and there are concerns that the Labor Day holiday next week could exacerbate a spread of the latest outbreak. During the holiday, millions of

Chinese will be on the move by train, bus and plane.

Vice Minister of Health Zhu Qinsheng said anti-SARS measures had been stepped up ahead of the week-long break. "Our airports and ports are taking measures to ensure things will go smoothly," Zhu said in Malaysia. "We have resumed temperature screening in airports

and railway stations. Passengers are also required to fill in health declaration forms."

Meanwhile, all hospitals across the country at county level and above have been ordered to conduct urgent checks on deaths related to pneumonia dating back to March 2. No suspicious cases had been found so far, the health ministry said.

## The Safety Zone

### **Nuclear War Still Possible New York Number One Target**

The threat of devastating nuclear attack by Russia against the United States has not diminished, warns former Sec. of Defense Robert McNamara.

Writing in a recent issue of the Los Angeles Times, McNamara and co-author Helen Caldicott claim that the threat of a nuclear catastrophe remains real, "whether by accident, human fallibility or malfeasance."

The Soviet Union collapsed on itself and the divide between Eastern communism and Western democracy disintegrated more than 13 years ago.

Because of that, the nightmare scenario is not on the minds of many Americans today.

#### **Missiles Still Pointed at New York Cities**

Nevertheless, the threat remains serious, McNamara and Caldicott argue, because, despite the end of the Cold War in the early 1990's, thousands of Russian nuclear warheads are still pointed at the U.S. targeting many civilian population centers. McNamara, defense secretary to presidents Kennedy and Johnson, U.S. and Caldicott, a pediatrician and head of the Nuclear Policy Research Institute, say that Russian nuclear targeting strategies haven't changed much — and certainly not enough to

reflect the thaw in relations between both nations.

The pair also cite a January 2002 document from the U.S. Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., titled, "Prototypes for Targeting America, a Soviet Military Assessment." The study reports that New York City is the single most important target after military installations on the U.S. Atlantic coast.

In addition, a report commissioned in the 1980s by the U.S. Office of Technology Assessment is still as relevant today. It said Soviet nuclear war plans called for aiming two one-megaton bombs at each of the following: The three airports serving NYC; Wall Street; each major bridge; all major rail centers; all power stations; four NYC-area oil refineries; and the NYC port facilities.

Also, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, in a recent report on nuclear-attack preparedness, featured a map showing an obliterated New York City from nuclear blasts and the resultant firestorms and fallout. It predicted millions of people would instantly perish, while most survivors would die shortly thereafter from radiation burns and exposure.

#### **Russia, Leading Nuclear Superpower**

Russia, despite press reports to the contrary, remains a nuclear superpower, arguably the greatest nuclear superpower. Between Moscow and Washington, the two governments can lay

claim to 96 percent of the world's 30,000 nuclear weapons.

In Russia, says the National Resources Defense Council, most of the 8,200 nuclear warheads are pointing at American cities and defense sites. In return, most of the United States' 7,000 warheads are targeting Russian missile silos and command centers. Russia continues to lead the U.S. in smaller tactical nuclear warheads. The U.S. destroyed most of its tactical nuclear arsenal during the 1990s.

Of the 7,000 warheads in the U.S. arsenal, 2,500 are maintained on a 24-hour ready alert status, and can be launched within moments. And, the commander of the Strategic Air Command has only about three minutes to decide if a nuclear attack warning is real or not. Then he has 10 minutes to find the president and give him a 30-second attack briefing, including options. After that, the president has three minutes to decide whether or not to retaliate and if so, which targets will be hit. Once they were launched, U.S. missiles would reach their Russian targets in about 15 to 30 minutes.

The situation is relatively similar in Russia, with the exception that Moscow's early warning system is rapidly aging. According to the McNamara and Caldicott, the systems of both countries sound alarms daily, in response to wildfires, satellite launchings and solar reflections off clouds or oceans. But as the Russian system continues to decay, it may be more difficult for Moscow to determine whether alerts are real or not. That's dangerous, argue experts, because it may mean in the future, Russian commanders and leaders may have to rely more on human judgment—a concept much less reliable than computerized early warning systems that operate without emotion.

### **Russia Continues Missile Build-up**

Perhaps worse, as Russia's overall military structure continues to suffer from a lack of funding and crumbles, Moscow continues to pour scarce military funding into more nuclear weapons. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov told reporters that Moscow will test its mobile version of the Topol-M intercontinental ballistic missile once more before it is put into service.

The missile, which will form the backbone of Russia's nuclear defenses, is 47 tons, will carry one warhead, and has an estimated range of 6,900 miles. Ground-based Topol-M rockets are already in use; the mobile version could be operational by 2006. The last test of the mobile missile came earlier this month, Ivanov said. It traveled its maximum distance before hitting a target on the Kamchatka peninsula.

In addition, according to Agence France Presse, the U.S. has hinted it may use a loophole to get out of a treaty signed with Russia in 2002, which mandates both countries slash their nuclear arsenals by two-thirds over a decade.

### **Give Them Up**

The liberal leaning McNamara and Caldicott say the best strategy now is to simply abandon nuclear weapons altogether. They say Russia and the U.S. are now allied in the global fight against terrorism. As such, "their first duty in this effort should be immediate and rapid bilateral nuclear disarmament, accompanied by the other six nuclear nations (France, Britain, China, India, Pakistan and Israel)," followed by U.N. Security Council action "to ensure no other nations, particularly Iran and North Korea, acquire nuclear weapons." "Time is not on our side," they wrote.

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## **U.S. Issues Global Terror Alert**

WASHINGTON, April 29 (Xinhuanet) -- The US State Department on Thursday issued a new global terrorism alert that warns US citizens abroad of an increased threat in attacks and violent anti-American demonstrations.

The department also renewed a regional terrorism advisory for the Middle East and North Africa.

The US government was deeply concerned about the heightened threat of terrorist attacks and the potential for demonstrations and violent actions against US citizens and interests overseas, the department said in a worldwide caution notice.

Warning that the al-Qaeda terrorist group "continues to prepare to strike US interests abroad," the notice said "future al-Qaeda attacks could possibly involve nonconventional weapons such as chemical or biological agents as well as conventional weapons of terror."

The department on Wednesday warned US citizens to avoid travels to Israel and Palestinian territories and urged Americans to leave the Gaza Strip immediately. Enditem

## **Container Scheduled for Shipment Blows Up in LA Port**

An explosion in a 20-foot-container at the Port of Los Angeles, on April 28, brought the bomb squad to the shipping complex and prompted the longshore workers union to shut down the terminal.

The explosion occurred at the Trans Pacific Container Service Corp. terminal around 1:30 p.m., said Los Angeles city fire Capt. Jim Wells.

Television footage showed the walls of the steel container bowed outward, the rear doors blown off and its contents -- mostly red soda

cans and other food products -- strewn about like candy from a pinata.

The container was on top of a small tractor-trailer when the explosion occurred, but the driver was uninjured, said Dave Arian with the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 13.

However, the container was set to be placed on a ship just below a container that had hazardous materials inside, Arian said.

"If the explosion had happened after the hazardous cargo container had been placed on top, we might have had toxic materials blanketing the longshore workers and floating all over Wilmington and San Pedro," he said.

The cause of the explosion was not clear, though officials told KABC-TV it may have been a propane tank inside the container that blew up.

The container was set to be loaded on the ship The Micronesian Heritage, which was picking up 74 containers en route to Samoa and other pacific ports.

Arian said the explosion shows that security at the port complex is not as tight as it should be.

"We have been fighting for the proper inspection of all containers coming into the port, but the shipping companies are not interested in protecting the port community," he said.

The Port of Los Angeles is the nation's busiest, handling millions of containers annually.