

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND CURRENT STRUCTURE

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The Department of Emergency Management (DEM) has undergone many transformations during its life. Its beginnings date back to the 1940s when the Organisation for Hurricane Relief was formed.

The general direction and authority of the Organisation was vested in his Excellency the Governor, members of the Executive Committee, the Financial Secretary, a Legal Draughtsman and the Controller of Food Supplies and Prices. The headquarters of this Organisation was at Government House.

The Central Relief Organisation, which served as the coordinating agency, comprised “Liaison Staff” and had its headquarters at the Department of Agriculture. It comprised an Intelligence Officer, Assistant Colonial Secretaries who served as Mobile Intelligence Officers and Public Relations Officer, the Government Electrical Inspector who was in charge of emergency electric power and wireless communications and the Island Commissioner for the Boys Scouts who formed the messenger service.

For relief purposes, the parishes were divided into districts and persons appointed annually by the vestries were in charge. This set up formed the Parochial Relief Organisation.

In contrast to the Department of Emergency Management, this Organisation was never fully aware of the need for a plan for disaster preparedness, although the public was informed of an impending hurricane in the form of public warning which were arranged according to the standard hurricane categories of Advisory, Cautionary Warning and the onset of a hurricane. These procedures were specifically designed to facilitate the action of members of the Organisation, rather than giving the public a thorough briefing of impending disaster. The Organisation was more concerned with relief after the disaster. As such, all of its actions were geared towards returning things to normal after the event, rather than with lessening the impact.

Although this was a major short coming in the context of today’s operations, it nevertheless seemed to have functioned with some efficiency in 1955, as the losses and suffering during hurricane *Janet* were lessened to a considerable degree, owing to its actions.

In 1978 the organization was renamed the Central Emergency Relief Secretariat which provided administrative support and coordination to the wider disaster management system in Barbados.

Over the years, the Organisation was required to expand the scope of its responsibility to respond to other emergencies such as flooding and landslides, as well as man-made disasters such as oil spills, industrial fires, aircraft crashes and large scale public service vehicle accidents.

DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (DEM) TODAY

The Department of Emergency Management is the government department responsible for the development and implementation of the Emergency Management Programme in Barbados. It has the responsibility for coordinating emergency management activities in Barbados.

The Department came into being on April 1, 2007 by the statutory legislation of the Emergency Management Act 2006. It replaces the Central Emergency Relief Organisation Secretariat which dated back to the 1940's when an organization for Hurricane Relief was formed under the authority and direction of the Governor and members of the Executive Committee, as was the then Colonial System of Government. At that time the main emphasis was on relief.

DEM today is developing and implementing a national Comprehensive Disaster Management programme which embodies the concept of all hazards: natural and man-made at all phases of the Disaster Continuum: Prevention and Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery as well as integration of disaster risk reduction.

It utilizes the integrated emergency management approach, which is necessary if it is to effectively and efficiently accomplish its mission through the identification and mobilisation of all appropriate resources and detailed planning for the possible impact of any hazard. The present staff structure comprises of:

- Director - National Disaster Coordinator
- Deputy Director
- 4 Programme Officers
- 1 Storekeeper
- 1 Assistant Accountant
- 1 Assistant Librarian
- 1 Secretary
- 2 Clerk/Typists
- 1 General Worker
- 1 Driver /Operator
- 1 Driver / Messenger
- 1 Telecommunications Officer

THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The National Emergency Management System is the overarching mechanism which facilitates emergency management. It not only consists of the Department Of Emergency Management which is responsible for the coordination of stakeholders and activities but the following groupings:

- Emergency Management Advisory Council
- Emergency Operations Centre /Emergency Management Teams
- Fifteen (15) Emergency Management Standing Committees

- Thirty (30) District Emergency Organisations (DEOs)

The National Emergency Management System is comprised of representatives of the National Disaster Committee which is called the Emergency Management Advisory Council (EMAC) whose membership comprises of representatives of the Emergency Services, key government ministries and departments, the Private Sector, Non Governmental Organisations NGOs, Community Based Organisations CBOs and international and regional emergency management organizations.

Under the EMAC there are fifteen (15) sub committees called standing committees which are organised along Emergency Response Functions such as Shelter, Evacuation, Mass Feeding, Emergency Telecommunications, and Public Utilities amongst others.

Emergency Management Standing Committees

The Standing Committees are chaired by selected members of the Emergency Management Advisory Committee. These Chairpersons are all Technical Heads of Government agencies which have responsibility for the execution of national disaster management policy and programmes in their respective areas of expertise. The Committees include:

- Public Information (PIEC)
- Damage Assessment and Statistics (DASC)
- Health and First Aid Services (HFASC)
- Food and General Supplies (FGSC)
- Public Utilities (PUC)
- Emergency Transport (ETC)
- Road Clearance and Tree Trimming (RCTTC)
- Welfare Services (WSC)
- Shelter Management (SMC)
- Telecommunications (TEC)
- Emergency Housing and Rehabilitation (EHRC)
- National Mitigation (NMC)
- Tourism Emergency Management (TEMC)
- Technical Standing Committee on Coastal Hazards (TSCCH)

The National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC)

The National Emergency Operations Centre is the centralised location from which the mobilisation and coordination of responses and resources is carried out in the event of a major incident, emergency or disaster. The NEOC is staffed by the EOC Management Teams:

Emergency Management Teams

The Emergency Management Teams are structured to provide a twenty-four hour round the clock operation in the event of any major disaster. The Teams are made up of the Technical

Heads/representatives of the agencies which are members of the National Disaster Committee. The primary functions of the Teams are:

- Notification of key individuals and appropriate agencies
- Mobilising additional and extra ordinary resources
- Collecting, collating and analysing information
- Prioritising response activities
- Warning and keeping the public updated on the progress of the incident, the need for evacuation or other precautions and the termination of the incident
- Coordinating Damage Assessment and conducting Needs Analysis
- Coordinating Emergency Relief and Initial Rehabilitation activities

District Emergency Organisations (DEOs)

The District Emergency Organisation operates as the volunteer arm of the Department of Emergency Management, the agency responsible for the National Emergency Management System. The role of the DEO's is to organize and coordinate the resources of the community so as to allow for an effective response in time of crisis. The DEO works with the community to develop and operationalise disaster prevention and disaster preparedness programmes to lessen the impact of identified hazards such as hurricane, flood and earthquake, fire, aircraft and vehicular accidents and is also becoming more and more involved in the fight against environmental hazards such as love vine and the Giant African Snail.

The DEO reaches out to all groups in the community, including churches, service clubs, neighborhood watches, PTAs, skilled artisans, families, community groups, non-governmental organisation and most importantly the individuals living in the community. There is also a close association with the government agencies such as the Fire Service and the Police that operate in the respective communities.

The DEOs are operated by volunteers and the membership is drawn from the communities which they are intended to serve. The management structure of the DEO is made up of a Chairman, a Deputy Chairman, a Secretary, a Public Relations Officer and officers covering the areas of Shelter Management, First Aid, Damage Assessment, Road Clearance, Transportation, Communication, Clothing and Feeding. General members of the DEO become involved and operate in the areas that are of interest to them. The DEO's main functions are to provide a forum for education and training at the Community level, develop a mechanism for initial emergency response and to develop a mechanism to facilitate the conduct of damage assessment, needs analysis and relief distribution

Involvement in a DEO has several benefits. In addition to gaining a deep knowledge of your community and the people living there, individuals involved in a DEO are able to receive training in diverse areas and gain invaluable knowledge in many aspects of disaster management. The knowledge and skills gained can then be incorporated into your daily life for the benefit of your family, your friends and your community as well as the island as a whole. Involvement in a DEO also makes you a member of the larger family of DEO members that operate around Barbados as well as being an active participant in the fun and fellowship that comes with being

part of this movement.

We invite you to become involved in the DEO in your area. There are thirty (30) DEOs strategically placed across the island. For information on how to contact the DEO in your area please call the Department of Emergency Management at 438-7575. You may also wish to complete and submit the volunteer form via email or drop it in at the Department of Emergency Management office at No. 30 Warrens Industrial Park, St. Michael.

We look forward to having you join us. Remember *volunteers are a gift to the community.*