Community Resilience and Rapid Recovery of the Business Sector: A Community Resilience Lesson from the Charleston Tri-County Area

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CARRI Partner Community Forum
April 28, 2009
Resilience Issue

• Major concern following Hurricane Hugo was rapid recovery of business sector – particularly tourism

• At announcement of Navy base closing, concern was mitigation of loss of major economic “engine”

• No systematic means of determining
  – Status of business base – impacts on business resources
  – Resources needed for return of business sector
  – No “playbook” of steps to regain or maintain vibrant business sector
What We Did

- Established phone bank and systematically contacted individual businesses to determine needs and resources
- Worked with local elected leadership to push “positive” message of recovery
- Worked with local leadership to develop “plans” to mitigate economic loss
• Developed knowledge and expertise in business continuity planning
  – Brought in business continuity planning expert to Tri-Counties
  – Developed and provide business continuity planning training for local businesses
  – Established Business Continuity Planning Council to maintain focus and energy
Key Players

- Local elected and appointed leaders
- Chamber of Commerce
- Chamber members – business representatives
- Business Continuity experts
- Local emergency management
Lessons Learned

• Prior to incident, establish systematic means of assessing business sector’s status

• Business sector should partner with community leadership and emergency management to plan for “return to business”
  – Plan should include all of private sector – large, major employers as well as small businesses
  – Plan should identify critical areas or aspects of local economy for focused efforts (e.g., “Save the Season” campaign for local tourism)
• Business continuity planning should be on-going focus
  – Routine activities to improve business sector’s knowledge of techniques that help maintain or restore business activity
    • Cash flow management
    • Customer relations and customer service
    • Planning for employee return to area (and to work)
  – Education activities which “condition” businesses to value of BCP – help maintain “will to recover”

• Coordinated, positive messaging vital
  – Include use of range of technology (phone, web, texting, etc)
Resilience Enhancements

- Business continuity planning has increased ability of local businesses to withstand impacts from disasters
- Business Continuity Planning Council’s on-going education efforts increases effectiveness of local business practices during “normal” times
- Business Continuity Planning Council is on-going resource that has helped improve the entire “business system” of the Tri-County area
- BCP Council helps maintain focus on preparedness AND recovery messaging
- Charleston has become resource for business recovery in other communities