Continuity IQ from DSPN

June 2006

Fast Facts for Our Valued Friends and Clients

Here are some bullets and brain teasers about current events from your friends at DSPN. This month's topic is hazards caused by hurricanes. If you'd like to forward this message to your colleagues, just click the "Forward Email" link at the bottom of this page.

Fast Facts about Hurricane Hazards

Did you know....

1. A major hurricane should be thought of as a sequence of hazards, including high winds, power outage, storm surge, flooding, tornadoes, and possibly the collapse of the local economy. If you have facilities in a hurricane zone, you should be prepared to respond to all of these.
2. Hurricane-force winds can easily destroy poorly constructed buildings and mobile homes. Debris such as signs, roofing material, and small items left outside become flying missiles in hurricanes. Extensive damage to trees, towers, water and underground utility lines (from uprooted trees), and fallen poles cause considerable disruption.
3. The Inland High Wind Model can be used by emergency managers to estimate how far inland strong winds extend. The inland wind estimates can only be made shortly before landfall when the windfield forecast errors are relatively small. This information is most useful in the decision-making process to decide which people might be most vulnerable to high winds at inland locations.
4. The level of surge in a particular area is also determined by the slope of the continental shelf. A shallow slope off the coast will allow a greater surge to inundate coastal communities. Communities with a steeper continental shelf will not see as much surge inundation, although large breaking waves can still present major problems. Storm tides, waves, and currents in confined harbors severely damage ships, marinas, and pleasure boats.
5. One tool used to evaluate the threat from storm surge is the SLOSH model. Emergency managers use this data from SLOSH to determine which areas must be evacuated for storm surge.
6. While storm surge is always a potential threat, more people have died from inland flooding from 1970 up to 2000. Intense rainfall is not directly related to the wind speed of tropical cyclones. In fact, some of the greatest rainfall amounts occur from weaker storms that drift slowly or stall over an area.

7. Smaller storms can do more damage when they begin travelling inland. One example was Hurricane Cindy, which spawned 33 tornadoes in 2005. Tornadoes are most likely to occur in the right-front quadrant of the hurricane.
8. Katrina's impact on the local economy should be instructional to us all. According to USA Today, New Orleans owes investors $878.6 million, including nearly $500 million in general-obligation bonds that it normally would pay off with property tax receipts. But this year's tax bills have not gone out yet, five months late. And a recent assessment cut city property rolls by 24% while the likely tax collection rate is pegged as low as 50%.
9. According to David Brodamer, Managing Editor of Retail Traffic, "New Orleans has become a commuter city rather than residential. Traffic on major highways into the city is up by 90,000 cars a day post-Katrina. The city empties at night, a ghost of its former self. Retailers located in the city's core are grappling with this new reality. Many are operating on limited hours, if they are open at all."
10. Before Katrina, New Orleans had about 460,000 residents. Nearly 190,000 people have returned so far. The Rand Corp., an independent think tank, projects a 275,000 population by September 2008. Local retailers are feeling the pinch.

Brain Teasers

True or False:

1. The 2005 hurricane season included 27 named storms, breaking the record of 21 named storms set in 1933.
2. The 2006 hurricane season is forecasted to be an average year with 9.6 named tropical storms and 5.9 hurricanes.
3. There is an an 81 percent chance that at least one major hurricane will hit the U.S. coast in 2006.
4. The number of severe hurricanes has doubled worldwide even though the total number of hurricanes has dropped over the last 35 years.
5. In 1938, a hurricane struck New England, killing 10 people in New York City.

Check your answers here...

Answers to the above questions:

1. True. The 27 named storms included a record 15 hurricanes, breaking the previous record of 12 set in 1969.
2. False. The averages listed are correct, but the 2006 forcast nearly doubles the averages, with 17 named storms forecasted and 9 hurricanes.
3. True. This forecast is provided by William Gray of Colorado State University.
4. True. "We're not saying that global warming is causing there to be more intense hurricanes," said study author Peter Webster of Georgia Tech. "What we're saying is that sea surface temperatures are rising, and the intensity of hurricanes is associated with that. The warmer the sea surface temperature, the more intense the hurricanes." In 1995 there were 870 hurricane and tropical storm days worldwide, but in 2003 that number dropped to 600.
5. True. Moving north at 60 mph, the storm came ashore in New Jersey with wind gusts exceeding 200 mph. The eye passed 55 miles east of Manhattan. In the region, 600 people died.

Readiness Check

Hard-to-remember details:

1. Can you quickly locate people in your facilities with special needs, including minors under age 17, persons with disabilities or medical needs, and non-English speakers?
2. How specifically does your insurance policy define water damage? Does the definition include damage cause by a plumbing break? Rising water? Wind-driven water? Storm surge? Many Katrina victims are litigating imprecise definitions now.
3. Do your shelter facilities include long-span roofs or unreinforced masonry walls (such as gymnasiums) that are vulnerable in high winds?
4. Do you have enough generator capacity and fuel to manage a power outage that lasts for a week or more?
5. If you have to operate from your alternate work locations for an extended period, are the suppliers you will need located in that area as well?

New From DSPN

Check these out on our website:

1. DSPN's business continuity workshops will be offered in Philadelpia, Dallas, Bellevue, and Los Angeles during 2006.
2. The Hurricane Safety Guide from USA Today is now available on our Free Resources Page.

Contributors to This Issue

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Comments and Contributions

Tell us what you think...

Thanks to all of you who have sent us comments about this mailing.

In responding to recent incidents, did you discover an interesting detail that you would like to share? If so, send it along and we'll consider it for a future issue. If you want us to print a comment or submission about your company, be sure to give us permission when you write.

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