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Recipe for disaster

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STUDY OUTLINES VULNERABILITIES IN REDMAN'S VILLAGE

by Latoya Burnham

Access for emergency vehicles, the number of vulnerable people and issues with drainage were just a few of the areas of concern found by a community profile and risk assessment done on Redman's Village.

The study, undertaken by the St. James Central District Emergency Organisation, of which Barbados TODAY obtained a copy was conducted last year in an attempt "to find practical solutions towards reducing the impact to those hazards identified".

The report stated that: "To date our dialogue and interaction with the country's emergency stakeholders and governmental agencies have led to solutions in the past and we have no doubt that residents in this village and surrounding areas will similarly benefit from short, medium and long term solutions and recommendations."

Chairman of the DEO, Selwyn Brooks told the annual general meeting of the organisation on Sunday that the report had been presented to the Department of Emergency Management "and other relevant agencies for

further investigation and action".

Redman's Village was one of two districts where relatively small studies were undertaken to provide a full profile of the vulnerabilities there – the other being Hometown/Sunset Crest, which is not yet completed.

The Redman's Village profile looked at aspects including drainage, fire prevention, medical emergencies, vulnerable people, emergency shelter capacity, hazard analysis and community response.

The drainage investigations identified wells, culverts and other locations, flood prone areas, sources of flood water and water courses as well as debris level threats to these courses.

The study sought to identify the location of fire hydrants, whether they were clearly visible and identification markers placed.

"We sought to find out when and how often these devices were flushed to ensure their effectiveness. The accessibility of fire tenders to service residents, and how knowledgeable residents were re their fire

prevention devices," the report said.

It also looked at accessibility to emergency vehicles, the knowledge of persons with regard to basic first aid; where the vulnerable persons, i.e. elderly and/or disabled individuals were located and their status, as well as the suitability of the emergency shelter before and after the impact of an event.

More importantly, an assessment was done to determine the capacity of the community to respond to any emergencies or hazards that might arise.

Brooks told Barbados TODAY: "In Redman's Village we were

able to identify a number of vulnerabilities. We found drainage issues; we found sparse number of fire hydrants. I don't want to blame anyone for that because in Barbados we develop a track, it becomes a road, it becomes a number of houses and then you get two hotels put on it, but the infrastructure was not there to begin with.

"Redman's Village has a problem with low water quality and it was worse when there was a sugar factory on top of Shop Hill... So to put a hydrant in certain parts of Redman's Village would not have been possible either because there is no infrastructure main laid," he stated.

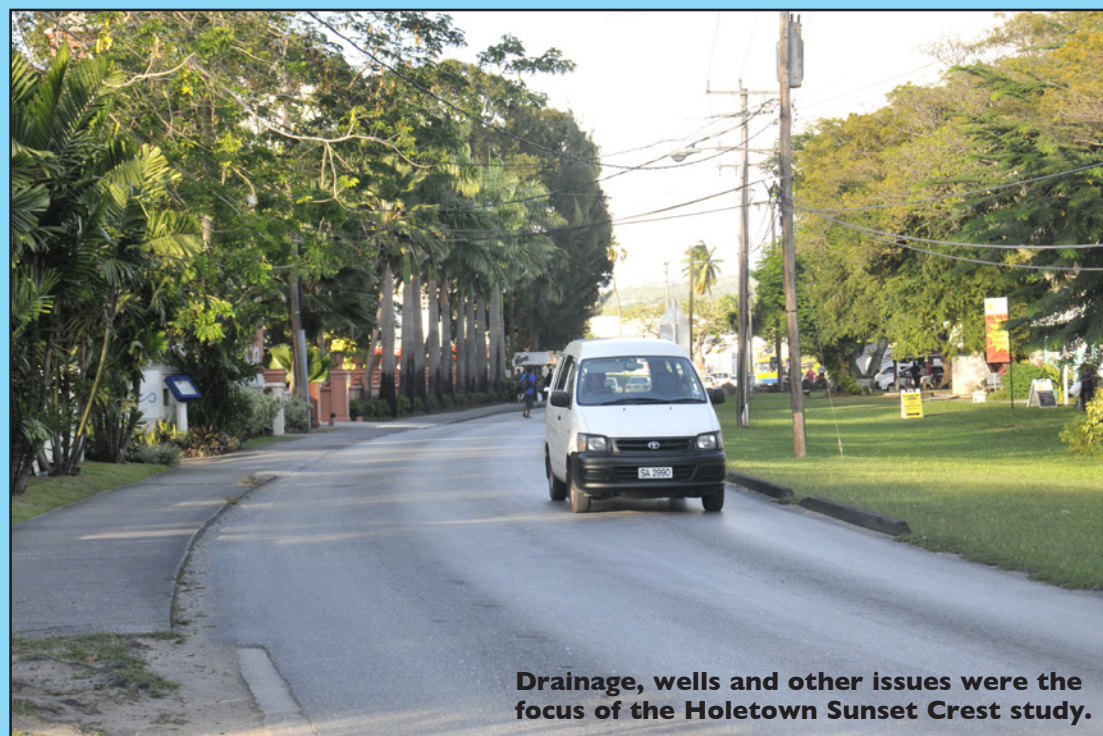
He said the Fire Service was working with them to put the necessary markers to identify the hydrants, seven according to the study, in the area.

There was also concern about roads to the district as well as their size, with only one major access point to and from Redman's, which also had implications for the ability of emergency vehicles to get in and out.

The study concluded: "[T]he St. James Central DEO is concerned with several hazards identified, and sincerely hopes that as this report is shared with the relevant authorities and agencies, a pro-active approach and a sustained effort is made to correct those concerns, some short and some long term.

"It is encouraged that residents also make a concerted effort to address these concerns, as the DEO stands ready to meet individually or collectively with residents to help reduce those challenges and to build a higher level of resilience to those hazards that may impact this community." latoyaburnham@barbadosoday.bb

This lone main access to Redman's Village was one of the areas that received lots of mention in the report.



Drainage, wells and other issues were the focus of the Hometown Sunset Crest study.



The Hometown Sunset Crest study is 80 per cent concluded.

St. James under microscope

The St. James Central District Emergency Organisation is about to undertake a massive profile and risk assessment study of a large segment of the area it covers from Batts Rock to Paynes Bay.

And chairman Selwyn Brooks says they are more than open should any other DEOs wish to use the two studies of Redman's Village and Hometown/Sunset Crest that they have already undertaken, as models for similar projects in their own communities. The latter study, he noted, was about 80 per cent completed, with them only now having to introduce a public awareness/education component to have that completed.

Brooks said what his DEO had been able to do was tap into resources at their disposal – the expertise of the respective members and other related agencies like the Drainage Unit and Coastal Zone Management Unit.

The study of Hometown/Sunset Crest, had encompassed about 342 properties, examining issues of flooding, emergency evacuation, access and education/awareness of residents and businesses.

Coming out of that study, he said they were now able to map the wells in the area and were hoping that a database could be set up to document the history of complaints with each of

the wells. This, he said, he believed could help with proper maintenance as well as with the quick identification of problem areas in times of flooding, hence emergency planning.

Meanwhile, the Redman's Village study had also given valuable information on future emergency planning, approaches that other DEOs could use as a map for studies of their own areas.

"What has this got to do with disaster management? That is the question that we are now trying to move people away from thinking just about hurricanes. If the wells are not properly cleaned, you can bet come hurricane season we will have flooding problems. So we talk with the residents to let them know it is not just the Drainage Unit responsibility alone to make sure the wells [are functioning]."

The two studies had given them an idea of what they needed to do to get more disaster/emergency ready, and the new study, Brooks said, would give them an even greater assessment of St. James Central.

"The study we are going to be doing this year is from Batts Rock to Paynes Bay. We started with Redman's Village which was a smaller space and then Sunset Crest which was also a small area because the houses are the same, the roads too, but this one now is going

to be a much bigger project because we have no map of the road system.

"There are typographical problems; the shelf, which is the 80-foot bar from the coastline and we have West Terrace, so when you have a lot of rain in West Terrace it does not take long for it to get down to Fitt's Village and Paynes Bay..."

Given that CZMU was looking at tsunami preparedness, he said they were also hoping to form a link to examine in an informal way, the sea conditions over time and get residents involved in the monitoring and planning of evacuation routes.

This was all information he believed others could use and threw the possibility out for others to feel free to contact that DEO for information on planning similar studies.

"Where we have gone and are going, no other DEO has done this yet and it is not that we are boasting but I would be glad if all DEOs could be like this. They don't have to reinvent the wheel. Come see what we have done, see if anything we have done can help you with what you are doing to help improve your communities and join with us. At the end of it, it is Barbadians you are serving," stated Brooks. (LB)



The Paynes Bay to Batts Rock stretch is the focus of the next study.



Chairman Selwyn Brooks (left) chatting with Chief Fire Officer Wilfred Marshall on Sunday.