

The Department of Emergency Management  
St. James Central District Emergency Organisation



Annual General Meeting

*Chairman's Report*

Queen's College

Sunday January 14, 2018

It is indeed a privilege to stand here to deliver another Chairman's Report. 2017 was indeed one of our most challenging years as the economic conditions and its consequences placed some obstacles in the way of some members' participation and most certainly our finances, and therefore not being able to complete some of our projections for the year.

Nevertheless, I can still report on our accomplishments.

The Damage Assessment initiatives of the DEO was revisited early in the year with the selection and training of 18 members, followed by a simulation and a number of walk throughs, to allow persons to be familiar with their ED (Enumeration District). Therefore setting the framework to ensure each ED in St. James has a Damage Assessment officer appointed and ready to respond if needed, a requirement for which the Statistical Department is seeking to fulfil.

The DEO conducted community profiles in the Crystal Heights community and along the West Coast from Batts Rock to Paynes Bay and including Prospect, Appleby, Derricks and Paynes Bay. These profiles have allowed the DEO to update our data bases on the current hazards and vulnerabilities in these communities. We are also happy to note that having shared the contents of the several issues identified from the profile, some have been addressed by the relevant authorities.

The DEO purchased six additional radios and the number of trained radio operators has increased to 17. I would hereby like to thank Wesley from the Department of Emergency Management for his

continued training efforts and our Communications Officer Hazel for her commitment and enthusiasm in ensuring that our Radio Net is conducted twice a month, ensuring that the radio team members practices their radio operating techniques.

18 members participated in the Barbados Fire Service's Fire Safety training and the correct use of the fire extinguisher held at the Barbados Fire Academy at Arch Hall. This one day training program, ably presented by Officers Straker and Austin was very timely. The DEO is now better equipped with the knowledge of the various types of extinguishers and are now better equipped to use them at their respective homes and work places.

The St. James Parish Independence Committee (PIC) again requested our assistance in their annual celebrations, especially the now popular stairs challenge at the steps from West Terrace to the Good Shepherd school playing field. The DEO provided First Aid assistance and radio communication coverage throughout the event.

The Safe use and handling of the chain saw was also completed. Fortunately we were not called out as often this year, as in the past, to cut trees overhanging or falling across the road after heavy rainfall. Nevertheless, this annual training ensures some DEO capacity when called upon.

In 2017 there was a reduction in the request to speak to schools, churches and neighbourhood watch associations; however the ones which were done were all well received.

Our responses to events relating to the 2017 hurricane season were significantly reduced in spite of the periodic heavy rainfall. There is evidence that some residents have actively responded to our community initiatives and the information found in our circulated Hurricane Preparedness and Family Plan checklists.

While Barbados was spared the devastation of hurricanes Irma and Maria, Antigua, Barbuda, Dominica, B.V.I. and Puerto Rico were not so lucky. I was deployed to Dominica following the destructive impact as part of the CDEMA response team, in collaboration with the Department of Emergency Management and the Statistical Department, primarily to assist in the Damage Assessment process. That week will remain etched in my memory, having another first hand exposure to the level of impact a devastating hurricane can unleash. Immediately on my return, my experience was shared with members pictorially and with scenario based presentations. Let us hope that we will not have to experience a level five system in our lifetime. Needless to say I know we are currently not prepared for such.

I am pleased to state that the term of office 2016-2017, 22 new members were enrolled in the DEO. I am very encouraged that our programs and community outreach have annually seen persons joining, and benefitting from the exposure to our activities. During the year in review our active membership stood at 71 persons. Over the 14 years of our existence up to December 2017, our records show that 284 persons from all walks of life joined and participated in our activities.

During the year our monthly executive and general meetings were all well attended and would have influenced the general progress and administration of our programs and activities.

I take this opportunity to thank all members for your continued support and commitment.

As we start another year of service to our community, it is my firm believe that the DEO has the varied level of competence to offer our communities acceptable levels of First Response, and stand ready to work alongside the Department of Emergency Management and other stakeholders within the island's Emergency Response Mechanism.

In keeping with our strategic plan, I hereby present a number of initiatives and proposals for our active consideration and participation.

1. The continuity of our DEO will be enhanced by increased initiatives within the DEO that allow the personal development and knowledge of our members.
2. Our Floor members' role and expectations have been altered to ensure further development and service to the association.
3. Training opportunities both local and overseas are already being investigated. Members will soon receive the training schedule for the first three months of the year.
4. We will continue to seek the provision and access to uniformity in response apparel and basic gear.
5. We are already discussing opportunities for fund raising as last year we have felt the consequences of the current economic downturn, as donations and fund raising were significantly

reduced. Such funds will facilitate the provision of equipment and gear.

6. We will soon be launching our new redesigned website and social media platform with an interactive component so as to increase our outreach capacity.
7. Our treasurer has already started to investigate possible grant funding from an international agency as recently advertised in the media.
8. We intend to double our active membership by a number of public relations initiatives and further community engagement.

### **1 ) Community**

During the last three months of 2017 we actively engaged the hospitality and real estate sectors along the west coast with our project- “Building Emergency Response Capacity”.

At the completion of this pilot project, six establishments should have written and simulated emergency plans to at least two hazards. It is anticipated that the pilot should be completed by the start of the 2018 hurricane season, once these businesses find the time and resource personnel to actively participate in the project.

### **2) Damage Assessment**

2017 saw a renewed effort to ensure Damage Assessment Officers were identified and trained, and assigned to each Enumeration District (ED) within our parish. This year we will continue this initiative and look forward to working with the Statistical Department to fill the current void.

### **3) Community Emergency Response Teams (C.E.R.T.) Program**

Every individual in our communities should be encouraged to have the knowledge of the risk and vulnerabilities and vital information they need to collectively make their communities more resilient.

Our community profile initiative will be intensified as this gives us an opportunity to periodically analyse those hazards in our communities as a result of the constant evolving topological changes and their resultant challenges. Fitts Village and Arch Hall has been identified for specific focus as a result of our assessment, and will see some emphasis placed on those two communities. A C.E.R.T. project has been identified for those two areas. It is hoped that on completion of the initial phase, significant engagement and educational and community training will assist the Emergency Resilience Capacity of these areas.

### **4) St. James Disaster Plan**

Two years ago the foot print of the St. James Disaster Plan was designed and discussed. This project was put on hold when we envisaged the amalgamation of the three St. James DEOs into one parish entity, which could have enhanced the other two struggling entities; by offering their geographical boundaries enhanced disaster capacity and response. It is now history what has stalled this proposal. We will therefore now seek to complete the St. James Disaster Plan with some expectation to be completed for a community launch by August 2018.

### **5) Establishment of an E.O.C.**

The news of the proposed redevelopment of a property at Holders Hill by a philanthropist has engaged our attention as we have previously

identified that building, ideally positioned to facilitate an E O C, not to only serve St. James, but the entire northern area. Egress and ingress advantages, its elevation and radio signal strength that easily engage our national repeaters-are among the advantages this location offers. The Department of Emergency Management has already been asked to lobby for our possible inclusion in such plans, so we can be facilitated for the establishment of our much needed Emergency Operations Center. Let us hope that this would materialise by the end of 2018.

### **6) Primary and Secondary schools program**

Both primary and secondary schools will continue to be touched within our programs this year. We have already done emergency exercises at St. Albans, Good Shepherd, Welches, Frederick Smith and St. James Primary. The schools administrations and pupils are an ever changing commodity; therefore we can't rest on the success of previous programs. This year we will be extending our reach to the Gordon Greenidge Primary so that collectively the schools within the parish can have their disaster plans simulated following a series of training and sensitisation of initiatives.

### **7) Vulnerable Persons**

The Vulnerable persons will not be left out. Our records and profiling have shown an increased need to continue to reach out and facilitate this sector of our community. Our profiles have also revealed some emergency response capacity deficiencies at our children homes and senior citizen homes which need to be addressed.



### **8) Sports Clubs Initiative**

Some years ago our sports clubs were targeted to consider their emergency response capacity and best practices to reduce sports related injuries. We will this year seek to address the ever complacent attitude that is we will deal with it when it happens, - by revisiting this initiative. This will also facilitate the involvement and practice of our medical committee.

### **9) Curriculum for primary and secondary schools**

I take this opportunity to repeat the call made some five years ago for the establishment and introduction of Disaster Management into the curriculum of our primary and secondary schools. The capacity of any country to mitigate, prepare, respond and recover from any emergency or disaster is predicated in the knowledge, skills and best practices of the persons residing within that country. Such a focused initiative has enormous potential not only to educate, train and build our capacity and resilience to cope with the noticeable increases in the magnitude of impacts, but also to provide vast employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in this wide range of services and supplies.

### **9) Membership**

This DEO was established in August 2003 with three members. August 2018 we will officially be celebrating 15 years of continuous service to the parish of St. James. During these years we have grown from strength to strength with a sound administrative base and methodology of providing our communities with reasonable levels of disaster and emergency education and response. While recognising and being

careful not to rest on our achievements, we will be seeking this year to double our active membership.

Let us review our commitment and face those challenges we will encounter during this year with a positive attitude and tenacity to succeed, as our community needs us just as much as we need them.

### **10) Finance**

The application for grant funding is currently engaging the attention of the treasurer and finance committee. Such funding if successful will be targeted to the provision of additional equipment, the establishment of the EOC and additional outreach, to build greater resilience among our communities. These finances will allow the DEO to build the level of resilience over the next seven years 2018-2025- called the 2025 vision. This initiative calls on our DEO to assist in the creation of a paradigm shift and a new community culture of disaster resilience by fostering:

- ✓ Greater responsibility for disaster risks assessment in our communities
- ✓ The need to address the varied challenges to establishing core values and resilience in our communities, including the use of the history of disaster loss and damages, so as to foster long term commitments to enhancing future responses and mitigative
- ✓ Developing and deploying tools or metrics for monitoring progress towards resilience.
- ✓ Building local community capacity so that decisions and the ultimate resilience of our communities are driven from the bottom up.

- ✓ Residents should be informed and have an understanding of the landscape of the Department of Emergency Management policies and practices, and initiatives that can help communities increase the level of resilience required.
- ✓ Residents engaging in educational and training initiatives will be better equipped with the knowledge and responsibilities required to enhance what policies and best practices the DEO recommends in the resilience capacity building programs.

### **11) 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations**

To mark the anniversary of the establishment of the St. James Central DEO which started in August 2003, the DEO proposes a number of special activities to commemorate our 15 years of service to the community.

- a) The DEO has already started discussions with a media house to produce a supplement which will feature the work of our DEO during the past 14 years of service.
- b) We will be hosting a lecture and panel discussion, where the public will have the opportunity to ask their questions not only applicable to the work of the DEO, but the entire disaster management program in the island.
- c) The DEO plans to showcase our capacity with the hosting of a simulated disaster exercise. It is likely that other DEOs and other stakeholders will participate.
- d) We will be re launching our improved and updated website shortly.

- e) It is hoped that towards the end of this year we will have an anniversary awards dinner.

The contents of the report that I have just delivered, has already been discussed at our first executive meeting this year. I am very enthusiastic that the new committee and the wider membership will do our best to fulfil these proposals. I look around the room, let me acknowledge your presence and thank all of you for attending. Some persons we have and will continue to work with you. If you are visiting us for the first time, we are hereby reaching out to you and look forward to developing the quality of cooperation and assistance required to attain those goals mutually beneficial to us all.

As I close this report the messages I leave with you are:-

- ✓ Resilience of any country is measured by its ability to prepare and plan for, respond to and recover from and successfully adapt to adverse events. Therefore knowledge and better planning is vital if we are to reduce our disaster losses.
- ✓ Businesses need to conceptualise a framework for community level resilience with private and public sector collaboration designed to increase the capacity for our vulnerable persons/communities. What is lacking is the development of a set of guidelines for private sector engagement for enhancing community disaster resilience essential for all phases of pre disaster and post disaster planning.