

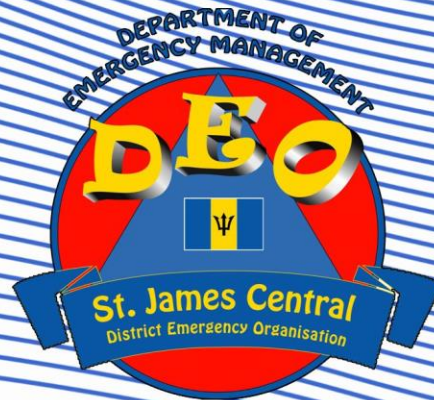
Department of Emergency Management

St. James Central

District Emergency Organisation

Annual General Meeting

January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019



Chairman's Report

Honourable Edmund Hinkson, Minister of Home Affairs, Honourable Kerrie Symmonds, Minister of Tourism and International Transport, Honourable Sandra Husbands-Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Trade, specially invited guests, fellow members of our DEO, and special greeting to members of the Disabled Council who are with us this evening attending our Annual General Meeting as we celebrate 16 years of continuous service to the varied communities in our parish, including the private and business sector.

Since 2003 I have had the distinct privilege to lead this DEO, and with the support, commitment and dedication of our members during these years, our DEO has made significant strides in the deliverance of Comprehensive Disaster Management best practices at the community level. With the increasing members enrolling over these years, our continuity planning, the building of stakeholder partnerships within our emergency network, and other entities, the DEO stands ready to continue to offer our services in the future to this parish and our island.

Last year's AGM, held at this very location and addressed by Executive Director of the Regional Security System, Captain Errington Shurland, he stated "*An effective community emergency response mechanism is the first line of defence in any country's disaster preparedness and risk reduction capacity*". These words resonated with me especially this past year, for such a philosophy has been that motivational thread that guided successive executives over the years.

A former Commonwealth Secretary General while addressing the Commonwealth Consultative group on the security of small island states- July 18 1984 also stated and I quote; -

"To my mind nothing more highlights the region's vulnerability than the threat of frequent natural disasters, such as earthquakes and hurricanes that affect the entire region causing significant loss of property and life."

Over the past decade his words have come to pass as not one Caribbean country has been spared the impact of these disasters, be they natural or

manmade. My deployment to Dominica after the passage of hurricanes Irma and Maria and the recent reports of the largest recorded number of earthquakes within a 36-hour period have all served to convince our DEO of the need for higher levels of capacity building and risk reduction among our communities island wide. The question can no longer be- Will we will be impacted, but rather when will we be impacted?

With these realities in mind, the program of the DEO for the year in review sought to continue our capacity building, as we recognise that climate change will influence those natural hazards likely to impact us, in unprecedented ways. This capacity building and community engagement, included: -

a) Continuous training for our members in related disciplines.

Safe use of the Chainsaw	Communications
First Aid and Medical Response	Fire Suppression and safety
Shelter Management	Damage Assessment

The capacity coming out of the training was tested in a simulation exercise, which highlighted our strengths, as well as some areas which we need to improve in.

b) Community outreach

Highlights of our community outreach included a Public Meeting on July 8<sup>th</sup> at this school hall where presenters from the DEO, the DEM, Coastal Zone Management and Co-Operators General Insurance, shared pertinent information from their respective entities, and gave the large audience an opportunity to have answers to wide field of questions which they raised, At the completion of the meeting the audience expressed the view that it was time well spent.

Other outreach initiatives were: -

- A First Aid presentation and CPR demonstration at the Salvation Army headquarters in Reed Street.
- Earthquake evacuation presentation at Deacons Primary School
- A presentation on emergency preparedness procedures to members of the Holy Innocents Church, St. Thomas
- A presentation to the Principal, teachers and staff of the Frederick Smith Secondary School on Teachers Professional Day on aspects of the school's emergency plan.
- We conducted a training session on Safe Use of the Chainsaw for the St. Lucy, St. Michael South East and the Christ Church East Central District Emergency Organisations.
- We had discussions with the principals of Good Shepherd and Welches Primary schools on the schools' evacuation procedures for those hazards likely to impact the school.
- We continued our annual community profiling, this time from Batts Rocks to Paynes Bay, which would have highlighted some gaps for which we will be seeking to address this year.
- We had discussions with the Barbados Council for the Disabled to seek to find other opportunities where we can be of assistance to its members.
- We established an amended version of the American Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program, and sought to introduce it as a pilot project in the Arch Hall and Fitts Village districts. The community response to this initiative was good, but the fees associated with the then affiliated stakeholders, put the cost of the program out of our reach.

- The DEO was also able to spearhead the re-activation of the Christ Church East Central DEO, which had been dormant for many years. This DEO now meets on a regular basis with a membership of over 20 members.
- The proposed Building Emergency Response Capacity pilot project was affected by not having access to the required funds to build a platform required to execute the project. While representatives from 8 business houses showed interest by attending a meeting to discuss the project, the experience and partnerships established has served the DEO in good stead, as this project in an altered format, presentation and engagement will be one of the major initiatives for this year.
- We were asked to cut and remove a tree which fell on a house in Spring Farm, St. Thomas, as a result of high winds. Luckily no one was injured and residents in that community expressed their gratitude for the assistance rendered.

2018 in review, amidst the success was not spared the economic challenges the country is facing, as sponsorship and fund raising was significantly reduced. This however did not daunt the spirits or the attitude of our members to continue to give of their best to ensure that we fulfil our mission statement, that is – to be the most effective community organisation in disaster preparedness and response.”

With this vision ever before us, on behalf of the executive committee, I hereby present our proposals for this year 2019.

## **1. Senior Citizens Homes**

It is a fact that Barbadians are living longer and changes in the family structures of yester year are seeing the necessary establishment of senior citizens homes. Several of these facilities were not built or designed to house occupants with varied challenges. While I have no reason to suggest that these facilities are not registered under the guidelines and laws regulating such agencies, we would like to see some improvement in the manner these facilities are managed, by greater acceptance to emergency planning best practices and procedures and related training of staff and provision of safety equipment to offer some response in case of an emergency.

The DEO will be engaging these homes located in our area to see how we can offer some assistance.

## **2. Crisis Communication project for the west coast**

The combination of large properties, hotels and other services along the west coast makes it very necessary to have a crisis communication plan in place to serve those independent property requirements as well as all-inclusiveness along that area, should this area be impacted.

The DEO has entered in to discussions with a major property on the west coast to host such a project, to their advantage, while seeking to benefit other properties on the coast. Some equipment has already been obtained. Training will be offered. Licences will be required and other properties will be encouraged to register within the system and purchase their own equipment and meet other associated cost to make the project a reality. It is anticipated that radio coverage and other security challenges will be enhanced while allowing access to our National Communication network, and the hotel industry E.O.C. when activated. This initiative is a critical part of any emergency plan and we sincerely hope that we can sensitize all involved of its importance and benefits.

### **3. Damage Assessment Capacity Building**

Correspondence have already been sent to the Statistical Department on an initiative to ensure the Damage Assessment portfolio for the St. James Parish is enhanced. with the staging of a training and simulation exercise for all Damage Assessment Officers assigned to parish of St. James regardless of being DEO members. It is expected on completion of this exercise, all DAO would also be in possession of their respective ED maps, ID cards and PPE and should be familiar with their respective Enumeration Districts.

### **4. Disaster Management and the Church Assistance**

40 churches within the parish of St. James have already been invited to a stakeholders meeting on Saturday February 9<sup>th</sup> at the St. John the Baptist Church, to discuss ways in which the church can partner with us as we roll out certain aspects of our community risk reduction initiatives as well as to focus on our existing vulnerable persons program. We also will be seeking to establish health guilds where not already established, Similar to that established at the St. Thomas Parish Church. Some churches have already responding favourably to this initiative by indicating their intention to attend and participate in the discussion.

### **5. Tree Trimming Project**

Our community profile has identified several areas where trees are towering near utility lines, some posing danger to property and some reducing the spread of light from street lighting. All these categories pose some danger to property, life and security. Light and Power will be informed, residents will be alerted and the elderly and vulnerable persons will be assisted by the DEO. We will be seeking business houses sponsorship, should hoist equipment be required to facilitate safe cutting of selected trees and their disposal.

## **6. S. E.O.C. Development**

The DEO will continue to lobby for the inclusion of our SEOC within the proposed redevelopment of the old St. John the Baptist School, as plans have been developed for that facility to house an early education nursery school. The location is ideal for ingress and egress to the northern section of the island as well as radio coverage and repeater accessibility, and is a safe elevation from likely coastal impact, to mention a few advantages.

## **7. School engagement**

Plans are already in train to continue to engage all of our schools in the parish. The usual evacuation exercises will be extended to West Terrace and Gordon Greenidge Primary, as well as a school quiz for all primary schools focusing on Emergency Disaster Management. We have also had preliminary discussions with Major Greene of the Frederick Smith Secondary School, to continue to sensitize staff and pupils and the possible additional shelter in place concept. We have also requested to meet the principal and staff of Queen's College to identify gaps and possible updates where necessary, for over the years we have been able to assist them in the establishment of their schools' plans.

## **8. CERT Project**

Last year we conceptualize this project, had all the information prepared, sought stakeholder partnership and promotional information. The cost of production and implementation and lack of sponsorship, forced us to put this on hold. We were then seeking sponsorship for this project from the Japan's Grant Assistance for Grass Roots Project. This year additional partners will be targeted to ensure a successful implementation.



## **9. West Coast Emergency Planning Project**

The DEO recognises the significant contribution the hotels, large properties and other business houses make to the economic stability of our country, especially at this time of our country's development. We have heard reports on the devastation similar properties faced during the recent impacts from hurricanes and other hazards.

What if Barbados was similarly impacted, what is the capacity of those properties along the west coast, to respond and to be back up within the shortest possible time, so as to maintain our competitiveness with our other Caribbean entities.

Some 140 properties have been circulated with our emergency planning survey, and are asked to return them by January 25<sup>th</sup>, so as to have some knowledge of their status of preparedness and response. We have already received some forms and we are beginning to note the severity of the challenges that exist. In February we will be analysing the results and will use the data to engage our stakeholders and partners to convene seminars and workshops, simulations and consultancy services, so as to create where not existing and enhance where knowledge and response gaps exist, all with the hope to enhance the disaster risk reduction capacity to those hazards we can expect to come a calling some day in the not too distant future.

The fact that climate change and its resultant consequences are likely to impact us more severely, we can't allow current levels of complacency to be the norm. Our non-conforming attitude needs to drastically change by ensuring we conduct the required risk reduction exercises and business impact analyses, that will allow our business continuity protocols to be suitably patterned to ensure we can continue to provide the current level of service within a relatively short time frame if we are impacted.

We have already begun to engage a number of professionals and emergency service practitioners to fulfil the expectations of this project which it is highly anticipated to benefit the properties along our platinum coast.

#### **10. Barbados Council for the Disabled proposals.**

Having worked and interacted with the Council for the Disabled and its affiliated members, and hearing some of their challenges, we decided this year's activity will be 3 pronged.

- a) The disabled community is currently of the view that accessibility to the information of the CAP system does not allow for appropriate response and meeting their functional needs.
- b) The members of the council are concerned that when accessing emergency services, the response can be improved if additional information can be made available by the service providers – the caller ID feature.
- c) The council on hearing of the St. James Central vulnerable persons program, are desirous of being included and more involved. They have expressed the view that the program should be introduced to all DEOs for their consideration and implementation, so that their members can all benefit island wide.

Following a meeting with the president and the administrative officer of the council, our DEO will be seeking to offer continued support and assistance to see how these matters can be addressed to the benefit of the council and its members.

## **11. Website redevelopment and face book enhancement**

The DEO is pleased to state that our Face book and website pages have been enhance and is monthly updated or when necessary during the month. The comments to our email and WhatsApp platforms have complimented these platforms. An interactive feature has been created to be used especially during the hurricane season where a 24-hour response can be facilitated during or after impact., once the infrastructure is up and running.

## **12. Finance**

2018 was most certainly one of several finance challenges, as the country has been seeking to grapple with our economic challenges. The lay off and reduction in financial capacity has also affected our DEO as in the case of most voluntary organisations.

While we were able to raise some funds due to our punch cards and donations, our members have remained resolute to ensure we can this year meet our expected revenues to cover our activities.

We are again appealing to the DEM as we have done every year in the past, to help us to fund our programs, and will be seeking their support and approval in a number of requests to potential donors and philanthropist, as Barbadians have pledged their support to several causes over the years.

If our DEO can seek assistance and support from the DEM, for a major fund-raising activity, so that funds can be made available. We have certainly demonstrated our capacity to deserve such with proven programs and activities for community risk reduction within our areas of responsibility.

We can no longer be left alone to try to acquire funding for our programs. St. James Central is willing to enter into discussion with the DEM on furthering this call and how DEM can help us to obtain 1) Grant funding from regional or international agencies, 2) Lobby the government and philanthropists for access to funds.

In conclusion, it is our view that the country's community emergency response mechanism can be the DEO's capacity to offer first line of defence, response and risk reduction if impacted. However, the DEM must demonstrate further commitments to ensure that we can seek to meet such objectives by funding and training of our members. To my mind this is a serious gap that has grown wider over the past years.

The St. James Central DEO will continue to support the DEM and to work along the National Response agencies, our partners and stakeholders. World Wide organisations are all saying, climate change will over the next ten years unleash the severity of impacts not experienced before and the vulnerability of our island to such hazard impacts will demand greater levels of engagement, response and capacity building. The citizens must now be willing to participate more meaningfully and St. James Central have committed ourselves to be part of this paradigm shift needed to:

1. Build greater levels of risk reduction at the community level
2. Seek to enhance residents' knowledge of those best practices to mitigate and prepared for their respective environments.
3. Improve response capacity with the potential towards reducing recovery challenges.
4. To ensure the quality of life is preserved by trying to shape and craft that much needed safety culture vital to our existence.

Selwyn Brooks  
Chairman  
Department of Emergency Management  
St. James Central DEO