



# B U L L E T I N

May 23, 2002

*Asociación Dominicana de Mitigación de Desastres*

The Dominican Disaster Mitigation Association (ADMD) invites you to visit our Home Page:

<http://desastre.org>

Write to us at:

[desastre@desastre.org](mailto:desastre@desastre.org)

to receive our Bulletin by e-mail.

The ADMD, originally sponsored by the Caribbean Disaster Mitigation Project (OAS/USAID), is a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) dedicated to reducing the vulnerability to natural phenomenon faced by communities, organizations and businesses in the Dominican Republic. Please find the enclosed **Bulletin**, No. 23, as of May 31, which updates recent activities:

**PROJECT IMPACT by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):** The Haina Business and Industry Association, with the collaboration of REFIDOMSA, is implementing a training program to prepare association and industry representatives to fulfill their duties as members of the Incident Command Center in order to implement the Contingency Plan developed with the ADMD's technical assistance during the implementation of FEMA's Project Impact in Haina. Also, Grupo M in Santiago has evaluated the HEMP Process methodology and Haina's Contingency Plan and is integrating them into their Contingency Plan with the ADMD's assistance.

**OFDA/USAID/ADMD Disaster Mitigation for Communities in High Risk Areas of the Dominican Republic via Technical Assistance for Community Disaster Mitigation Committees.** On September 1, 2001 a twelve month follow on ADMD/IRG/USAID/OFDA project began. A total of 15 communities were selected from the Barahona and San Pedro de Macoris Provinces in order to further develop the roles and responsibilities of the Community Disaster Mitigation Committee members and to teach them practical mitigative measures which can be used to strengthen homes against hurricanes and earthquakes. The first round of training is complete and the drills to implement the Community Emergency Plans have been held in 14 of the 15 communities. During April, the Retrofit and Connect to Protect Workshop was given to community representatives to initiate the roofing retrofit activities in each community. In addition, the proposals and budgets for eight community structures to be retrofitted (7 in the San Pedro de Macoris Province and 1 in the Barahona Province) in order to serve as shelters and warehouses in the event of a disaster. In May, three of the projects were initiated and the housing retrofit training was given in the majority of the communities with enthusiastic participation. For more information, contact Ms. Herridge, ADMD Coordinator.

**Vulnerability Analysis for Natural Disasters of the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) Project Portfolio in the Dominican Republic.** As of February 2001, the ADMD has completed two (out of a total of three phases scheduled) sets of visits to evaluate the potential exposure of 12 NGO's and their beneficiary communities in the Dominican Republic to damage and loss in the event of a disaster in order to recommend feasible mitigative measures. In particular, due to the number of micro-enterprise credit programs, there is interest in protecting said programs against failure in the event of a disaster, due to the economic significance of these activities.

**Technical Assistance for World Vision Offices in the Dominican Republic to facilitate the preparation and implementation of community based and institutional contingency plans.** Since inception, the ADMD has conducted community orientation activities and several small infrastructure projects to reduce vulnerability to natural phenomenon with World Vision. Now, the



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ADMD is accompanying their efforts to develop and implement an action plan to achieve the goals established regarding fully operational contingency plans.

**Organization of American States (OAS) Best Practices Matrix Analysis for the Caribbean Region regarding Risk Identification, Reduction and Transfer.** The ADMD participated in the collection and analysis of data from the Dominican Republic for this study, in communication with experts from the finance, insurance, NGO, government and private sectors. As a result of the information obtained, available on the internet:

<http://www.oas.org/cdmp/riskmatrix/>

the ADMD, concerned by the probable damage and loss expected with pending earthquakes, has initiated an awareness campaign to motivate the government and private sector to seek a feasible solution to the social and economic crisis which will arise regarding real estate, impacting upon the nation's economy. There is no legal requirement for insurance for real estate, much less for multiple occupant buildings (such as housing or office towers, for example), for which a conservative estimate is that 30% will be significantly affected. An estimated 80% of annual construction is informal, according to the article published by CODIA's President in the most recent edition of CONSTRUExPO magazine in March, 2002, page 22. In said article he explains that "Unawareness, the willingness to violate the laws cited, the time one must wait for projects to be approved by the respective institutions charged with authorizations, among other elements, contribute to the increase in illegal works, which oftentimes is accompanied by the illegal practice of engineering, architecture and related professions."

One should not assume that the majority of owners, investors or tenants will have access to savings sufficient for an emergency of this magnitude. In fact, many assume they are protected by the "Fuerza Mayor" clause in their loan contract, in the event of a natural disaster. However, this clause only protects the financial institution for the remaining balance of the loan. Nor is there an abundance of cases of owner/tenant agreements regarding the repair or reconstruction of the building if serious damage occurs. To further complicate the situation, it is reasonable to foresee an accelerated and exaggerated rise in the price of surviving structures, combined with an insufficient availability, which means that a significant proportion of the residential and commercial population would literally be homeless and without the means to claim the value of their uninsured investment in said real estate. Nor would they have access to a formal mechanism that could resolve the crisis. In fact, a similar situation could arise of even greater impact regarding infrastructure built by the government and, as yet, uninsured, upon which the sustainable development of the Dominican Republic relies. For example, the sewage systems in Armenia, Colombia, were out of service during four months after the earthquake – imagine the implications regarding sanitary conditions for a city such as Santo Domingo or Santiago de los Caballeros, given a similar scenario.

Another point is that both the wind and the seismic protocols of the construction code have been in effect since 1979. The wind code was recently updated by the OAS through GE2/Intec and will be integrated into the new general building code, financed by an international loan. Nevertheless, time limitations as well as the methodology could impact on the effectiveness of the product. On the other hand, the consideration of such important elements as materials testing (cement, cinder blocks etc.) and structures (columns, beams, and walls) has been left out. Nor will they include in the new code key building methodologies, such as prefabrication (on the rise in the DR since more than ten years ago), which is used for parking garages, shopping malls and other buildings. It is crucial to note that, in spite of all the benefits of prefabricated construction, **if the structural elements such as columns, beams, and walls are not adequately connected, the resulting structure could be unstable in the event of an earthquake or hurricane.** If we combine these factors with the lack of supervision of construction on behalf of the authorities, the results could



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be catastrophic with the loss of thousands of lives and the retardation of the nation's economic development for decades. For this reason, the ADMD, together with SODOSISMICA; and international and national engineering and insurance consultants; recommend that financial and insurance institutions require private technical supervision for important structures in order to guarantee compliance with the building code and the capacity to withstand the awaited hurricanes and earthquakes. If you would like to collaborate with the awareness campaign and participate in the generation of feasible alternatives to the problems described, contact Ms. Herridge, ADMD Coordinator, at (809) 508-2596 and 533-8024.

**Workshop for the Santo Domingo Hotel Association regarding Contingency Planning for Hurricane Season.** On Saturday May 11<sup>th</sup>, the ADMD, together with Gutiérrez, Almonte y Asociados, gave this workshop to 32 capital area hotel representatives emphasizing the necessary preparations to guarantee operational and service capacity, in addition to holding a table-top exercise to simulate the passage of a hurricane over Santo Domingo to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Contingency Plans and areas for improvement to be ready for the current hurricane season.

According to the report by the internationally renowned expert, Dr. William Gray from Colorado University, the Caribbean is in – since 1995 – and will continue to be, until at least 2025, a cycle of very active hurricane seasons (with up to 8 or 9 hurricanes, of which 4 or 5 could be strong), due to a rise in temperature of 0.4 to 0.6 degrees Celsius in the North Atlantic Ocean. Thus those in the Caribbean should be alert this season and during those to come, since the cycle lasts between 25 and 50 years. For more information see the website:

<http://typhoon.atmos.colostate.edu/forecasts/2002/fcst2002/>

## RECENT ACTIVITIES AND INFORMATION:

The ADMD has published an article (in English): "The Necessity of a Long-Term, Multisectoral Perspective for Success in Disaster Mitigation" in the EMGT232 Disaster Newsletter available on behalf of the Crisis and Emergency Management Program at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C., on their website:

<http://www.seas.gwu.edu/~emse232/emse232apr>

which has been well received.

In March, the CONSTRUExPO magazine published an ADMD article titled: "How to Mitigate Damage and Loss When Building, in the Event of a Disaster" which can be sent to those interested by e-mail. Send your request to:

[desastre@desastre.org](mailto:desastre@desastre.org)

addressed to Ms. Herridge.

The ADMD continues a steady rhythm of orientational presentations regarding natural hazards and disaster mitigation to businesses, organizations, schools, and communities, as well as interviews for radio and television to promote information and recommendations. This period a total of 6 interviews for television (a total of 200 minutes) and 2 for radio (25 minutes) were given. We would like to thank the following programs: Arbitraje, Channel 35; Hora de Té, Channel 23; De Color, Channel 25/69; Tu Ciudad, Channels 11 and 21; Matutino de Teo Veras, La 91 FM; and Mr. Yaqui Núñez's Program, Supra FM for their generous and enthusiastic support. In addition, 15 presentations have been given to a total of 753 teachers, students, businessmen,



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employees, and community members in Santo Domingo, Uvero Alto, San Pedro de Macorís, and Barahona. Don't hesitate to contact us to coordinate a presentation, by calling: 508-2596 and 533-8024.

## **ADMD COURSES, TRAINING AND CONSULTING:**

The ADMD provides consulting and technical assistance in addition to offering a wide variety of courses for technicians and professionals from the private and NGO sectors given that each department should be able to create and implement plans, procedures and skills which will permit the operations to continue in spite of the occurrence of natural phenomenon.

Remember that conditions (structural, financial and operational) vary from one company or organization to another and that the capacity to remain viable and competitive depends upon the precautions taken in advance to prevent the interruption of production, service, damage and loss. These precautions also apply to suppliers and clients. Contact us at 508-2596 and 533-8024 to coordinate a meeting to establish a proactive vulnerability reduction action plan.