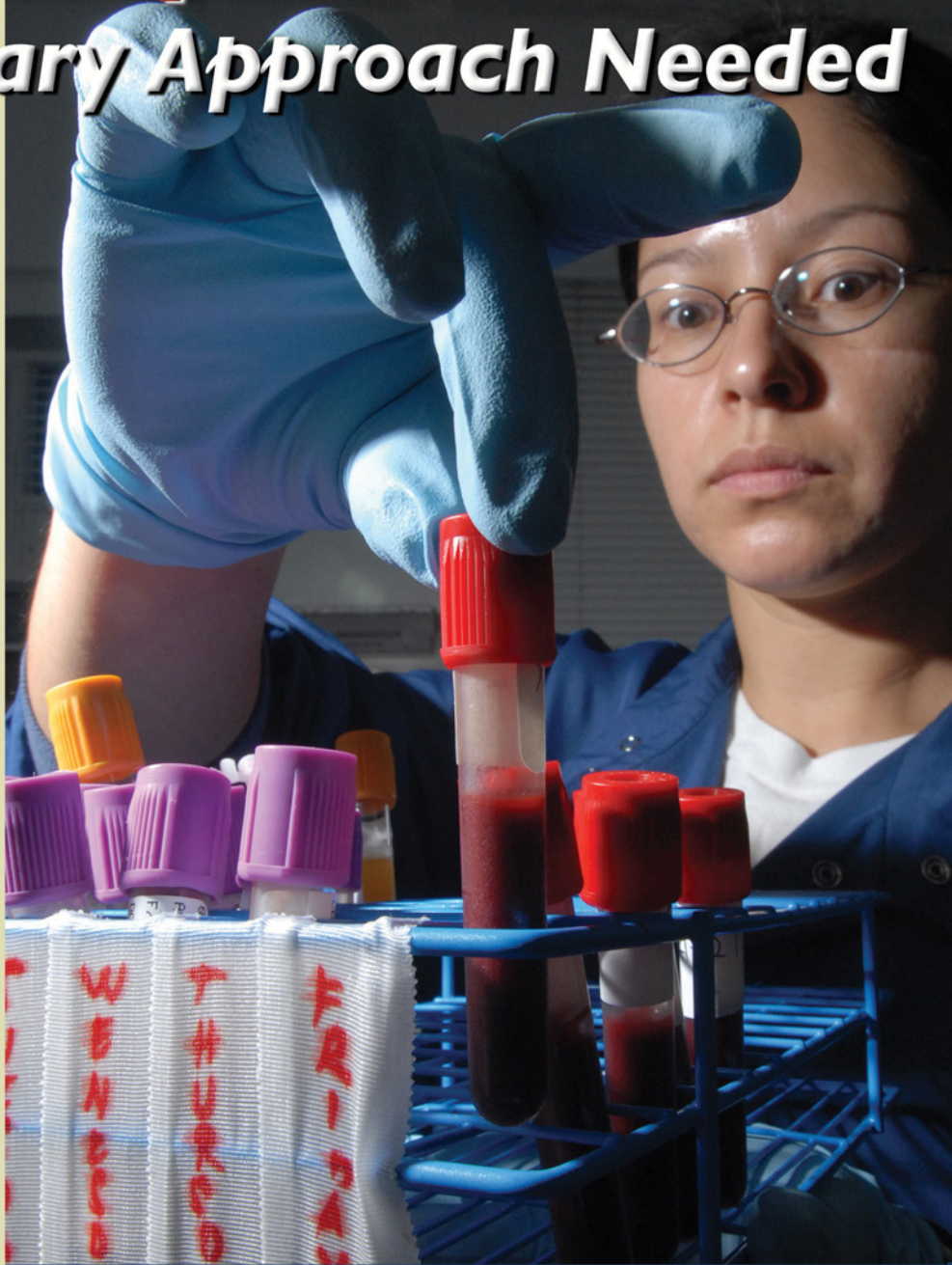




# In Search of a Solution

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## Business and Personal Preparedness – The Key to Collective Survival

By Adam Montella, Health Systems



With the increasing severity and occurrence of natural and manmade disasters during the last two decades, the microscope of public scrutiny has turned to some unlikely suspects – private industry and individual citizens. The California wildfires, Hurricane Katrina, and the 9/11 terrorist attacks are prime examples of just how damaging a single catastrophic event can be when stakeholders do not adequately prepare.

Aside from their obvious direct effect on the lives and property of individuals, these disasters dramatically affected business operations in the regions involved. Many companies were forced to put their business-continuity plans and IT disaster-recovery infrastructures into action. Unfortunately, many more found that the lack of a plan and, in some cases, the non-availability of enough capable employees, turned an already difficult task into an insurmountable challenge.

In today's "just-in-time-delivery" supply-chain environment, basic goods are no longer warehoused awaiting orders. As a result of this major change in the way that most American businesses operate, this efficient but fragile system failed in the immediate aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks when critical supplies such as milk and toilet paper were unavailable in many parts of the Northeast. After Hurricane Katrina, to cite a somewhat later and more specific example, automobile manufacturers in Detroit were unable to resume production because a number of the small businesses that produced many of the air-conditioning vents for the industry were destroyed.

For many businesses, the situation appeared to be hopeless. However, in

what seems to be a hopeless situation, the presence of a detailed business-continuity plan can create hope. Having a disaster-recovery plan for people and critical information assets could make the difference, in fact, between an organization's survival and its demise.

### A Workshop Series For Small Businesses

Today, either out of compliance or necessity, an ever-increasing number of the nation's large businesses have plans in place to deal with disaster. However, the continuity of small business operations is often overlooked, despite the fact that small businesses collectively account for most employment and more than half the production of goods and services in the United States. To address this problem, the Homeland Security & Defense Business Council has been hosting a series of national workshops in local communities to equip small and medium-sized businesses with "Critical Success Factors for Business Survival" in the event of a man-made or natural disaster in their home communities. These workshops are designed to educate the owners and operators of small businesses, and other local leaders, of inexpensive ways that they can partner with one another and be better prepared to carry out their responsibilities as business owners and responsible members of the community.

The first of these workshops – titled "Partners in Preparedness Symposium" – was held on 27 September 2007 in observance of National Preparedness Month. Nearly 400 people were in attendance. The American Red Cross of the National Capital Area and the Homeland Security & Defense Business Council hosted the interactive discussion to help businesses within the National

Capitol Region prepare to meet 21st-century risks such as natural disasters and terrorist attacks. The event was co-sponsored by council members Bearing Point, Deloitte, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, and Previsstar.

Speakers at the symposium included former Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating, president and CEO of the American Council of Life Insurers; Greg Pellegrino, chairman of the Homeland Security & Defense Business Council and global managing director, Public Sector, of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu; Darrell Darnell, director of the District of Columbia's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency; James C. Dinegar, president and CEO of the Greater Washington Board of Trade; and Linda C. Mathes, CEO of the American Red Cross of the National Capital Area.

Governor Keating, who was in office during the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, is a key partner to the Red Cross and one of the nation's strongest voices in preparing communities for both man-made attacks and natural disasters. The 9/11 attacks and Hurricane Katrina "taught us that bad things will happen," he said. "They also taught us that the public will be unforgiving if we are not prepared."

The symposium led the preparedness efforts down a different and less publicized course: "Preparing Your Business to Survive the Unexpected." To help ensure that businesses are in fact better prepared, the workshop participants were given "Preparedness Toolkits," specially designed for small to medium-sized businesses, compliments of BearingPoint.

At the same event, the Homeland Security & Defense Business Council released *Corporate Responsibility: Why Businesses Should Be Prepared in a World of Uncertainty* – the first in a series of planned "thought leadership" publications that call on large and small

businesses throughout the nation to act to secure the economic engine that all Americans depend upon.

## **People Must Always Be the First Priority**

Many small and medium-sized companies, of course, cannot afford full-time business-continuity or emergency-management personnel. In today's economy, businesses both large and small are being forced to do more with less. The tools created for the symposium help to identify some cost-effective steps in creating the necessary plans. Additional tools – e.g., Previstar's Continual Preparedness System (CPS) – provide a cost-effective means of using technology to serve as a force multiplier.

Last year, the American Red Cross responded to 75,000 disasters nationwide ranging from house fires to local floods to life-altering tornadoes and hurricanes. However, a National Preparedness Month survey conducted by the ARC discovered that only seven percent of Americans have taken the steps necessary to prepare for such disasters. That is obviously not enough, as Darnell pointed out to the 27 September workshop attendees: "Preparedness is everyone's business," he emphasized. "Government can't do it alone. Business, government, citizens, and our partners such as the Red Cross, in the non-profit and volunteer community, must all work together to ensure that all segments of our community are prepared for emergencies of all types."

To address the various ways to meet personal-preparedness needs, the American Red Cross of the National Capitol Area and the Fairfax County [Va.] Chamber of Commerce Women's Business Council presented a second symposium – "Power of Preparedness" – on November 27. That session, supported by Previstar, was attended by some 45 women business leaders in Fairfax County and focused

on ways to help participants better understand the impact of the individual's role in businesses preparedness within the community.

Setting the tone for the event was a presentation by Governor Keating's wife, Cathy Keating, former First Lady of the State of Oklahoma. She spoke of her personal experiences on the day of the Oklahoma City bombing, her role and perspective as a parent and community member, and her desire to make Fairfax County and the National Capital Area (her new home) the most prepared and responsive in the country.

What made the Fairfax seminar unique was its focus on the individual and the cascading implications between personal preparedness and community businesses. The seminar also drove home the fact that disasters affect people – first and foremost – and emphasized that numerous interdependent relationships exist between local businesses and the people not only living in the communities those businesses serve but also, many of them, employed by the same businesses. If people do not feel safe, and/or if their families and property

are affected by a disaster, they will not be available to assist their employers in recovering from the disaster.

Regardless of whether the reference is to the individual, to a small, medium, or large business, or to a church, school, or government agency, the important thing is to take action. There is a lot of talk – especially *after* a disaster – about being prepared. But being prepared is not a one-step process, and does not have to be done all at once. Taking even small steps puts an individual citizen, and/or a business, on the right track. But that also is not enough – one must keep moving. As the humorist and philosopher Will Rogers once said, "We may be on the right track, but unless we keep moving, we can still be run over."

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## Domestic Preparedness

NATION'S LEADERS ~ One on One

### Thomas J. Lockwood, Senior Advisor DHS Office of Screening Coordination



Mr. Lockwood's views of how the Department of Homeland Security is designing and implementing a common, flexible, and versatile credentialing framework that can be used in a broad spectrum of HLS and incident-management situations.

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