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# Be prepared

## Join the chamber's disaster preparedness committee

**Anyone who was a Boy Scout remembers the slogan, BE PREPARED.** What it taught us was to think of what might happen and plan for that event if it took place. Most likely, it never would, but by planning for an eventuality one would BE PREPARED.

**W**e heard many people blaming others for the possibly slow response to help victims and communities affected by hurricane Katrina. What is not surprising is that so many people can give great advice after the event. As they say, it is very easy to be a Monday morning quarterback.

The truth is that when one does not have all of the information, it is extremely easy to say that this or that should have been done. There can also be very good reasons why what one thinks should have been done, was not. What everyone can say regarding hurricane KATRINA, is that many, many people were informed, at least three to four days before the hurricane hit the Gulf Coast, that it was headed that way and that it would cause incredible damage. Take note, the forecasters were not saying it would PROBABLY cause, but that it WOULD cause damage.

In other words people and organizations were warned as to what Katrina would do—but were not prepared. This reminded me of what our scoutmaster used to tell us before going on a hike or a campout, "be prepared for whatever unexpected event might take place and

how it might affect us or you."

About two days before the hurricane actually hit the Gulf States, I played a game with some friends having them list what they would pack to prepare themselves to ride out a storm in case they were caught in it. My list included such things as, a flashlight (small but powerful), a small portable radio, extra batteries, a small mirror, a set of dry clothes (put into a water proof package), water purification tablets, a small portable stove with the heating tablets or small gas canisters, at least two lighters, some candy bars, containers of potable water, aspirin, prescription medication, a card indicating who to inform in case something happened to me, packages of dehydrated soup, a pocket knife and bandages.

I am sure the readers of this editorial can come up with other or perhaps, better items to pack, because the fact is that we have the time to think about it and can begin to do something about it, to BE PREPARED.

As many of you know, during our AACCLA event this year in Bogotá, our AmCham signed an agreement to develop a Disaster Preparedness and Relief Committee with the Pan Ameri-

can Development Foundation (FUPAD as it is called in Colombia), to help identify possible disasters that could affect the communities in which we live and work, and develop a plan to respond to such events.

Thanks to this committee, we can all BE PREPARED. If your company is not involved at this time in this committee, I strongly urge you to get involved, especially after the lesson many learned from KATRINA. By your joining the committee, you and the community where you live and work will BE BETTER PREPARED. In addition to preparing for the immediate effects of a potential disaster, you and your company and the community in which you operate will be in a better position to handle the longer-term problems created by the initial event.

FOR INFORMATION ON HOW YOU AND YOUR COMPANY CAN BECOME AN ACTIVE PLAYER IN THE CHAMBER'S "DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND RELIEF COMMITTEE," PLEASE CONTACT MONICA MORALES HERE AT THE CHAMBER AT [comites@amchamcolombia.com.co](mailto:comites@amchamcolombia.com.co) OR CALL HER AT 623-7088. ■

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