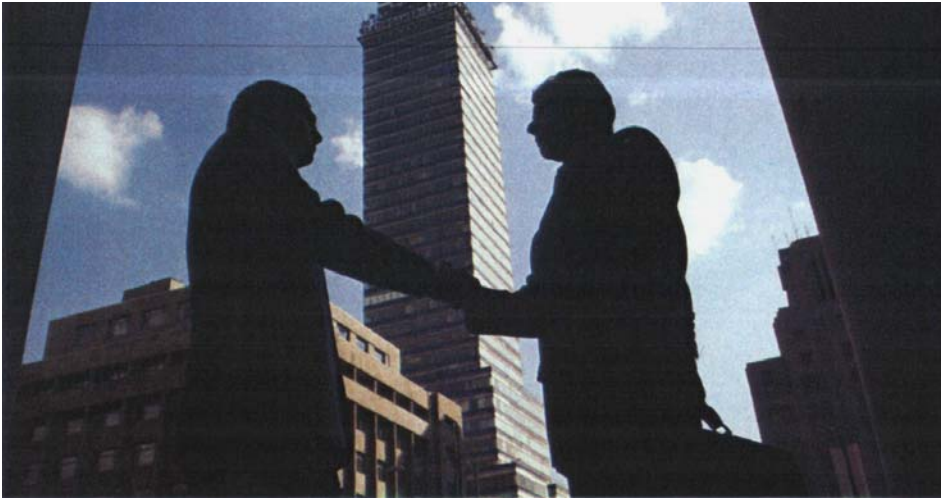


GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS: A NEW MODEL FOR PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS



In 2005, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina illustrated the importance of public and private sectors working together to protect the nation from catastrophic events.

Most businesses understand the need to help maintain continuity of their communities to ensure their own business continuity. However, while companies have responded generously in the face of disaster, business-government collaboration has too often been chaotic — with little or no advanced planning, training or exercising.

Business Executives for National Security (BENS) is one organization working toward improving public-private collaboration. Based in Washington, DC, the non-partisan, non-profit organization is comprised of more than 500 business executives nationwide, with a 25-year history of applying successful business practices to improve the nation's security.

In 2002, BENS created a model for regional homeland security partnerships between business and government. Its Business Force model is designed to help mobilize and organize the resources and expertise of the business community, in advance of disaster, to improve security capability in states or regions where it is most needed. From the first Business Force partnership in New Jersey, BENS went on to facilitate partnerships in Georgia, Kansas City, San Francisco Bay Area and LA/Orange Counties in California, and in the State of Iowa, with three new partnership regions slated for development in 2007. Business and government use these partnerships to better prepare for all hazards, whether terrorist attack, flu pandemic or natural disaster.

In January 2007, a BENS chartered task force of top American executives issued recommendations on better integrating business resources and capabilities with those of governments' disaster response plans. The report, *Getting Down to Business: An Action Plan for Public-Private Disaster Response Coordination*,² used lessons-learned from Hurricane Katrina and other disasters to highlight

recommendations in three broad categories: a) public-private collaboration at the state and local level before and during emergencies, including business representation in state emergency operations centers; b) public-private resource coordination, supply chains and surge capacity, and; c) regulatory and legal impediments to government-business collaboration in disaster response.

At a recent Emergency Information Infrastructure Partnership (EIIIP) virtual forum, two BENS staffers discussed how their organization is working to help build and strengthen these partnerships. One project involves building on the success of the existing Emergency Management Assistance Compact — a mutual-aid agreement among all states that provides a system for sharing government material and staff resources between disaster affected and non-affected states.

The National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) Private Sector Committee and EMAC asked BENS to help assess the feasibility of integrating business resources into the existing EMAC policies and procedures, thereby making private sector personnel and resources available through EMAC systems as express “agents of the state.” The creation of a Business EMAC, or BEMAC could enhance states' abilities to support one another with private, as well as public resources. A BENS-facilitated working group comprised of business and government representatives is working on specific recommendations and an implementation plan that is acceptable to NEMA in time for the 2007 hurricane season.

For further information, visit www.bens.org or e-mail benslabens.org.