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## Helpful Links

- [Business Executives for National Security](#)
- [2007 Report: \*Getting Down to Business: An Action Plan for Public-Private Disaster Response Coordination\*](#)
- [2011 Report: \*A Review of BENS Business Response Task Force Report\*](#)
- [BENS in Action: BENS Responds to Missouri Disaster](#)
- [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#)

## A Retrospective: BENS’ Impact on Public/Private Partnerships

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### BENS Efforts to Build Public-Private Partnerships

Well before the tragic events of September 11, 2001 or Hurricane Katrina, Business Executives for National Security (BENS) recognized the need to build regional partnerships from the ground-up. We recognized that these partnerships are the best way for business and government to leverage their combined strengths to defend the population, government institutions and private infrastructure from natural and man-made disasters. **BENS conceptualized public-private partnerships as key structures that can strengthen a region’s capacity to prevent, prepare for, and respond to catastrophic events.** The premise is simple, and the implementation is difficult: Governors, state and local officials and private sector firms form working partnerships in various locales—strengthening relationships that transcend typical political and other boundaries of government and business relationships.

In early 2002, BENS began building and facilitating public-private partnerships in eight regions across the nation. From Boston to Los Angeles, each partnership had very different regional and political characteristics. Over time the regional partnership concept—in various forms—took root, enabling a successful response in a number of preparedness and emergency situations.

During the particularly disastrous 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, many BENS members experienced first-hand the reality that the role of business in response to disasters on a national scale was ill-defined and largely *ad hoc*. The federal government also noted its failure to integrate the resources of America’s vast private sector into its disaster response plans.

Consequently, the senior leadership of both the United States Senate and House of Representatives invited BENS to offer advice on how to successfully build public-private partnerships. **In June 2006 BENS formed a Task Force to recommend steps to systematically integrate the capabilities of the private sector—principally those of the business community—into a comprehensive national disaster response mechanism.**

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### Groundbreaking Report on Public-Private Disaster Response Coordination

The work of the BENS Business Response Task Force, *Getting Down to Business: An Action Plan for Public-Private Disaster Response Coordination*, was released in January 2007. The Task Force offered recommendations in three main areas:

- **Public-private collaboration**, to plan, train, exercise, implement and evaluate joint actions required to facilitate effective communication, decision-making and execution
  - **Surge capacity for private-sector goods and services, and the capabilities resident in private-sector supply chains**, to manage the delivery of goods and services (including free, pro bono and contracted) to and within disaster areas
  - **The legal and regulatory environment**, which can help or dramatically hinder efficient delivery of private-sector support during a disaster
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## The Impact of the Report and Improved Public-Private Partnerships

In 2011, on the four year anniversary of the Report, [BENS reviewed the Task Force recommendations](#). In general the review concluded that in the intervening years since BENS first undertook an assessment, many earlier shortcomings have been or are now being addressed:

- The concept of “resiliency”—hardly part of the lexicon when BENS conducted its earlier review—is now the community’s frame of reference for preparedness.
- Dozens of new associations, awareness groups and programs have emerged to help do things differently—and better.
- [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#) has completed a re-write of the federal process governing preparation and response to disasters. It is now working to deploy it.
- The federal government is positioning its policies and outreach to manage expectations. Disasters are once again seen as localized events that require community preparation and response.
- At the federal level there is now a private sector seat in the National Response Coordination Center and private sector liaison positions in all ten FEMA regions.

However, there is still more work to be done to bolster viable and lasting public-private partnerships:

- Less than half of the states report having a business or private sector component to their Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs).
- Local, state and federal agencies have access to contracting for a huge private sector source of goods and services, but the supply chain necessary to deliver the products is inefficient, plagued by inadequate coordination and credentialing issues.
- The legal and regulatory status of the private sector during a disaster remains neither predictable nor efficient.

FEMA continues to make progress. In August 2011, it sponsored the first annual conference on “Building Resilience through Public-Private Partnerships.” Its vision was to:

- Encourage every state and territory to have a publicly accessible, dedicated, resourced, engaged and sustainable public-private partnership program focused on resilience.
- Public and private sharing of data in both directions to enable life-saving and property protecting timely decision-making.
- Consistent private sector credentialing, access and waivers across jurisdictional lines in support of disaster.
- Local, state, and national resource registries/databases that enable the sharing of goods, services and donations.

BENS continues to monitor and support efforts by FEMA/DHS to achieve the goal of a truly resilient partnership between the public and private sectors.

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### **In Case You Missed It – CQ Article on BENS: “Report: Public Private Partnerships Need Institutional Support”**

[\*Please click here for the full article from Congressional Quarterly\*](#)

(A special “thank you” to BENS members William Brunkhardt and Ernest Blackwelder for participating in this interview.)

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## National Preparedness Month

This month, September 2011, is National Preparedness Month. In cooperation, BENS is honored to partner with FEMA to encourage businesses and individuals to become [National Coalition Members](#).

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National Security**  
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Together we can make certain all Americans are prepared to face and respond to disasters and emergencies in their homes, businesses, and communities. Coalition Members have access to resources and can collaborate with thousands of fellow members across the country on ways to participate and get communities involved. Here are a few highlights:

- Suggestions and ideas for activities and events
- Ready-to-use templates and messaging, including posters, web banners, press releases, articles, Facebook Status Updates and Tweets for Twitter, plus more!
- A calendar to post your event and see what else is happening around the country

It takes just **97 seconds** to be part of the team, and part of the solution. [Sign up today!](#)

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