



Civic Leaders Speak Out About Emergency Preparedness

February 22, 2007

About the McCormick Tribune Foundation

The McCormick Tribune Foundation is a nonprofit organization committed to making life better for our children, communities and country. Through its charitable grantmaking programs, Cantigny Park and Golf, Cantigny First Division Foundation and the McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum, the Foundation is able to positively impact people's lives and stay true to its mission of advancing the ideals of a free, democratic society. The Foundation is an independent nonprofit, separate from the Tribune Co., with substantial holdings in the Tribune Co. For more information, please visit our Web site www.McCormickTribune.org.

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Since 1983, the National Strategy Forum, a non-profit, non-partisan organization, has focused on the issues and trends affecting US national strategy and national security. A well-informed public is vital to the development of civic responsibility and a viable security structure, and the National Strategy Forum's principal mission is to promote open and informed public dialogue about national security topics such as international terrorism, homeland security and defense, continuity of public and private sector operations after a catastrophic incident, and civilian emergency preparedness. Public education programs include the National Strategy Forum Speaker Series (6-8 lectures annually) and a quarterly publication. In addition to its public education programs, the National Strategy Forum conducts conferences on various subjects relating to national security. Post-conference reports and other program information may be found on the National Strategy Forum website, www.nationalstrategy.com.



Cover Caption:
"A first grade student at Westwego Elementary School shows off his work as his class works through the FEMA for Kids activity books provided by a Community Relations team during tornado recovery efforts."
Photographer:
Robert J. Alvey/FEMA

Civic Leaders Speak Out About Emergency Preparedness

**Convened by: McCormick Tribune Foundation
and National Strategy Forum**

**McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum
Chicago, Illinois**

February 22, 2007

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Foreword

The chaotic aftermath of Hurricane Katrina clearly illustrated the devastating consequences of a lack of emergency preparedness at all levels. After witnessing such an event, it seems unthinkable that we wouldn't do everything possible to be ready for the next disaster. Yet, earlier this year, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security study of emergency preparedness in large urban areas around the country revealed that Chicago is still one of the cities least adequately prepared to respond to a major catastrophic event.

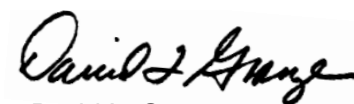
With this in mind, the McCormick Tribune Foundation, in partnership with the National Strategy Forum, convened a group of nearly 100 civic leaders at the McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum in downtown Chicago to discuss emergency preparedness in Chicagoland. Participants included representatives from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, as well as students and young professionals.

The McCormick Tribune Foundation is deeply committed to strengthening civic health in our region by encouraging citizens to be informed, responsible, and engaged. As Katrina-scale natural disasters bring to light the limits of our government's ability to respond in an emergency, they also demonstrate the crucial role of individuals and communities in pre-empting and mitigating the effects of a disaster. We believe that civic leaders in particular can play an important part in educating their communities about preparedness and motivating their community members to learn safety skills and develop emergency plans in their homes, schools, and workplaces.

The goal of this workshop was to collect thoughts on the current state of preparedness in our region, create a list of action items and resources, and disseminate this information to other civic leaders and to the general public.

We hope this report will help readers understand the importance of prudent preparation for a catastrophic incident. Every one of us can make a difference in improving our civic health and keeping our children, communities and country safe.

Sincerely,



David L. Grange
 President & CEO
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Introduction

As recent catastrophic incidents have shown, essential government services may be disrupted for some period of time and first responders may be overwhelmed. As a result, in the first 72 hours after a disaster, individual preparedness and pre-existing social networks—including neighbors, community associations, the workplace, schools, or places of worship—may be a temporary alternative to government resources. In such situations, being prepared and informed can significantly reduce the impact of a disaster.

The workshop participants' comments have been organized into three main sections: general thoughts on preparedness and the particularities of our region; concrete action items for the home, the workplace, and the greater community; possible partnerships with the public, private and non-profit sector. Appendix A is a reference guide to the major national and local preparedness information resources.

This report aims to inform civic leaders and the general public on issues related to disaster preparedness in the Chicago area and motivate them to take action in their communities. To make this information useful and relevant, the workshop group was asked to think about preparedness broadly, in a way that applies to situations ranging from a large-scale incident like bio-terrorism or a natural disaster to a more contained event like a power outage or an apartment fire. This is not intended to be a comprehensive study of disaster preparedness, but merely the beginning of a longer conversation on strengthening the civic health of our region.

Part I: Starting Points

A. Reflecting on our lack of preparedness

Participants noted that a number of preparedness resources and programs already exist and are easily accessible through the Internet or community organizations like the local Red Cross. So, why aren't we taking advantage of them? Several theories arose about the public's seeming reluctance to prepare for an emergency situation.

One of the most repeated thoughts was that, in order to be credible, the threat needs to sound real. When discussing disaster, there is a tendency to focus on the most catastrophic events, such as a terrorist attack or a mass epidemic. All too often these types of incidents seem like very remote possibilities and we dismiss the warnings with a "this can't happen to me" attitude. A civic leader trying to encourage preparedness in his or her community, therefore, should craft a message at a level that everyone can relate to. Participants suggested using realistic scenarios such as a personal story from someone affected by a disaster talking about the consequences of not being prepared, losing a home, or not being able to find a family member. The goal shouldn't be to scare, but to appeal to people's emotions in a way that incites them to take action.

Another obstacle is the fact that we tend to think about emergency planning only in the immediate aftermath of a disaster while the images of destruction and loss are still vivid in our minds. It is crucial, then, to emphasize that effective preparedness is an ongoing process and that our families and communities should always be ready to react to any emergency situation.

One final point was that there is a misconception that being prepared is cost prohibitive or just plain inconvenient. Cost-free, easy-to-access resources are widely available, yet only a small portion of the population takes the time to do the research. Civic leaders can contribute significantly by showing people where they can find information or how to assemble a simple emergency kit with common household items.

Part I: Starting Points

B. Formulating a message that encourages action

- Formulate a message that people will care about, recognize, and remember. The message should be personal and accentuate public concern regarding preparedness issues. As mentioned above, fear tactics should be minimal and tempered. Instead, use common sense warnings such as, "This is what can happen if you are not prepared," including contrasting anecdotes of what could happen to people who are unprepared versus those who have an emergency plan.
- Keep the message simple and easy to remember, like the American Red Cross's "Get a Kit. Make a Plan. Be Informed." Civic leaders should think back on previous effective public awareness campaigns that resulted in civic action or a change in policy. What models and strategies have worked in the past, and why did these particular campaigns lead to a change in people's behavior?
- Emphasize the fact that, by being prepared, each person can have a positive impact on his or her family or community. Being informed and educated on emergency planning, then, is part of our civic duty. As people become more informed on these issues and more involved in their communities, they will begin to believe in the importance of preparedness and encourage others to follow suit.
- Clearly disassociate preparedness from politics and dispel the notion that our government is perpetuating a culture of fear or taking measures that will curtail civil liberties. Decentralizing the public awareness campaigns by putting them in the hands of local and community organizations may help reach more people and make the message more credible.

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C. Thinking about our diverse communities

The city of Chicago and surrounding areas are composed of ethnically, economically, and geographically diverse communities. Information on preparedness and safety programming should be tailored to each specific population or neighborhood. Participants suggested that civic leaders consider the needs of the following groups in particular:

- Non-English speaking communities: Once these communities are identified, any flyers, training materials or other announcements should be created in their language.
- Vulnerable or hard-to-reach populations: This category includes low-income families, the elderly, the handicapped, hospitalized patients, and the homeless. These are groups that may not have access to information through the regular channels. In case of an emergency, they may be difficult to locate or slow to evacuate because of limited mobility or health issues.
- Suburban communities: Those who don't have access to public transportation and may be more vulnerable to road congestion in case of an emergency evacuation.

Part II: Basic action items for the home, the workplace, and the community

When thinking about how to be as prepared as possible for the immediate aftermath of any type of disaster, one attendee suggested adopting a “worst case scenario” philosophy. This means creating a personal safety checklist by asking questions like: “What if I can’t find my children?”, “What if all public transportation is shut down and the roads are blocked off?”, “What if I can’t get to (or can’t leave) my home?”

Participants came up with a number of concrete actions that we—as individuals and/or civic leaders—can take right now to protect our family, our workplace, and our community.

A. What we can do for our family:

- Keep emergency kits at home and in the workplace and make sure they are updated regularly.
- Know our children’s school emergency plan.
- Establish a family communication and reunification plan and ensure that every household member is familiar with it. This includes having a contingency plan for pets in case of forced evacuation.
- Meet our neighbors. Become involved in neighborhood or condominium associations to build relationships with those who live closest to us.

B. What we can do in the workplace:

- Hold regular emergency evacuation drills and make all employees familiar with the site’s emergency procedures.
- Have designated “wardens” to guide people in case of emergency.
- Create a phone/e-mail communication chain so people can reach each other should something happen off-site or outside of working hours.
- Integrate emergency preparedness information into new employee orientation materials.
- Disseminate information to employees on how they can be better prepared at home.

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C. What we can do for our communities:

- Take a CPR or first aid training course through a local hospital, health club, or community organization.
- Become a volunteer civilian emergency responder through the Citizen Corps or similar program.
- Join neighborhood organizations, such as block clubs, condominium associations, and neighborhood crime watch groups, and put emergency preparedness on the agenda at these gatherings.
- Create a “Community Organizing Kit.” Work with government and private sector entities to assemble and distribute kits containing a generic guide to community organizing for preparedness projects.
- Petition the local alderman’s office to disseminate safety flyers to the neighborhood and help the community understand how much they can expect from local officials in an emergency situation.

How we can teach our children about emergency preparedness:

- Provide children with age-appropriate books and games that deal with issues of emergency response and help them become familiar with the idea of safety. This could be modeled from the “stranger danger” concept that parents and schools instill in children at a young age.
- Make “Masters of Disaster” part of the curriculum. This program, piloted in a few Chicago Public Schools, focuses on integrated learning by giving school children projects focused on creating an emergency plan for their families.
- Coordinate a prudent preparation advertising campaign through mass e-mail campaigns, Internet videos, cell phones, and blogs, and social networking Web sites such as MySpace, Facebook, or YouTube.

Part III: Partnering with the public, nonprofit, and private sectors

Civic leaders do not need to reinvent the wheel. A range of existing local, regional, and national programs and planning resources make basic preparedness information and training tools available to the general public. Civic leaders should also become familiar with federal, state, and local projects related to safety and security and use those as models when building their own initiatives.

Participants emphasized the importance of working with community groups who are already established in their neighborhoods or fields of activity. These groups know their populations well and have a unique ability to reach them. For the more skeptical audiences, these messages may appear more credible coming from a familiar, trusted local organization than from the federal government.

Following is a list of participants' ideas on preparedness programming partnerships with the public, private and not-for-profit sectors:

- Ask **schools** to distribute emergency preparedness information to parents at the same time as their children's report cards.
- Work with the **public libraries** to access harder-to-reach audiences like the certain immigrant populations or people who are homeless.
- Encourage **religious institutions** to take advantage of their captive audience of community members to disseminate information and ask their constituents to spread the word.
- Keep **retired emergency responders and medical personnel involved in the process** either as on-call volunteers or to train civilians.
- Partner with the **CAPS** (Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy) program to build a database of the vulnerable people/families in the neighborhood and create a civilian corps in charge of checking in on them in case of emergency.
- Partner with **local media outlets** to disseminate preparedness information: small newspapers, public television, local and school radio stations that will reach small, targeted communities.
- Distribute emergency preparedness flyers door-to-door through the **Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts**.
- Arrange small-scale discussions through organizations that hold monthly or quarterly meetings, such as **neighborhood groups, commercial clubs, or condominium associations**.
- Encourage the **CTA** to create a disaster response plan to expand service and extend service areas beyond city limits.

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- Help **local sports teams** partner with organizations like the Red Cross to make preparedness-related announcements at big stadium events or pass out emergency supply kits.
- Petition the **City of Chicago** to host military and emergency responder drills and make them open to the public—in the same vein as the Air and Water Show rescue demonstrations—to help people become familiar with the idea. This is also a good venue for distributing information and/or kits and gives participants the opportunity to ask questions, hear testimonials, and speak directly to first responders.
- Work with the towns and cities in our region to create a September 11 **"Prudent Preparation Day"** which would be dedicated to commemorating 9/11 with a range of programming on emergency preparedness.
- Partner with a company that produces a **common household product** that people use or see every day and get them to advertise on their packaging.
- Look to other states and large urban areas for **successful preparedness education and information models**. The Mobile Points of Distribution (PODs) system in Florida and the generalized CPR training in Seattle came up as noteworthy examples.

Though we can't predict or control our local and national government's level of preparedness, we are not without recourse in the face of a catastrophic event. As individuals, we can take responsibility immediately for our families and community by becoming better informed about disaster preparedness. We hope this report will help civic leaders and the general public understand the importance of preparedness and give them the resources they need to begin to take action in their homes and their communities.

Appendix A— References and Resources

Federal Government Resources:	Environmental Protection Agency <i>Emergency Preparedness</i> http://www.epa.gov/ebtpages/emergencypreparedness.html
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <i>Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response</i> http://www.bt-----.cdc.gov/	Federal Citizen Information Center http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/
Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program <i>Residential Shelter-in-Place</i> http://emc.ornl.gov/CSEPPweb/SIP/SIPhtm	Federal Emergency Management Agency http://www.fema.gov/
CitizenCorps.gov http://www.citizencorps.gov/	FirstGov <i>The Official Web Portal of the U.S. Federal Government</i> http://www.usa.gov/
Department of Education <i>Emergency Preparedness Plans for Schools</i> http://www.ed.gov/emergencyplan/	FirstGov for Consumers http://www.consumer.gov/
Department of Health and Human Services <i>Disasters and Emergencies</i> http://www.hhs.gov/disasters/index.shtml	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) http://www.weather.gov/om/severeweather/index.shtml
Disaster Help https://disasterhelp.gov/portal/jhtml/index.jhtml <i>Anti-Terror</i> https://disasterhelp.gov/portal/jhtml/community.jhtml?community=Acts+of+Terror&index=0&id=19	Ready.gov http://www.ready.gov
	Threat Alert System <i>Information for Citizens</i> http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?theme=29
	U.S. Department of Homeland Security http://www.dhs.gov/
	USA Freedom Corps http://www.usafreedomcorps.gov/

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Chicago Area Government Resources:	National and Local Organizations:
Alert Chicago http://webapps.cityofchicago.org/ChicagoAlertWeb/	The Ad Council The country's leading producer of PSAs since 1942. http://www.adcouncil.org
ChicagoFIRST https://www.chicagofirst.org/	American Association of Retired Persons http://www.aarp.org
City of Chicago Office of Emergency Management and Communications (OEMC) http://egov.cityofchicago.org/city/webportal/home.do	American Medical Association Disaster Preparedness and Medical Response http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/6206.html
Illinois Emergency Management Agency http://www.state.il.us/iema/	American Red Cross <i>Terrorism - Preparing for the Unexpected</i> http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/keepsafe/unexpected.html
National Strategy Forum <i>What can I do in the Event of a Mass Casualty Incident? A Handbook for Civilian Emergency</i> www.nationalstrategy.com	<i>Masters of Disaster Program</i> http://www.redcross.org/disaster/masters/
	American Red Cross of Greater Chicago <i>Information on the Go Kit</i> http://www.chicagoredcross.org
	American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) <i>Disaster preparedness for pets</i> http://www.aspca.org/

Appendix A—References and Resources

Boy Scouts of America http://www.scouting.org	Neighborhood Watch <i>Safety Tips</i> http://www.usaonwatch.org/tips.asp
Disaster Relief <i>Library - Preparedness</i> http://www.disasterrelief.org/Library/Prepare	Points of Light & Volunteer Center National Network <i>Organization Coordinating</i> <i>Unaffiliated Volunteers in Disasters</i> http://www.pointsoflight.org
Federation of American Scientists <i>ReadyReally.org</i> http://www.fas.org/reallyready/index.html	Public Readiness Index (PRI) www.WhatsYourIQ.org
Girl Scouts of the USA http://www.girlscouts.org	
Home Safety Council http://www.homesafetycouncil.org	
National Safety Council http://www.nsc.org	

Appendix B—Participant List

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McCormick Tribune Conference Series Call for 2008 Conference Proposals

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For detailed submission guidelines and application instructions, please visit our website at:
<http://www.mccormicktribune.org/conferences/conferences.aspx>

Proposals must be received no later than August 31, 2007 to be considered for conference support.

Please direct all questions to Conferences@McCormickTribune.org.

We look forward to your ideas!