



Final Transcript

HUD-US DEPT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT: Severe Weather Preparedness

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SPEAKERS

Virginia Holman
Suzanne Isaacs
Celeste Washington
David Ziaya

PRESENTATION

Moderator Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for standing by. Welcome to today's Severe Weather Preparedness conference call. At this time, all participants are in a listen-only mode. Later we will conduct a question-and-answer session. (Operator instructions.) As a reminder, today's conference call is being recorded.

I would now like to turn the conference over to your host, Virginia Holman. Please go ahead.

Virginia Thank you. Welcome, everybody, to today's webinar on Severe Weather Preparedness, emergency preparedness planning. We certainly are aware, with the strange weather patterns and often severe storms we've been experiencing, this webinar is very timely.

Before we get started on the content, I'd like to go over some of the logistics slides for you. As the operator mentioned, the audio is being

recorded. The playback number, along with the PowerPoint and a transcript of today's webinar are going to be available on HUD Exchange. You just start out by going to hudexchange.info and you'll be able to get the webinars. I'll also send out a [indiscernible] when those archives are posted. It's usually 48 hours or so. All of your lines are muted during the presentation.

I did send out handouts this morning to you all, but they're also available for download in the control panel on the right-hand side of your screen. Just click on handouts and then click on the document name and you'll be able to download it to your desktop.

We will have some polling questions, so when they come up, please respond to them, since our presenter really feels that it's very important information that she wants to have. There'll also be a discussion and a question and answer period. When that occurs, the operator will give you instructions on how to ask the questions or make your comments.

If your line is unmuted during those Q&As, do not use the speakerphone because we get a lot of feedback from that. Questions are always important; we've got two ways that you can ask questions. On the control panel, on the right-hand side of your screen there is a box that says questions. If you just type your question in there, we will be monitoring those and the presenter will be answering, Celeste will be answering some of them at the end of the session.

You can also later on send your question to our mailbox at housing.counseling@HUD.gov. Put the webinar topic in the subject line so we get it to the right person. When the phones are open for discussion, as I said, don't use your speakerphone. If they're all unmuted, be sure and keep your own phones on mute.

There's going to be a brief survey at the end. Please take time to fill it out. Your responses are really critical to us as we strive to always improve our webinars and our presentations. You will also, within 48 hours, be getting an email from GoToWebinar thanking you for attending. The email is going to say, this is your certificate of training. There is no other attachment, it is, in fact, that e-mail. Print it out and save it for your records.

At this point, I'm going to turn the presentation over to Suzanne Isaacs, who is representing the Office of Outreach and Capacity Building.
Suzanne.

Suzanne

Good afternoon, everybody. Jerry Mayer was not able to make it this afternoon. I am with the Office of Housing Counseling. I'm actually on their disaster assistance response team. We decided it was really important and critical to develop this webinar today, because we're finding that housing counseling agencies are being requested more and more to respond to disaster areas. That really puts you on the line; you need a new toolkit to help you work with your clients and yourself during these times of disasters.

I'm going to introduce to you, next is—next slide please—David Ziaya. I call him David Z; he's the chief disaster and national security officer for HUD. He's going to give us our opening remarks. Take it away, David.

David

Okay, thank you, Suzanne. First of all, I want to congratulate the Office of Housing Counseling for pulling together this information. It's not only timely, but it's good information that everyone should have in terms of being prepared ourselves before we have to get into the point to where we have to help other people who have been faced with a disaster.

I want to thank the Office of Housing Counseling for having the foresight to pull this together. I also want to thank Celeste Washington and my team for volunteering to step up and provide the presentation that you all will hear from; Celeste has got years and years of experience working with this stuff. She knows her stuff and we're glad to have her on board and working with you all on this. I know you're going to have a good session here in a couple minutes.

I'm going to just say a couple of things about our office and what the Office of Disaster Management and National Security does and then turn it over to Celeste and the folks and let you get to the real meat of the situation here. ODMNS is the office here and headquarters that really is the coordination point for disaster management and national security.

From the disaster management aspect of it, we cover everything from preparedness and exercises to doctrine reviews, from the office of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and their various cadres and leadership groups, to COOP [ph] planning and training and drills in terms of the fire drills and the occupancy emergency plan; anything that has to

do with disaster emergency response, that's what our office is working with.

From the perspective of our coordination, we very much value these kind of partnership opportunities with the Office of Housing Counseling to help facilitate preparedness and provide information and continue to be in coordination with you guys to provide information to your clients.

It's one of those things that preparedness, you can do a lot or you can do little, but at the same time, the more you have and the more ready you are, the better off everyone is going to be. There are a lot of tools out there, there's a lot of information. Sometimes, it's almost information overload. We want to make sure that we're getting you guys the most current information, the best thinking on this, so that you can get that out to your organizations and help provide them the resources that they need. When you're working with the victims of disaster, it's just absolutely imperative that we provide the service that we can as quickly and efficiently as we can so that we can get folks back to normalcy as soon as possible.

Again, our office is there to help be a resource. I'm assuming that this is going to be just the first in a long line of activities that we will do in partnership with the Office of Housing Counseling and broader the Office of Housing in other parts of the department as we continue to work with our interagency and partners and anyone else that has a role in this play, shall we say.

I want to again, just commend you all for the work you do. Thank you for working with the victims of disasters. The key to keep away with is making sure you're taking care of yourself also and prepared and you've got your own families prepared and ready to go so that you can help those that are going to need it in those times. We hope we don't ever need it, but if we do, we know it's there.

With that, I'm going to go ahead and turn it back over to Suzanne and Celeste. I wish you guys a good training session. Thank you.

Celeste

Thank you, David. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Celeste Washington. Today I will be presenting Emergency Preparedness: It's Not Just a Phrase.

It's a pleasure to be here today. I'd like to thank all of you for your participation. As we move through the presentation, there will be several

opportunities for you to share your experiences, thoughts, comments and suggestions. Remember, your input will enhance everyone's experience and help us all to become better prepared. With that, let's get started.

Here are the four areas that we will be focusing on today. Often times the terms, emergency and disaster, are used interchangeably. For our purposes, we are going to define a disaster as an event that requires you to rely on your own resources for an extended period of time. We will take an all-hazards approach, which means the strategies you learn today can be used to help protect you and your family during a variety of events ranging from personal emergencies to large-scale disasters.

A hazard is a situation that poses a threat to life, health, property or the environment. Hazards can be grouped into three main categories: natural disasters, technological and accidental hazards and terrorism.

The same preparations you take for a natural disaster can help in any event where your access to resources, including communications, power or supplies, such as food and fuel, may be limited or temporarily unavailable. Technological and accidental hazards are related to human activity and include power outages and hazardous materials incidents.

Terrorist events are not accidental. They are deliberate and intentional acts that are dangerous to human life. In 2011, Facebook and researchers at Cornell University and the University of Milan concluded that, on average, Facebook users were separated from each other by only 3.74 people. Now, five years later in 2016, they report that that number is down to roughly 3.57 people.

With these findings in mind, let's look at this from a disaster perspective and examine our own connections to those who have experienced or been impacted by a disaster. More than likely you, or someone you know, has been affected by a disaster. All regions of the United States have at one time or another experienced a natural or human caused event.

Have you or someone you know experienced or been affected by an emergency or disaster? Everyone, please participate in this poll question.

Suzanne, do we have any responses to the poll?

Suzanne

Yes, we do. No, I don't see any, sorry.

- Celeste Okay. I would like to offer my own personal.
- Suzanne There it is. Do you see it now?
- Celeste I cannot see the poll results, but if you would please read them to us.
- Suzanne The polling results, just a second, I can't see it either. Ginger, can you help?
- Virginia Yes, 89% of the respondents said that they had experienced or been affected by an emergency or disaster.
- Celeste With this large response, 89% of the respondents today, we see the importance of being prepared. Emergencies can and do happen. Are you prepared? Water contamination, power outages and severe weather can happen at any time and in any part of the country.
- For example, severe weather can occur in all four seasons and includes hazardous conditions caused by thunderstorms, tornadoes, flash floods and winter storms.
- Let's see where we are on preparedness. Please select the statement that most closely applies to your household. Everyone, please participate in this poll question as well.
- Suzanne We have a nice response on this: 26% of the folks have an emergency plan in place and know what to do; however, 42%, they have discussed what to do an emergency, but have no written plan; 23% of those attending today have no plan at all; 9% had none of the above. I'm not too sure what they're doing.
- Celeste Definitely my congratulations to those who have developed an emergency plan and have explained the roles and responsibilities of each person. However, even if you answered another response we're going to address those today and get you well on your way to preparedness.
- What do I need to do to be prepared? Even if you don't have an emergency plan or have not discussed preparedness with your household, you've already taken steps that will help you during an emergency.
- For instance, do you keep a set of jumper cables in your car? Have you updated your emergency contact information for your child's school? Do

you wear a medical ID bracelet to alert first responders of a medical condition?

Preparedness is not difficult; it just takes time. Eighty-two percent of Americans agree that if someone could make it easy to prepare then they would do it. Today, we are offering easy actions that you can take to get started.

This next section focuses on personal and family preparedness. First and foremost, you must understand the hazards facing your community. Every state is at some risk for a tornado. It's a good idea to know what to do if one occurs. Before a tornado hits, the wind may die down and the air become very still. Look for a dark, often greenish sky, large hail or a large, dark low-lying cloud. Listen for a loud roar similar to that of a freight train. If you see or hear any of these signs take shelter.

Occasionally, tornadoes develop so rapidly that little, if any, advance warning is possible. It is important for you to know the danger signs and be able to quickly take action. If you live in a mobile or manufactured home, pre-identify a safe shelter location such as a storm shelter or the lowest floor of a sturdy building. Manufactured or mobile homes, even if tied down, offer little protection from a tornado.

If you are outside and unable to reach a safe shelter, possible last resort actions include lying in an area lower than the level of the roadway and covering your head with your arms and a blanket, coat or cushion or taking cover in a parked vehicle, buckling the seatbelt and covering your head with your arms and a blanket, coat or cushion. Remember, every state is at some risk for a tornado occurring.

Homes and communities adjacent to wildlands are at risk for wildfires. A home, and everything around it, is known as the home ignition zone.

When you look at your property, imagine three zones encircling your home. Zone one is the first 30 feet on all sides. Identify flammable materials such as dead leaves three to five feet from your home's foundation. Create a fire free area within five feet of your home. Replace pine needles and other dry bedding with nonflammable landscaping materials and high moisture flowers and shrubs.

In zone two, which is 30 to 100 feet from your home, create fuel brakes such as driveways and gravel walkways. Finally, in zone three, 100 to 200

from your home, remove smaller trees that grow in between larger, taller trees. Also, remove any accumulated woody debris.

Remember, if you see a wildfire and have not received evacuation orders, call 911. Don't assume that someone else has called. You may be the first person to spot the fire. Return home only after authorities say it is safe. Use caution when entering burned areas. Watch out for hazards such as hotspots, which can flare up without warning. Remember to evacuate immediately if you smell smoke.

Floods are the most common natural disaster in the United States. One of the most important actions to take to prepare for a flood is to evacuate before flooding starts. Actions to take to prepare your property include elevating critical utilities, such as electrical panels, waterproofing your basement, ensuring your sump pump is working and has a battery-operated backup and installing a water alarm as well.

As part of your regular home maintenance, make sure gutters and drain spouts are clear. Remember, never try to enter moving water on foot or in a car, even if it appears to be shallow. Flood-related injuries and deaths are often the result of individuals becoming trapped in floodwaters.

Plan for your specific needs. When it comes to your family, you are the subject matter expert. As you are developing your emergency plan, consider the daily needs of your family and what supplies you should have on hand to meet those needs.

Stay informed. Staying informed means that you have access to information before, during and after an emergency. Make sure you have backup ways to receive information. Don't depend on just your cell phone alerts or just a TV.

Become familiar with the terms used during emergency messaging. You should understand the difference between a watch and a warning. Watch means be aware. Listen to a NOAA radio and check your emergency supplies. Warning means take action now. Actions can include completing emergency preparations, evacuating or seeking safe shelter.

For a tornado, a watch means tornadoes are possible. Watch for warning signs, such as approaching storms. If you hear tornado warning, take shelter immediately, because a tornado has been sighted or was picked up on radar.

Plan for ways to stay informed if the power goes out. Having a generator is great, but won't help if you need to evacuate your home. Know that many emergency radios can use multiple power sources such as household current, batteries, solar power or even hand cranking.

Finally, know how to get the assistance you need; 211 will connect you to information on social and human services like food pantries and support groups.

Stay connected. During an emergency, you may be able to get a text message out even though you can't make a phone call. Several communities, like that of Buchanan County, Missouri offer a text to 911 service.

Social media is gaining in popularity and has been used to stay informed and stay connected during emergencies. However, here are a few caveats to help you use social media safely and effectively. Familiarize yourself with the various forms of social media before an emergency.

Before acting on information, make sure it is coming from a credible source. Many local, county, state and federal government agencies are now using social media as a communications tool. Lastly, be sure to safeguard your personal information.

Again, consider the specific needs of your family. For example, an aging parent may not know how to use a cell phone. Keeping a landline phone working may be important for your family. Remember to create a group contact list on your electronic devices to be used in emergencies. Make sure you test the numbers and email addresses every three to four months to make sure they are current. Staying connected and staying informed are important during an emergency.

Whether you are evacuating or sheltering in place, one of the most important items to have on hand is water. Plan for a minimum of one gallon per person, per day for at least three days for drinking and sanitation. When considering your water needs, remember, children, nursing mothers and those who are sick may need more water.

In very hot temperatures, water needs can double. Don't forget pets and service animals. Store at least three days of water specifically for them. Note the expiration date on store bought, commercially bottled water. If

you bottle your own water, be sure to date the bottles and replace them every six months.

With that, I'm going to pause for a second to take a water break.

Thank you. Plan to go. Be ready in case you have to evacuate. Know your evacuation route. Make sure to fill your gas tank before an emergency. Keep cash on hand in case ATMs are not working. Carry a map, just in case your GPS is not working as well.

Your go kit is meant to be portable so that you can easily take it with you. However, if you are evacuating by car and space is available, you may want to take your shelter in place supplies with you as well. Don't forget to pack small treats, cards, games, reading material and other comfort items, not just for the kids, but for you and your pets as well.

When planning for an evacuation, think of the five P's. People and pets, prescriptions, papers, personal needs and priceless items, photos, pictures and irreplaceable mementos.

Here are two ways to help you quickly locate a shelter if you need a place to stay. Even if you remain at home during emergency, you will still need to be prepared. Your shelter in place kit should include items that require no cooking or little preparation, such as canned tuna and vegetables, items that require minimum cooking or little water, such as instant oatmeal and items, which require cooking, but have a long shelf life, such as white rice and dried beans. If you have a generator, that's great, but have a backup plan for food preparation, cell phone charging and staying warm or cool during an emergency.

Plan to communicate; make a plan and share it. Plan to communicate; make a plan and practice it. These agencies can help you locate family members when you are separated from them during an emergency. To make it easier to locate pets or service animals, consider having them microchipped. Take a picture of you and your pet or service animal to document ownership and make it easier for others to assist you in finding them.

Let's dispel some popular myths. Myth number one, building a kit is too expensive. Building a kit does not have to be expensive. Shop sales, dollar and discount stores and take advantage of tax-free weekends. You don't have to buy premade emergency kits and/or first-aid kits.

It may be more economical and useful to you to make your own. Take your time and as you add an item, check it off your list. Don't forget to check that list twice.

Myth number two. Building a kit is a waste of money. Why buy items that I'll never use? Never buy items that you won't use. Keep food on hand that your family likes to eat and rotate your emergency food and water supplies.

Put aside a set of clothes that are comfortable and fit, but that you don't wear often. Choose items that you won't care if they become stained or torn. Be sure to keep them seasonally appropriate. That means changing them out during the spring, summer, winter and fall. Also, let items do double duty. Your home first-aid kit can quickly become part of your go bag.

Myth number three. Many of these items have a shelf life. If a disaster doesn't occur, then that is money down the drain. Make sure you rotate stock, including food and batteries. If you have the space, save the expired bottle water to clean up spills or to water the house plants rather than using your emergency water for these purposes.

Remember, know what to do before, during and after an emergency or disaster. Have emergency supplies at home, work, school and in the car. Listen to local officials and evacuate if advised by local authorities.

At this time, we'd like to open the phone lines so that you can share your experiences and tips in preparing for emergencies.

Moderator (Operator instructions.) Currently there are no questions in queue at this time. Please continue via the web.

Celeste Okay. We're going to continue on with our discussion.

Suzanne I have one question written in this queue. You've already answered it I see. I just want to reiterate; it says, does water usually expire. Yes, it does, in six months. That was new information for me as well. Thanks, Celeste, for sharing that with us.

Celeste

You're most welcome. Please be aware that if you do bottle your own water at home, make sure that the containers that you use have been properly cleaned and disinfected as well.

We're going to continue to the second half of the presentation, which focuses on integrating preparedness into pre- and post-disaster counseling.

What are the effects of disasters? As you can see by this chart, disasters have far-reaching impacts affecting the health and economic stability of both individuals and communities. For example, studies have shown that exposure to lead can lead to decreased IQ, poor school performance and a study in 2000 by Nevin [ph] showed a very strong association between pre-school exposure blood levels and subsequent crime rate trends over several decades.

As a housing counselor, you are able to offer options to your clients to reduce and mitigate some of the effects of disasters, both in your pre- and post-housing counseling sessions. For instance, window replacement can provide long-term, lead paint hazard reduction.

High levels of lead can often be found on interior and exterior windows, with different ages of homes. Lead can also be present in soil, exterior dust, porches and on-floor dust. All of these can influence blood lead levels.

As housing counselors, what can you do to assist your client? There are various ways to address preparedness both before and after a disaster. For instance, advise clients to gather their essential records and make both hard and electronic copies to keep in their go bag. They can also store documents in the cloud if they feel that these documents will be secure.

Having these documents and essential records on hand can help when applying for disaster assistance. Here are some of the important documents that may be needed during and after an emergency. I also suggest building a communication plan and keeping one copy in your go bag and one on the refrigerator. See the handouts for a wallet size template of a communication plan.

Just because a home is built to code does not mean it can withstand winds from extreme events such as tornadoes or major hurricanes. Safe rooms are specifically built for that purpose. A safe room can be built in the basement, on a garage floor or the interior room on the first floor. Even

with a safe room, it is important to stay informed during an emergency. As below ground level safe rooms provide the best protection from winds, they should not be used if there is a risk of flooding.

Low-cost measures to increase safety include the use of surge protectors, installing grab bars in showers and tubs and making sure homes have fire alarms, extinguishers and carbon monoxide detectors. Check with the fire department and the other organizations in your community that may provide low or no cost equipment to your client.

Educate your clients on the hazards that may be present in their homes. It's not just older homes that may have hidden hazards such as mold or radon. Make sure they understand the purpose of the home inspection and how to glean useful information from the seller's repair history and disclosures.

Climate change can have many far-reaching effects. One of these effects could be an increase in vector-borne illnesses, such as those transmitted by mosquitoes. Zika virus disease, Chikungunya and Dengue are all transmitted through the bite of mosquitoes. Homeowners can take simple steps to prevent bites including installing window screens and repairing cracks or gaps in their septic tank and covering open septic vents with wire mesh small enough to block adult mosquitoes.

Self-disaster counseling is different from standard housing counseling. Pre-disaster, it's tied to a single transaction, such as a home purchase or loan modification. Post-disaster, it can be a long-term engagement, more like case management for housing issues.

Post-disaster; help your clients develop action plans to understand their options, to determine their objectives and to develop next steps for rebuilding, repairing or relocating. Provide them information and referrals to address both immediate and longer-term needs, such as short and long-term housing, living expenses and access to medical and mental health services.

As both an individual and a housing counselor, you are part of the preparedness community. This community consists of federal, state and local agencies, community partners and services such as utility companies, hospitals and neighborhood organizations, as well as private citizens of all ages.

During an emergency, you may be asked to perform a variety of duties such as identifying referral resources at the city, state and federal level, providing access to emergency repair loans, designing new programs to address emerging needs and assisting in recovery efforts. By providing information and access to resources through your partnerships and outreach mechanisms, you can assist your clients in regaining a sense of control after a disaster, enabling them to accurately assess their repair or replacement needs to make informed decisions and to avoid injury and undue expense.

We've come to our last poll question. Does your agency conduct outreach on emergency preparedness in your community? Would a customizable PowerPoint, similar to this one, be of use to you?

I'm going to give everyone a minute to respond. Suzanne, if you could please give us the poll results?

Suzanne I sure will as soon as it happens.

Celeste Thank you.

Suzanne I'm getting feedback that a number of people can't see the poll question.

Celeste The poll question is actually visible on the PowerPoint slide. If there is not a mechanism to answer, perhaps they can just type into the response box.

Suzanne Right, that's a good idea, because I'm not seeing that it is a poll question.

Celeste Okay.

Suzanne People are coming in saying they would like a customizable PowerPoint, but I can't tell the difference between if the agency does an outreach in their own community or if they need a PowerPoint, because there's two questions and people are making one answer.

Celeste Thank you. We do see that there is interest in perhaps using a PowerPoint for a community outreach.

Suzanne Even more so, yes, they would love the PowerPoint similar to this one. The agencies, right now, are not doing the outreach. A PowerPoint would enable the housing counseling agencies to do their own outreach.

Celeste Certainly, that is one of the things that our offices have discussed, to make that available for their use, because they are serving a very important function at the community level.

For more information on emergency preparedness you can go to www.ready.gov. As you see, I've captured a screen shot so you can see the screen, they give you a navigation and search engine as well. Here are some of the resources that are available on the site.

To recap, today we focused on four areas: disaster characteristics and hazards; personal and family preparedness; integrating preparedness into pre- and post-disaster counseling; and the big picture. If you would like further information I've given my contact information on the slide. I'm sure if you reach out to the Office of Housing Counseling, they will be glad to assist you as well as contact us with any follow-up questions.

Virginia Celeste, this is Ginger. My phone died and I want to apologize on that last polling question. If people could just send it to the email here, housing.counseling@HUD.gov, their responses to those, particularly your thought of a customizable handout.

Celeste Great.

Suzanne Great. We're getting rave reviews for that one. We will, in fact, work on getting a PowerPoint developed and posted. We'll let you know through the [indiscernible] serve that comes out often, when we finally have that PowerPoint together and for posting.

Celeste Okay. I'd like to open up the phones one last time for any comments or suggestions, or perhaps someone would like to share some tips of their own.

Operator, could you open up some lines in queue for us, please?

Suzanne While you're waiting for her to open that up—

Moderator (Operator instructions.)

Suzanne There's a very good question. It says, is there grant funding available to conduct such counseling? The grant funds, specifically for disaster preparedness and assistance, is not available right now. I can tell you that

we're working on that, connecting with other agencies and see how we can make funds available in the future.

It's something that we are actively working on and we are aware that if a disaster, a nationally-declared disaster hits your area, you do need extra funding. Again, we're working on that one.

Moderator There are no questions in queue at this time.

Celeste Okay. Suzanne, do you have any final comments?

Suzanne No. This is our jump off at spring program. You were like me this morning, you turned on the TV and you saw the disaster in Belgium, I mean in Brussels. It really impacted me knowing that, today, we were starting our kickoff for disaster preparedness and it comes in many ways, shapes and forms.

This is going to be the start of a series of our preparation for ourselves as the Office of Housing Counseling and preparing the housing counseling agencies. In turn, preparing you first as a family first so that you then can outreach to others. We would love the feedback on this presentation today. Again, there's going to be more. We want to continue to give you what you need in regards to disaster and emergency preparedness.

Please, let us know. We love emails, we love questions and we do listen to you, and I think many of you are aware of that. When you give us feedback, our office actually does make changes and gives you what you want. Please, don't hesitate.

Virginia We will be adding a guide on emergency preparedness planning to our capacity building toolkit, which is on the HUD exchange. Look for that within the next month. As Suzanne said, we're continuing to give you the tools you need to do this very important task.

Celeste This concludes my presentation. On behalf of David Ziaya and everyone here at the Office of Disaster Management and National Security, I'd like to thank you for your time. I hope that you will start your emergency preparedness, if you have not done so yet, start with today.

Thank you again.

HUD-US DEPT OF HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Host: Kristen Villalvazo

March 22, 2016/2:00 p.m. EDT

Page 17

Suzanne Thanks, everyone. Don't hesitate to contact us. Have a good rest of your day.

Moderator Ladies and gentlemen, that does conclude our conference for today. We thank you for your participation and using AT&T Executive TeleConference Services. You may now disconnect.