2014 EPICC AGM RECAP

On Tuesday May 13, 2014, the Annual General Meeting was held at the Coast Plaza Hotel and Suites in Vancouver. Although, we were hoping for more of our membership to be able to make it out, the ones that were there, got to see an excellent presentation.

We started the event, with our guest speaker, Greg Solecki. Mr. Solecki flew in from Calgary and delivered an excellent talk on his involvement with the Calgary Floods. It was very interesting to hear about the response and also learn about the continuity of local government operations & recovery efforts.

We were so impressed with Greg Solecki’s presentation that we are most likely going to be having him back to speak at our Annual Victoria seminar in the fall. If you didn’t get a chance to see him then, come out and hear what he has to say in Victoria.

After the presentation, we moved into the AGM. EPICC’s chair, Glen Magel shared with the group, all that EPICC has been up to over the past year, focusing on the success of the 1st ever Annual EPBC joint Conference. EPICC will continue to join ventures with the Pacific Northwest Preparedness Society to host another exciting event this November.

We elected new Directors and said Good Bye to others. We would like to give a big Thank You to our past Directors who have contributed many hours and assisted with
bringing EPICC, as an organization, to where it is today. Thank you Laurie & Larry Pearce, Dennis Gam & Debi Letkemann. We will miss you and appreciate your service over the years as a Board member.

We are also pleased to announce the addition of two new Board of Directors. Welcome Aman Darred & Robert Sell to EPICC. We look forward to working with you.

The meeting closed with some delicious hors d’oeuvres and drinks. It was a good opportunity for people to network and have conversations with our guest speaker Mr. Solecki.

We are ready to have another exceptional year.

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MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

2014 EPICC Annual Victoria Seminar

When: Friday October 3, 2014

This one day Victoria event is always a pleasure to attend. The focus is generally around Business Continuity. Our Director Lisa Benini, has consistently brought in awesome speakers to share their knowledge and information with the attendees. This year we are hoping to get speakers to discuss how they have built their BCP’s i.e What tools are they using and how are they managing company-wide continuity strategy building. Stay tuned for more information and on-line registration.
How Much Can (and Should) Government Protect People from Natural Disaster?

By letting citizens live in vulnerable places even after disaster strikes, government plant the seeds for future disaster.

Donald F. Kettl | May 28, 2014

It didn’t take long after the tragedy of the Oso, Wash., March mudslide for everyone to wonder: Should local officials have done more to prevent people from building in harm’s way?

The local emergency management director, John Pennington, was grief-stricken. “We did everything we could,” he told reporters. He added, “Sometimes big events just happen. Sometimes large events that nobody sees happen. And this just happened.”

A retired architect who had a weekend home in the path of the slide — and who lost many of his neighbours — told The Seattle Times, “We are not a bunch of stupid people ignoring warnings.” He explained, “We all make risk assessments every day of our lives. But you cannot make a risk assessment on information you do not have.”

That quickly became the back story: Residents would not have built homes in the area if they had known the risks. The slide was unpredictable and local officials had done all they could. It was simply a freakish act of nature that took scores of lives.

Critics sharply disagreed. They pointed to logging above the slide and to previous slides in 1949, 1951 and 2006 in the same area. In fact, soon after the 2006 slide, new construction quickly resumed and new residents moved in, apparently unaware of the risks they were taking.

International landslide expert Dave Petley, a professor of hazard and risk at Durham University in the United Kingdom, was sure the slide was predictable. He wrote on The Landslide Blog on the American Geophysical Union’s website, “I’ll nail my colours to the mast — to my mind this was [a] foreseeable event, and as such the disaster represents a failure of hazard management.”

He’s not alone in this view. In 1999, private geomorphologist Daniel Miller co-wrote a report for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that warned of the possibility of “large catastrophic failure.” In a later post on CNN, he wrote, “As a scientist, I knew that material [on the hill above] would someday be on the valley floor.”

This brings us the central dilemma that constantly plays out across the country. The feds often know a great deal about the risks but don’t have the authority to...
Local governments have the authority to act, especially through zoning requirements, but often don’t have the capacity to collect all the technical information or the will to interfere in local development.

New Orleans officials, for instance, had known for decades that their citizens were at risk from big storms. Just a year before Katrina struck in 2005, a Federal Emergency Management Agency simulation pointed to the devastation a Category 3 storm would cause. Evacuating the city, the exercise found, would be a huge problem. When the storm hit, the city was woefully unprepared.

Similarly, the Northeast had long known that low-lying areas were vulnerable to storms, thanks to several predictions by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change backed up their warnings, and Superstorm Sandy’s devastating wallop in 2013 confirmed that too many residents had built too many properties on land that was too vulnerable.

Compounding the problem is that many citizens look to government as the insurer of last resort. When natural disasters devastate local communities, a warm-hearted nation invariably provides help. Even small-government conservatives rally around government aid when their communities are affected, and such emergency aid is one of government’s most important roles. Short-term federal relief efforts like this, however, have often planted the seeds for future disasters. By helping local communities rebuild, federal programs have often created targets for the next natural disaster by ensuring an ongoing cycle of devastate-rebuild-devastate.

Since the mid-2000s that’s started to change. The federal government’s recovery aid after both Katrina and Sandy have required tough new zoning and flood insurance requirements, including raising living quarters above flood levels and prohibiting rebuilding in the most endangered areas. But the underlying policy dilemma remains: Should the federal government be the insurer of last resort, with the responsibility for salvaging the housing decisions made by individual citizens and zoning policies set by individual communities?

Everyone wants a small government, but every natural disaster brings calls for more governmental help for the afflicted and tighter governmental rules to prevent problems from recurring. That inevitably leads to questions about whether government could (and should) have prevented individuals from making decisions that put them in jeopardy. Moreover, we tackle the toughest questions at the worst possible time, trying to frame smart long-term strategies in the face of unspeakable human tragedy, and that’s a tough way to make good policy.

But we’re making progress. Although Congress in March voted to cap potential premium increases under a revised National Flood Insurance Program, the new risk-based zoning and flood-insurance policies that appeared after Katrina and Sandy are steering investments away from the areas at greatest risk. We still have a long way to go, though, in sorting out just who ought to be in charge of what. We can’t stop natural disasters, but we need to do much
better in setting the policies — at the federal, state and local levels — that help people figure out how much risk to take and what kind of help government will provide when disasters strike.

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