

**LAUNCH OF THE GUIDELINES TO FIRE AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES
MANUAL, THURSDAY, 17 FEBRUARY, 2011
3W's PAVILION, UWI**

**REMARKS DELIVERED BY DENNIS DE PEIZA,
MANAGING DIRECTOR, REGIONAL MANAGEMENT SERVICES INC.**

Mr. Masters of Ceremonies

Senator Harcourt Husbands, Parliamentary Secretary, Prime Minister's Office

Mr. Vincent Burnett, Chief Labour Officer

Mr. Wilfred Marshall, Chief Fire Officer

**Mr. Kirk Humphrey, Director, Ministry of Social Care, Constituency
Empowerment and Community Development**

**Professor Barriteau, Deputy Principal, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill
Campus,**

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me start by issuing my words of welcome to all gathered here for the launch of the **Guidelines to Fire and Emergency Procedures Manual**. I am exceptionally heartened by the fact that you have graciously accepted our invitation, and more so, taken the time out to be here, to be part of this important event. I take your presence here today as a way of communicating the importance you attached to this effort, which is aimed at promoting a culture of awareness and preparedness amongst the people of the nation as it relates to disaster mitigation; and specifically so, to the perils of fire and earthquakes.

As I look around the room, I see some prominent individuals whom I would want at this point to recognize. These are:

Ms. Delthine Thorpe, Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag.) Ministry of Health, Ms. Mary Anne Redman, 2nd Vice President, Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados, Mrs. Judy Thomas, Director, Department of Emergency Management, Ms. Kim Tudor, CEO, National Initiative for Service Excellence, Mr. Lloyd Phillips, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Mr. Victor Felix, Deputy Chief Labour Officer, Mr. Peter Earl, Chairman, National Advisory Council on Occupational Safety and Health, and Mrs. Velda Octavé-Joseph, Community Disaster Planning Specialist, Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency.

I wish to specially acknowledge the presence of Mr. Randolph Cox, now retired Chief Fire Officer. I go further, and publicly express my thanks to Mr. Cox, who without hesitation or reservation gave his approval and the support of the Barbados Fire Service for this project.

Now I will turn my attention to the business of the day. Today's experience is special to me, as it is the second time my name is associated with being the author of a published work. In 2007, I was privileged to launch the book 'Issues and Responses.' That work highlighted a range of Industrial Relations Issues including that of

Occupational Safety and Health. In my consultancy, which trades under the name of Regional Management Services Inc, a strong focus is on the delivery of Workplace Training.

Arising out of our contact with the business world, we are of the opinion that not enough emphasis is placed on offering workplace training. We hold the view that this could extend to the level of importance which is placed on safety in the home, schools and the wider community.

It would seem that in the past, the focus of our emergency planners was limited to the natural disasters such as storms, hurricanes and flooding; and on fires to a lesser extent. The need for a change to our thinking is now more apparent, as it would seem that the climate change phenomenon, has now thrown up earthquake as a major and looming threat. The devastation to be caused by an earthquake, couple with the outbreak of fires cause by broken electrical lines and ruptured gas mains, cannot be ignored. The question to be posed and answered is ...Are we prepared?

I am confident that the majority of us in this room would answer no to that question. Who can forget the experience of November 29, 2007, when mayhem broke out, following an earthquake measuring 7.4 on the Richter Scale which hit Martinique, and was felt in Barbados. What lesson have we learnt, and what are we doing to prepare the nation against any such an eventuality? The news of late of various tremors across the region, as in Trinidad and Tobago and St. Lucia, remain a constant reminder of the need to prepare. The trail of death and destruction which followed the 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti on January 10, 2010, should be enough to get Barbadians into action.

I wish to caution against ignoring the warning given by Seismologist Dr. Joan Lutchman, on 10 December, 2010, that the Caribbean region is due for a large earthquake. She said then that the last to hit the Eastern Caribbean was in 1843. Let's us not toy with the idea that the Haiti earthquake was the one that has already broken the cycle, and that the worse has passed. Need I remind you that **no one really knows.**

Let us now turn our attention to the fire bug which has continued to plague us. It was a time that fires were in the main limited to cane and bush fires. Today, we are exposed to many potential fire hazards that result from the use of electricity, petroleum and gases which we use in our homes, workplaces and the community. Our recent history tells us of that several lives have been lost due to house fires.

There is the emerging trend of fires occurring at the workplace. The loss of six lives as a result of the Campus Trendz Boutique Fire, 3 September 2010, remains etched in our minds.

Destruction by fire results in financial losses, the interruption of business, and the displacement and disruption of the lives of employees. Recent fires such as those recorded at Gazettes Industrial Park, BICO Limited, Sam Lord's Castle, Campus Trendz and The Handyman Hardware Store, all tell the sorry tale.

Every effort must therefore be made to guard against potential hazards and risks at the workplace, which can result in the loss of property and life.

Hopefully this manual will be accepted by all as a useful education and training tool. I take this opportunity to call on organizations such as the Barbados Manufacturers Associations, Barbados Chamber of Commerce, Insurance Companies, Commercial Banks, Credit Unions, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, the University of the West Indies, the Department of Emergency Management, and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, along with other public, private sector and non-governmental organizations, to embrace this manual, and to help us to ensure that it gets into all households, schools, educational institutions and work places in Barbados.

I respectfully suggest that you can do so, by sponsoring the printing of copies, and coordinating the distribution process.

On that score, I wish you to join me in commending the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development for being the first to signal its intention to embark on a distribution programme; which will see the manual reaching the public, through the medium of the Constituency Councils.

Inasmuch that the information contained in the manual is universally applied, it is my hope that some regional agency will come forward and partner with us, in getting this manual across the region.

In introducing you to the manual, I draw your attention to the fact that it has been designed as a pocket size document. This would make it relatively easy to be carried on the person. It is a reader friendly document. It provides the direction on how to use a

Fire Extinguisher, carries the Emergency ISO 7010 Fire Safety Symbols, and local emergency numbers.

It provides valuable tips on Fire Safety Procedures, Emergency Procedures, Earthquake Disaster Preparedness, and is inclusive of Safety and Recovery Tips.

The manual in directing attention to the issue of safety in the workplace, highlights the Role of the Safety and Health Committee in addressing Fire Safety and Workplace Emergencies. It also highlights the Fire Prevention Plan and the Duties of Fire Warden.

Following on this, I wish to make the observation that fire and emergency drills are not seemingly a feature of the workplace culture, or that of the school environment in Barbados. If the state is serious about promoting disaster mitigation and preparedness, then it must start by making it mandatory for exits and /or fire drills to be done at schools and workplaces on routine basis. In an age where Barbados is moving towards high rise construction, this is the underlining reason why such drills are important. This would certainly compliment the provisions in the Safety and Health at Work Act 2007-12, at Section 38 (1) and 39(1), which addresses safety provisions in case of fire.

Now that Barbadians have access to this manual which contains the relevant information on how to respond in the case of a fire and an earthquake, I strongly suggest that it can be use to good effect in preparing persons for simulation exercises to be conducted at workplaces, schools and other institutions of learning.

In launching this manual today, I consider this as yet another chapter in my life as a teacher. It is my view that the profession requires of me, to use experiences to educate the people of the nation. It was my first experience of an earthquake that dates back to the year 2000, which has brought me to this point. This happened in Costa Rico, when the Barbados Senior National Football Team was engaged in the 2002 World Cup Qualifiers. Need I tell you that the entire Barbados delegation was ignorant to what was taking place, and how we were required to respond. Sad to say, we could only stand like a 'pack of lost sheep' as everything around us swayed, while the Costa Ricans and other guests in the hotel dining room at the time of the tremor, hurriedly took the necessary precautions to avoid injury. It was clear that they were all drilled and prepared.

In considering this as a part of my contribution to my country Barbados, I must recognize that this stage could only be reached with the support of several contributors, who were responsible for making a financial contribution, or sponsoring an advertisement in the manual, which provided the funds needed to support this launch.

I therefore wish to acknowledge the support of:

- Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development
- Insurance Corporation of Barbados
- Barbados Public Workers Cooperative Credit Union Limited
- Barbados Vocational Training Board
- Barbados Shipping and Trading
- Central Bank of Barbados
- Goddard's Enterprises Limited

Sincere thanks are offered to the Ministry of Labour, and indeed, Dr. Hon. Esther Byer Suckoo for the endorsement of the manual. In like manner, I am grateful to the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development for its endorsement, and in so doing, record my thanks to head of that Ministry, the Hon. Steve Blackette. Today, Ministers, Dr. Hon. Esther Byer-Suckoo, the Hon. Steve Blackette and the Hon. Christopher Sinckler are unable to join us since they are all at a meeting of Cabinet. However, they have all sent their apologies, and a representative to the launch.

I am extremely grateful to have had the endorsement of the Barbados Fire Service and the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations Barbados.

With respect to the Barbados Fire Service, it ought to be known, that the current Chief Fire Officer, Mr. Wilfred Marshall, and the department's Training Officer, Mr. Neil Smithwick, were deeply involved in the reviewing process of this manual. They are to be commended for the job they did ensuring the accuracy of its contents.

This morning we were extremely pleased to have had our Chief Fire Officer, Mr. Wilfred Marshall here to address this launch. Sir, I am optimistic that this manual will go a long way in educating the public, and so assist the efforts of your department in promoting Fire Prevention and Fire Safety measures.

It has been an honour to have had brief remarks delivered by my good friend and colleague, Senator Harcourt Husbands. My thanks are extended to you for voicing your support for this effort.

Thanks to Mr. Kirk Humphrey for his remarks brought on behalf of the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development. We now look forward to working with you, through the Constituency Councils, in getting this manual into the hands of Barbadians.

To the Chief Labour Officer, Mr. Vincent Brunette, thanks to you for having delivered today's Keynote address. You can be assured that your thoughts and comments expressed on behalf of the Ministry of Labour, have been well received and noted.

This morning we are seated in what I consider to a hall of fame here in the 3W's Pavilion. This has been made possible through the generosity of the UWI. Madam Deputy Principal, Professor Barriteau, we are grateful to the University. Permit me to thank the Manager of the facility, Mrs. Judy Millington for accommodating us, and providing invaluable assistance in the preparation of the venue.

Our thanks and appreciation is extended to Coles Printery for the printing of the manuals, Fusion Graphics for the design of the invitations and programmes, Ms. Mona Robinson for having evoked God' blessing on the proceedings and Ms. Jackie Collymore for providing the catering services for today's event.

Mr. Chairman, Bro. Orlando 'Gabby' Scott, my good friend and colleague, thank you for job well done, and moreover; for the two decisive roles you played in giving life to this manual.

Finally, I wish to offer a big thank you to TURBOEK DESIGNS, who were responsible for the design and layout of the manual, and for the Video Production which you will view, momentarily. The face behind TURBOEK Designs is no other than my son Mario de Peiza. His work is to my mind what young entrepreneurs can do, if given the support and opportunity.

May I say, that the manual which is presented to you this morning, is in the true sense of the word, a '**home grown product**'. It is therefore fitting that I thank my wife, Julia, and two sons, Mario and Carlos for their contributions towards this finish product.

Before inviting to view the Video Presentation to officially launch the manual, let me inform you that each individual present will have the good fortune of receiving a copy at the end of the formal proceeding. As a sales pitch, you can get your copy of our first book, 'Issues and Responses', at today's special price of \$40.00.

Thank you for your being here and giving me your undivided attention.

DENNIS DE PEIZA
Labour Management Consultant
Regional Management Services Inc.