

Big Close – FLASH Introduces Three Pillars of Resilience Following the 2017 “Season of Change”

Planning for the NDRC program started long before the advent of the epic disaster outbreak of 2017. However, the focus on “Big” in all things resilience turned out to be prophetic. FLASH President and CEO Leslie Chapman-Henderson concluded the conference by synthesizing the ideas and priorities put forward by conference participants to address the big challenges in the disaster safety and resilience movement.

During her closing keynote, Leslie recapped the takeaways from the different topic areas of science, policy, and practice and pledged to work with the participants to create a statement of priorities for the movement in the coming year.

As promised, FLASH crafted the following three essential pillars for resilience priorities and is offering them to stakeholders as the 2017 “Season of Change” ends.

- I. **Science** – The disaster safety and resilience movement must embrace new and emerging technologies to support disaster recovery, accelerate construction innovation, and increase home affordability.

Cobots, robots, drones, and sensors are starting to move from laboratories onto construction sites. The recovery from Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, as well as the California wildfires, present an unprecedented opportunity to accelerate learning and application of these and other new techniques and methods. The disaster safety and resilience movement should support this innovation to ensure success.

- II. **Policy** - Modern building codes, standards, and floodplain regulations should be adopted, enforced, and maintained as the foundation of disaster resilience for all communities.

Leaders and stakeholders who participate in the planning, development, construction and oversight of our communities should champion the use of building codes, standards, and floodplain regulations to protect citizens and property. Incorporation of these essential measures will help minimize and avoid the type of catastrophic losses suffered by so many this year. Further, transparency will empower building owners and homeowners with information to ensure that those who create our communities do so by using minimum codes as well as beyond-code programs.

III. **Practice** - Risk communication strategies must be consistent, targeted, inclusive, and informed by social science to drive effective decision-making by individuals and leaders.

Leslie referenced the new book, *The Ostrich Paradox*, by Robert Meyer and Howard Kunreuther, during her closing remarks on practice and risk communication. She cited the six biases outlined in the book in the context of disaster preparedness, and how the authors offer strategies to help overcome psychological biases that inhibit successful disaster safety and resilience behavior. The insights provided in this book are one example of the diverse body of relevant social science that should be leveraged to create successful risk communication efforts.

This pillar also reflects critical lessons learned in the 2017 disasters that remind us that disaster preparations must be tailored to many diverse, individual needs. Those with disabilities, access, and functional needs require extra preparations and assistance to avoid tragedy. One of the stark examples of this happened when Harvey floodwaters swamped a nursing home, leaving frail, elderly residents stranded in dirty, rising waters. Hurricane Irma caused widespread power outages, including in a nursing home in South Florida. That outage left elderly residents to die of heat exhaustion.

As we publish this newsletter, the California wildfires continue to spread and threaten lives and property. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the October fires in Northern California caused deaths of many older adults due to mobility limitations and communication challenges arising from inconsistent cell phone service.

Leslie closed the conference with the pledge to collaborate with the expanding NDRC community and grow the FLASH partnership. The expanded team will support new thinking in disaster resilience strategies through continued developments in science, enhanced policy, and excellence in practice using the above pillars as strategic focus areas in 2018 and beyond. If you are interested in joining the new NDRC community, email Leslie@Flash.org or call (877) 221-SAFE today.