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DHL USA sponsors hurricane preparedness program in south Florida schools

StormZone simulation exercise brings home the importance of advance preparation



Students from Boynton Beach High School and program organizers at the StormZone session held at the Palm Beach County Emergency Operations Center.

You may not have heard of Hurricanes Jamie or Zack, but hundreds of middle and high school students in Florida certainly have, thanks to a specially designed hurricane preparedness course sponsored by DHL USA in October 2006.

Named StormZone, the three-hour sessions help students understand the importance of advance preparation when confronted by a potential disaster. StormZone sessions were held at schools in Broward, Miami Dade and Palm Beach Counties in south Florida.

Joining DHL in sponsoring the training sessions were the Hurricane Warning! program at the Disaster Survival House in Deerfield Beach and the Miami Herald newspaper.

In dealing with the approach and aftermath of the fictional hurricanes, students learned lessons about the importance of individual responsibility, organizational collaboration and project management. Tasks featured in the exercise include:

- Forming a local government.
- Learning organizing principles used by emergency managers.
- Making decisions necessary to respond to a disaster in their community.
- Developing, planning and executing a disaster recovery strategy.

Students acting as mayors and other government officials had to contend with events such as a fire in an evacuation shelter, an overturned truck on a major transit artery, washed-out bridges, gasoline spills and even civil disorder. A detailed Teacher's Guide was provided that explained how to organize and conduct the simulation in the classroom.

At the conclusion of the exercise, the student mayors conducted a press conference to inform student reporters on preparedness measures that were taken prior to the storm and recovery efforts after its passage.

"DHL's participation in the StormZone program is intended to foster a culture of preparedness in the community," said Dan Ludwig, Senior Vice President of Humanitarian Affairs, DHL USA. After attending a session with middle school students, he said: "They were focused on solutions to problems that can really happen during disasters, which is great for their development and the community."

"Children are huge influencers on parents and guardians, and students in these classes learn first-hand how to plan, prepare, respond and recover in emergency situations and explain this to their families," said Kelly Keogh, Director of Corporate Citizenship, DHL USA. "We see this valuable investment in the StormZone program as a proactive step to highlight the importance of emergency planning to DHL employees and our hometown South Florida community. The role-playing dynamics experienced by StormZone participants are very similar to what happens in real-life situations ranging from communication methods to the allocation of resources."

About DHL's Disaster Management program

DHL's Disaster Management program focuses on three areas: Disaster Preparedness, Disaster Response, and Post-Disaster Reconstruction and Rehabilitation. It forms a key part of DHL's Social Responsibility program.

DHL USA's support for StormZone is part of its Disaster Preparedness program. In the area of Disaster Response, and as part of the strategic partnership with the United Nations, DHL is putting in place a global network of DHL Disaster Response Teams (DRT) in cooperation with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The goal of the DRTs, which are staffed by employee volunteers, is to ensure that relief supplies reach people in need quickly and effectively by using DHL's logistics know-how to reduce bottlenecks at airports close to the scene of major sudden-onset natural disasters. The DRT Americas, based in south Florida, provides coverage of the Latin America and Caribbean region.

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