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## **How to prepare our businesses and our communities for natural disasters - by Nancy Greenwald**

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Nancy Greenwald,  
Construction Institute

2017 was the costliest year on record for natural disasters in the US. The toll on people's lives is incalculable and the hard cost of recovery stands at least \$305 billion and rising!

Ben Franklin's axiom that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure could not be truer. Whether you are a business, a town, or an individual, having a disaster recovery plan in place is crucial.

When it comes to planning and recovery, we need to plan both individually and as a community. If you are a business, your facility might be unaffected, but if your workers are unable to get to the facility because a major bridge has washed out, your company will not be able to function effectively.

Being prepared saves both lives and money. Research by an independent group of experts in 2005 found that for every dollar invested in actions to reduce disaster losses, the nation saves about \$4 in future costs.

Despite the savings in lives and money that be achieved from disaster management planning, most of us are not very well prepared. A majority (68%) of small-business owners don't have a written disaster recovery plan – even though about half (49%) said it would take their business at least three months to recover from a natural disaster. Despite FEMA's work, in the U.S., only 10% of earthquake and flood-prone households have adopted mitigation strategies.

The truth is that preventive actions to reduce the costly cycle of rebuilding and repair are needed now more than ever. There are steps that individuals, businesses and communities can take now to better prepare for and avoid the worst effects of extreme weather – and reduce costs.

The Construction Institute has assembled a team of experts, including some who worked on the recent recovery efforts in Puerto Rico, for a program on March 22nd at the Norwalk Inn that will focus on practical steps for disaster planning and recovery. Lead by moderator, Mark Adams -

National Real Estate Project Delivery Team - PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP, the panel includes:

- Fiona Cousins - director, ARUP Group Board - ARUP
- Christopher Day - second vice president of Catastrophe Operations - Travelers
- Robert Kenny - Region 1 Emergency Management Coordinator - CT Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS)
- Tom Norton - regional head of security, North Americas - Henkel Corp.; and
- Suzanne Novak - president - Erudyne LLC.

Don't miss this unique opportunity to learn from the experts. If you own, manage, design, construct and/or repair buildings and care about building resilient communities, join us for an open discussion about natural disasters and become better informed about making decisions that impact the future of your facilities and the resiliency of your community. Join us for Earth, Wind, Water & Fire: Planning for, recovering quickly, and curbing damage from natural disasters.

Let's be prepared.

To register, go to <http://construction.org/event/FCCOwnersForum>. The Construction Institute of the University of Hartford is a neutral non-profit organization whose members are dedicated to the improvement of the industry and of the built environment.

#### Footnotes

1National Institute of Building Sciences, Multihazard Mitigation Council, Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: An Independent Study to Assess Future Savings From Mitigation Activities (2005), [http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.nibs.org/resource/resmgr/MMC/hms\\_vol2\\_ch1-7.pdf?hhSearchTerms=Natural+and+hazard+and+mitigation](http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.nibs.org/resource/resmgr/MMC/hms_vol2_ch1-7.pdf?hhSearchTerms=Natural+and+hazard+and+mitigation).

2"Most Business Owners Aren't Prepared for Natural Disasters, Study Says | Nationwide.Com". February, 2017.

3Shreve, C.M., and I. Kelman. 2014. "Does Mitigation Save? Reviewing Cost-Benefit Analyses Of Disaster Risk Reduction". International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction 10: 213-235. Elsevier BV. doi:10.1016/j.ijdr.2014.08.004.

Nancy Greenwald is executive director of The Construction Institute, Hartford, Conn.

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