



## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

By:

**THE HON. WAYNE M. CAINES JP MP**

**MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY**

**Disaster and Emergency Preparedness / BELCO Major Environmental Emergency Contingency Plan**

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**Mr. Speaker**, I am pleased to advise this Honourable House of a significant disaster and emergency preparedness exercise conducted this week by Belco.

As part of the Island's critical national infrastructure, Belco has a number of emergency or disaster plans to prepare in the event of a significant event of this kind.

**Mr. Speaker**, in November, Belco engaged an instructor to teach three classes on the Incident Command System - method of managing serious incidents, culminating with the ICS-300 course or Intermediate Incident Command System.

Although principally for Belco's managers and supervisors the company also made spaces available for other agency representatives that would work with Belco to stabilize an incident and bring it to a satisfactory conclusion.

**Mr. Speaker**, for a range of different scenarios, involving chemical spills, large fires, explosions or a large number of subscribers without power for a long period of time, and not forgetting hurricanes, the Emergency Measures Organisation would be the coordinating organisation for all of the agencies involved. Belco would be a part of this response and depending on the nature and location of the incident, may have a large role to play or could, in fact, be the lead agency.

On 29<sup>th</sup> November, once all of the Incident Command Training was completed, a Tabletop Exercise was held centred around the Belco Plan for major Environmental Emergency Contingencies.

**Mr. Speaker**, by holding this important training, and including other agencies in both the training and the exercising, Belco has demonstrated leadership in taking these plans and its role in these types of incidents seriously, and understands the need to be prepared should they occur.

**Mr. Speaker**, within the Government, all disaster plans are coordinated by the National Disaster Coordinator who was a participant in this training and the final exercise. The Coordinator works to ensure that all of the Government disaster plans and those plans from the private sector that have an impact on national infrastructure are in synch with each other. He also ensures that training takes place across all relevant agencies and exercises are held to test those plans. Importantly, the Coordinator holds training sessions for the EMO agencies to prepare them to lead their departments and agencies to work together to solve the problems presented by a major incident.

**Mr. Speaker**, for the information of Honourable members, some of the plans we hold in various states of readiness are for:

- Hurricanes,
- The Airport Emergency Plan for air crashes,
- The Marine Search and Rescue Plan
- The Public Health Emergency Response Plan for pandemics and infectious diseases
- The Marine Pollution Contingency Plan for chemical spills in our territorial waters
- The Counter Terrorism Plan
- The Mass Casualty Plan
- Cruise Ship Disaster Plan for fires and accidents onboard cruise ships.

Presently, **Mr. Speaker**, there is no legislation underpinning the EMO. Honourable Members will recall the previous Administration indicating a need for such a statutory framework. I am pleased to advise Honourable Members that this Government will bring the necessary Disaster Management Legislation which will lay the foundation of governance for the EMO and its responsibilities. The aim is to create a Department of Disaster Management with the appropriate leadership to ensure Bermuda follows international best practices for small islands states.

**Mr. Speaker**, there is much work that remains to be done. Not only do the above mentioned plans need to be maintained, agency staff trained and exercised, but further plans need to be developed in areas such as:

- A National Threat and Risk Assessment
- Critical National Infrastructure planning,
- Cybersecurity
- Active Shooter Plans
- A single National Alert System
- Fuel and Energy Security
- Water Security
- Food security
- Large scale Explosion or Propane gas Incident
- Tsunamis

Whether or not the likelihood of some of these events is high should not prevent us from being prepared for them or discussing them as a community. This should include an understanding of what our initial actions should be to save our lives and the lives of our neighbours, should the unexpected or the unlikely occur. Many of these plans will cost little to implement and they will take time. They require community input and understanding for a plan to be put together which is written down and understood.

**Mr. Speaker**, this new Department will be immediately “fit for purpose” relying on existing, experienced officers from the Bermuda Police Service and the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service.

**Mr. Speaker**, I had the opportunity to visit the Exercise at Belco and found the participants to be fully engaged and keen to be prepared in the event of an emergency or disaster situation. I wish to commend BELCO for this important exercise and encourage the public to foster greater awareness of disaster and emergency preparedness.

**Thank you, Mr. Speaker**