

August 2012

SBA Disaster Newsletter

Your quarterly update from the Office of Disaster Assistance

One of the most rewarding parts of my job is celebrating the successes of those we've helped along the way. In May, during National Small Business Week, we honored four individuals for their extraordinary contributions to disaster recovery with the Phoenix Awards. Al Mignacci rebuilt homes and made construction repairs when tornadoes hit Raleigh, NC. With the help of his SBA loan, Barry O'Donovan was able to re-open his Cranford, NJ restaurant just six weeks after Hurricane Irene. And Mayor Gregg Kennedy of Smithville, MS and Mike Fisher of Bastrop County, TX won awards for their outstanding work as public officials ([click here for more coverage of this year's Phoenix Award winners](#)).

In June, SBA employees came together for the Disaster Media Training in San Antonio, TX. The training provided an opportunity to hone public outreach skills, as well as to refresh our SBA partners on the particulars of the disaster loan program. Coming together with agency employees from across the country reminds us that, in addition to our strong ODA staff, we have all of SBA to help us achieve our mission.

SBA has teamed with the American Red Cross to promote the Ready Rating program, a self-assessment to help businesses and organizations prepare for disaster. If you haven't already, I'd encourage you to take a look at this resource ([which you can learn more about here](#)), which can benefit not only our customers, but members of our communities. And as ODA continuously prepares itself for whatever may come its way, please don't forget to take the time to prepare yourself and your family.

Thanks,

James Rivera

Contributors:

Jim Atkins

Chris Cowan

Rick Jenkins

Mark Keltner

Mark Riddle

Robin Saunders

John Tauriello

Mark Vaccaro

Lance Wells

Julie Wozniak

Editor: Breanne Goodell

We want to hear from you!

Do you have recommendations for what you'd like to see in this newsletter? Send your comments or suggestions to your Center contributor or to breanne.goodell@sba.gov

Read and Conserve

Please read this newsletter electronically to save paper. If you do print, consider sharing it with your team!

National Preparedness Month, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, is designed to enhance the public's awareness of the necessity of having an emergency plan in place to respond to a natural or man-made disaster. SBA is one of many government and private sector coalition partners participating in this ninth annual event. SBA's involvement in National Preparedness Month includes the cohosting of disaster preparedness webinars to be held each Wednesday in September — with our own Associate Administrator James Rivera kicking it off on September 5th! Learn more at www.PrepareMyBusiness.org.

From the Associate Administrator

September is National Preparedness Month!

Reading Tips

See an underline in this newsletter? Click on it!

It's a hyperlink to a web page with more content on what you're reading.

The Exciting Life of an LV

The following is a true account from Loss Verifier John Fortner about one of his experiences in the field...and some unusual risks he encountered on the job!

I was working the Midwest Floods in the countryside northeast of Kansas City. It's an area of the country that's flat, with few trees, so you can see for miles. I called an applicant, a farmer who had some flood damage to his house, to schedule an appointment and get directions to his location.

The next day, having completed several inspections in the area, I had no trouble arriving on time. I pulled into his long driveway, parking about seventy five feet from the house, and grabbed my clip board and measuring tape. I had locked the door and was about halfway between my car and the house when I heard a strange sound. I found the source of the sound when a full grown female lioness came running at me. I looked for a tree, I looked at the house, and I looked back at my car... and thought I was dead.

The lioness ran right up to me, reared up on her hind legs, placed both front paws on my shoulders... and licked my face with her tongue. I thought she was just tasting me before she had me for lunch. I was frozen stiff and then heard someone shout, "Susie! Get down and leave that man alone!" The lioness dropped to the ground and sat in front of me, looking up into my eyes and licking her chops.

The applicant then walked up and said, "I'm sorry about that, she won't hurt you, we had her de-clawed". I told him I was not as worried about her claws as I was her big fangs. I then told the applicant that he should warn anyone coming to visit him that he had a full grown lioness running loose so they would not have a heart attack.

Susie followed me around the house while I was measuring it and I slowly calmed down and got familiar with my new friend. When I finished the verification I asked the applicant if he could get her to put her paws on my shoulders again and take some pictures with my Polaroid camera. I sent one of the photos to the Deputy Director and Director, telling them I wanted a raise and hazardous duties pay if I had to go through this again!

The Road Less Travelled

In the wake of floods, fires, hurricanes, earthquakes and other disasters, our Loss Verifiers (LVs) conduct Preliminary Damage Assessments in any and all conditions. Whether or not SBA eventually issues a declaration, LVs always travel directly to the disaster zone – typically immediately following the event, often working shoulder-to-shoulder with first responders.

Besides having to deal with the human suffering they often witness, our LVs must sometimes deal with their own personal hardships, too. Case in point: last November, when a massive extra-tropical cyclone — a winter blizzard comparable to a Category 1 hurricane — swept in from the icy north Bering Sea, the storm whipped the Alaskan Arctic coast for days with offshore waves of 35 feet and 90+ mph winds. SBA LVs Jesse Cisneros, Joe Vasquez and Ron Hayes traveled

by light plane to the far north Inupiaq villages of Kivalina and Noorvik — some of the most remote land in the world.

Bundled up in parkas and mukluks, taking off and landing from ice road runways, riding on snowmobiles or walking a mile on foot across the permafrost tundra at 20 degrees below zero—it was just “another day at the office” to these dedicated SBA disaster employees as they tallied the damages.

In October 2010, a flash flood in the Grand Canyon forced hundreds of evacuations and damaged property critical to the Sovereign Tribal nation of the Havasupai Tribe, “the people of the blue green waters.” After Administrator Mills issued a declaration, our two man SBA team, FOC-W Field Operations Specialist Dave Walker and Customer Service Representative Mark Jacoby, rode on horseback deep into the Canyon, with pack mules full of SBA supplies trailing behind. Half a day and eight dusty miles later, they arrived to provide assistance to the remote community of Supai, where they met with the “guardians of the Grand Canyon.”

So, next time you find yourself working in your comfortable cubicle, give a tip of your hat to our Loss Verifiers and Customer Service Representatives: working on the road—any road—and battling the elements in extreme conditions while offering their helping hands.

Other News

Since 2008, the Customer Service Center has used Pay.gov to accept over 105,000 loan payments for more than \$45 million. FY 2011 was our biggest year in terms of payments handled and dollars collected: 31,232 payments for \$12,402,539.56.

The CSC can process payments from callers using a credit or debit card and transfers from a checking or savings account. Customer Service Representatives use Pay.Gov to process borrower payments. This additional service the CSC offers generates additional call activity and provides a welcome service to borrowers.

Soon after its inception, the CSC began receiving requests from borrowers to make payments over the telephone or to set up recurring payments through their bank account. The CSC was not authorized to accommodate those requests. Additionally, an early responsibility of the CSC involved collection activities on delinquent disaster loans that had not yet been transferred to a servicing office. And while customer service representatives would reach out to borrowers who were behind on their payments, they were unable to accept payments over the phone. Seeing an opportunity to assist these borrowers and collect money for the Agency immediately, a customer service representative submitted a suggestion through channels that ultimately reached the Center Director. Through collaboration with Headquarters and the Denver Finance Center, permission was granted and training was completed turning the suggestion into a reality. The rest is history and the CSC now processes thousands of payments each year. The Customer Service Center was nominated and won the SBA Continuous Improvement Award in 2008 in recognition of this outstanding employee suggestion.

Pay.Gov at the CSC

Loan Payments Processed via Pay.Gov

Number of transactions July 25-31: 416

Total payment amounts July 25-31: \$212,261.63

Number of payment transactions FY-12: 22,307

Total payment amounts FY-12: \$9,349,147.64

ODA Goes All Out to Support Feds Feed Families

ODA managers and employees demonstrate their sack racing skills and relax at a picnic, while Deputy Associate Administrator Joe Loddo winds up for the dunk tank

On July 13, ODA held its first annual Summer Fling Picnic in Herndon, Virginia. Employees enjoyed food, music and games, and ODA managers volunteered to be dunked in a tank full of water to raise over \$500 for Feds Feeds Families.

On July 24, ODA joined SBA Headquarters employees in Washington, DC for the first Feds Feed Families Market Exchange. Donated baked goods, fresh produce and crafts were purchased with canned goods and other nonperishable items for the food drive.

Each ODA Center is hosting many other activities and events in support of the Feds Feed Families. The drive ends August 28th and we are well on our way to making a difference for hungry families across the nation.

Please donate your nonperishable food items by August 28th!

Calling All Reservists

It's check-in time again. Each quarter the Office of Disaster Assistance conducts an automated telephone readiness survey of our surge team. The next call is scheduled for the end of September and will record Reservists availability for duty in the 1st quarter of fiscal year 2013. This is not an activation call; it is merely a survey to determine if you will be available for work. When called at your primary number, you will be requested to indicate your availability and select one of two options: you are available for work; or you are not available for work.

Option 1: If you are available for duty during the next 90 days, Press 1.

Option 2: If you are not available for duty during the next 90 days, Press 2.

In the event a message is left on your voicemail, please call the Office of Disaster Personnel (ODP) Resource line at 1-866-368-9040 to participate in the survey. If you do not respond to the survey, you will be recorded as unavailable for the reporting period. In addition, the ODP Resource line will offer you the option to connect with your servicing HR office for any questions you may have regarding this process. Please do not contact your HR office to respond to the survey — your response will be recorded by the automated process.

Angela McIver-Minor

Angela McIver-Minor began her SBA career in October 1997 on the “Helpline” for the Area 2 office (now FOCE). She later worked in the Loan Processing department and remained there until the 2006 transformation. Currently, Angela represents the Office of Disaster Personnel as a Human Resources Specialist at FOCE. Some of her daily duties include coordinating activation/deactivation of employees and processing new hires, while ensuring HR practices are being conducted in accordance with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) standards. Outside of work Angela loves to travel, but her favorite activity is supporting, tailgating and attending games of her beloved Atlanta Falcons football team. Angela says, “In the words of Samuel L. Jackson, ‘What Do Falcons Fans Do? Rise Up!’ That’s how we do it in HR; we rise to any situation or task given.”

Katie Fournier

Katie Fournier is the DCMS Test Team Lead at the DCMS OC Center. This year she celebrated her 10-year anniversary with ODA. She began as a Temp in August of 2001 for the Area One office located in Niagara Falls, NY. She started out screening incoming applications and processing home loan applications. In the summer of 2002 Katie was asked to work out in the field. Her first deployment was to the US Territory of Guam after Typhoon Chataan. She continued to work extensively in the field and was a team lead for disasters in Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia. It is believed that Katie was the employee that accepted the first application that was processed in DCMS!!!!!! During the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina she spent several months at the PDC assisting in the Application Entry department and helped with the training of the new hires. In 2006, Katie accepted a cadre position as a Program Analyst at the DCMS OC in Herndon, VA. The move to Northern Virginia was a big adjustment and it took some time to settle in. However, after the move she went back to college and received her Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration. Today, as she leads the Testing Team she continues to work on completing her Master’s Degree in Management.

Going Green at SBA

Employee Spotlight The bumper sticker reads “Super Charged: Made in the U.S.” and those are two of the things Nan Miller likes best about her new car. Miller recently purchased a Chevrolet Volt, the first plug-in hybrid model offered in the country. The car runs 40+ miles on electricity then the gasoline engine takes over. Miller’s commute from downtown Fort Worth to SBA’s Processing and Disbursement Center now costs 70 cents per day for electricity and \$1 for gasoline, as opposed to the \$10 she was paying at the pump previously. The car charges in 8 to 10 hours via a 110- outlet in her garage. Nan’s first SBA disaster was in 1994, but she had a hiatus from the Agency between 1998 and 2003 when she worked as a planner with the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan planning agency. She coordinated DFW Clean Cities, a Department of Energy program to assist fleets with implementing alternative fuel vehicle projects. “I’m glad to see the technologies and prices get to a point where individuals can make it work.” She’s still debating a personalized license plate, but “GBY GAS” is the front runner.

Performance Appraisals:

Tips for Employees

With 2012 Performance Reviews approaching, here are some helpful hints for making the most out of your performance discussion.

Prepare a list of your accomplishments and progress to date. Provide your supervisor with your accomplishments starting from when goals were set.

Meet and discuss performance to date. Provide specific examples of what you've done well and where you would like to improve. Ask for feedback from your supervisor on what you are doing particularly well, and what you might improve. Ask specific questions like, "What else could I have done to improve X" or "Do you have any suggestions for me?" Then listen carefully.

Discuss what you plan to achieve, and what your manager expects you to achieve, during the next appraisal period. Make sure you get all the information you need by making sure your goals are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reasonable and Timely). If you walk away unsure of what is required, you haven't gotten the clarity that you need. Tell your supervisor about any issues or roadblocks you are facing and discuss how they might be overcome. Let your manager know what you need during the remainder of the fiscal year to be successful.

Discuss your development activities for the year. Share the progress you have made toward your own development plan with your supervisor. Find out how your manager can support you in accomplishing your development goals for the remainder of the appraisal period.

Complete the discussion

- Thank your supervisor for the feedback. Recommit yourself to successful performance.

Disaster Activity Snapshot

As of 8/13/12 ODA was working 7 open Presidential IA and 29 open Presidential PA disasters. ODA is actively working 36 Administrative declarations, 2 Governor certifications, 111 Sec Ag and 1 nationwide MREIDL declaration for a total of 186 open/active disasters.

Employee Suggestions

In Action!

The Employee Suggestion Box allows you to share your ideas on improving ODA with senior management.

Some employee suggestions are already making a difference! As a result of an idea from the CSC's Pam Cohen, SBA form 700 was changed to include a space for e-mail addresses, providing a new way of contacting a customer if their application is not returned.

If you have an idea, we'd love to see it!

Click [here](#) to submit your idea!

Employees in non-pay status can email their suggestions to oda_suggestions@sba.gov

Helpful Hints...

...saving your leave slips.

It can be useful to keep a copy of your leave slips for future reference. You can save these forms on your local drive. OPM Form 71 is available [here](#). Just click on the link, then on the OPM Form 71 that appears in the list. Type the data into this form, and then save it under another name in a local folder.