



News Release

PRESS OFFICE

Release Date: May 6, 2008
Release No: 08-49

Contact: Carol Chastang (202) 205-6987
Internet Address: www.sba.gov/news/

SBA Conducts Exercise to Improve Agency Disaster Response

WASHINGTON – U.S. Small Business Administration Deputy Administrator Jovita Carranza, agency senior leaders, key staffers and federal emergency response partners last week participated in a two-day disaster exercise to test the agency's capability to respond to a catastrophic disaster.

During the first day of the exercise, leaders from the agency's Office of Disaster Assistance, the Offices of Management and Administration, Financial Assistance, the Chief Information Officer, Field Operations, Congressional and Legislative Affairs and others, along with representatives from FEMA, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Red Cross and the IRS explained their roles and responsibilities in responding to disasters.

The next day's simulation exercise included several catastrophic disaster scenarios designed to challenge agency leaders to execute the SBA's Disaster Recovery Plan components for an effective response from employees across the SBA organization. The participants focused on delivering the highest level of customer service to disaster survivors, and worked to develop a clear and organized internal and external communications process that would provide important recovery information to the general public.

"The reforms of the last two years have prepared the SBA to process loans faster, provide better service to disaster survivors, and support the rebuilding of communities in the aftermath of major disasters," said Deputy Administrator Carranza. "This successful disaster exercise was a valuable experience as it allowed agency leaders to collaborate and address real-life challenges with practical, on-the-spot solutions."

One simulation involved a Category 4 hurricane that caused flood and wind damage to homes and businesses from North Carolina to Pennsylvania. Among the challenges faced by the SBA leadership were making estimates on the number of additional staff needed to respond to a disaster that damaged an estimated 900,000 structures, dealing with budget issues to ensure sufficient disaster loan funding, and responding to inaccurate media reports.

Deputy Administrator Carranza said these disaster response exercises will continue and expand to include varied groups of SBA officials, and more challenging scenarios.

For the latest news and information on SBA's Disaster Assistance program, visit the Web site at <http://www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance/index.html>.

###