

When disaster hits

Emergency and disaster preparedness planning keeps Boeing employees safe and customers in business

By Kathrine Beck

PHOTOS: (Below) A police officer surveys the devastation in the city of Kesenuma in northeastern Japan one week after the March earthquake and tsunami. **ASSOCIATED PRESS (Inset)** From left, Bud Battles, Chris Ely, Maggie Ramirez and Tamara Werner of the Auburn, Wash., site's Emergency Operations Center team use tabletop exercises to help prepare in case of a major emergency at the site. **JESSICA OYANAGI/BOEING**

The magnitude 9.0 earthquake that hit Japan on March 11, followed by a deadly tsunami, left fishing communities, businesses and towns devastated.

Public transportation across Japan was at a standstill for days, rolling blackouts occurred due to limited power availability, and retail outlets couldn't keep shelves stocked with food and other vital items. More than 900 temblors continued to rock the country in the weeks following the initial quake.

Boeing's Japan offices felt the effects.

"It's a sobering reminder how vulnerable we are to natural disasters," said Mike Denton, president, Boeing Japan, "and an even stronger reminder that planning and preparing is crucial to surviving and recovering."

Boeing Japan has more than 200 employees working in 12 cities, with the largest number in Tokyo. Immediately after the earthquake, Boeing emergency crisis teams reached out to locate all employees living, working and traveling in the area to ensure their safety and determine what help was needed.

It was not the first time Boeing employees have been caught up in natural disasters—or the possibility of one.

In September 2005, Boeing employee Jana Brazzle was working at the Houston site when Hurricane Rita threatened and the site was warned that an evacuation might be needed. She vividly remembers calling the Boeing Emergency Hotline to get updates on building closures and other matters.

She carries that number with her Boeing badge today.

"You knew at any point, you could call this number and know the status," Brazzle said.

Paul Diggins, operations director at the Houston site, said Hurricane Katrina, which had devastated New Orleans, was still fresh in everyone's memory, so "a lot of people were very nervous and there was a high sense of urgency."

He and his team carried out the established Emergency Preparedness plans for the Houston site.

Those plans include specific steps to take when a storm first enters the Gulf of Mexico, through to 24 hours before possible impact, at which point operations are suspended. The plans detail ways to communicate with employees and actions such as moving hardware to higher elevations, closing blinds and unplugging office equipment.

Fortunately, Hurricane Rita veered away from the Houston site. But Brazzle said it was reassuring to have the Boeing preparedness plans in place.

"You knew that we were all in this together," she said.

Today, Brazzle is a Puget Sound Business Preparedness project manager in Washington state for Shared Services Business Continuity. She helps organizations analyze the work they do and prepare plans to support customers

during floods, fires, earthquakes and other disruptive events.

"Having been through a natural disaster I can see both sides," Brazzle said. "There's an emotional side as well as the business planning. Emergencies happen. If you're lucky, you can predict them, but most times, you can't."

Last January, Brisbane, Australia, was hit by devastating floods when the river, which winds through the city and its suburbs, overflowed its banks.

Dan Johnson, senior manager, Information Management and Technology, Boeing Defence Australia, got the word Jan. 11, that the building would be evacuated. For the next four days, he served as a key emergency response coordinator.

"Our primary focus was on the safety of our staff and that anyone who needed help was getting it," Johnson said.

A big concern was the data centers that provide services for Boeing operations at 14 sites around Australia. If electrical power went out, as expected, the backup diesel generator that keeps the data centers going is located in the basement parking garage, and might get flooded.

Johnson worked diligently to ensure there would be time to shut down the data centers properly if floodwater was to reach the generator.

Airport authorities advised Boeing to shut down the customer training center located at the Brisbane Airport. Matthew McKenzie, manager of the facility, used established emergency planning and



Ready to help

Whether it's from the consequences of a disaster that makes headlines around the world, or a personal tragedy, Boeing is ready to help employees.

The company's Employee Assistance Program, or EAP, is available to help Human Resources, managers and employees deal with the emotional issues that can be caused by these situations.

"We know from experience that helping employees work through the emotional impact of what they have experienced can head off related problems, such as substance abuse or lapses in workplace safety, which can occur six months or more after the event due to unresolved trauma," said Ellen Walsh, a national and international program manager of the Boeing assistance program.

Through its network of specially trained professional counselors, the program deals with a variety of issues, including:

- Employee deaths, especially those that occur at work or under violent circumstances
- Natural disasters, such as the Japan earthquake and tsunami; Boeing had 200 employees in Japan at the time
- Man-made disasters, such as the Fort Hood, Texas, shootings in 2009, where a gunman killed 13 people and wounded 29 others

In 2010, the Employee Assistance Program assisted in 73 separate incidents, both international and in the United States, according to Rene Vaughan, also a national and



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preparedness processes to evacuate and suspend operations. The plans were originally developed by his organization in Washington state in response to a potential flood threat from Howard Hanson Dam.

The earthen dam, located southeast of Seattle, provides flood protection for the Green and Duwamish River valleys, but after a 2009 flood a weakness was discovered. Repairs are expected to take up to five years.

As part of Boeing's emergency preparedness planning, walls up to 12 feet (3.5 meters) high were built around the perimeter of two Boeing sites that could be flooded—the Commercial Aviation Services Training facility, which uses state-of-the-art simulators to train Boeing airline customers, and the Kent Space Center, home to several

important defense support programs and the regional emergency communications command center.

"These sites host critical business functions that if damaged by floodwaters, could significantly impact our customers and our ability to monitor the safety of our operations," explained Dave Komendat, Boeing's vice president and chief security officer. "The barriers provided the assurance we needed to protect these crucial areas."

Being prepared, and understanding what's needed to keep Boeing's global businesses running during and after a major disruption, is critical. In Japan, meanwhile, recovery efforts continue—as do Boeing operations there.

Denton, the Boeing Japan president,

credits the resilience of the Japanese people and the Boeing teams for being prepared.

"We will recover," he said. "Normalcy will return, and our business will continue. Wiser and stronger. ■"

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PHOTOS: (Below) Brisbane, in Queensland, Australia, endured major floods when the river that winds through the city and its suburbs overflowed its banks. **SHUTTERSTOCK (Insets, from left)** Near the Longacres, Wash., site, workers assemble barriers intended to divert potential floodwaters while Howard Hanson Dam is permanently repaired. **MARIAN LOCKHART/BOEING** Mark Kowalski of the Auburn, Wash., site's Emergency Operations Center team. **JESSICA OYANAGI/BOEING**



international program manager.

At the time of the Fort Hood shootings, nine Boeing employees, one Boeing contractor and two spouses of deployed employees were on-site at Fort Hood.

"The expedience with which the EAP organized dedicated resources to assist us was phenomenal," said Deneise Lacy, a Human Resources generalist from Boeing's site in Mesa, Ariz., who, along with her teammates, support Boeing staff and families at Fort Hood.

"The fact that employees and managers felt supported and that the company valued their well-being was very important."

To contact the Employee Assistance Program, U.S. employees can call 1-866-719-5788, while those outside the United States can call Canada collect at +1-905-270-7658.

For a list of on-site U.S.-based program counselors and other helpful information, visit <http://eap.web.boeing.com> on the Boeing intranet.

To reach the International Employee Assistance Program, employees can visit <http://eap.web.boeing.com/international>, also on the Boeing intranet.