

“Protecting Your Homes Against Hurricanes” Seminar – Welcome Address

Good afternoon,

It is my pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the Barbados Association of Professional Engineers to this afternoon’s seminar on “**Protecting Your Home Against Hurricanes**”.

It has become quite common for people to refer to natural phenomenon like hurricanes as ‘natural disasters’. This is somewhat of a sore point with engineers, most of who recognize that natural phenomena only result in disasters when they collide with unprepared and vulnerable communities. In other words, it is our inability to cope with an event and not the event itself which leads to disaster. Relatively inexpensive design considerations or retrofits can quite often mean the difference between temporary inconvenience and major dislocation after a storm has passed.

Fortunately, Barbados has been spared any serious hurricane activity for half a century. We should not however become complacent, and we should never confuse **infrequent** with **impossible**.

It is important that we prepare ourselves for the next hurricane Janet.

As a country, this means moving with some urgency to establish national minimum standards for the construction of buildings. It also means ensuring that our emergency systems and hurricane shelters are periodically evaluated to determine

their suitability for various categories of hurricane. In this regard, BAPE has assisted CERO in the past by carrying out inspections on several shelters. We believe however that a more comprehensive engineering review of the existing shelters should be undertaken, and we stand ready to assist CERO in the preparation of a Terms of Reference for such a study.

As individuals, preparation means heeding the advice of agencies like CERO and CEDERA, and taking the necessary precautions to protect our homes.

Which brings me to the objectives of this seminar. It is my hope that when we leave here this afternoon, we will all have a clearer understanding of **where our homes may be most vulnerable and what we can do to protect ourselves and reduce the risk of damage from hurricanes.**

Our presenters this afternoon all bring a wealth of practical knowledge and experience, and I would like to sincerely thank them for giving of their time to share this with us.

Thank you.

*Eng. Roger Blackman
President, BAPE
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