



NEWS RELEASE

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PUBLIC-PRIVATE-ACADEMIC PARTNERS LAUNCH LOUISIANA BUSINESS EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

LA BEOC is Louisiana's first emergency operations center dedicated to response and recovery for businesses

BATON ROUGE, La. – Today, Louisiana Economic Development Secretary Stephen Moret joined Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, or GOHSEP, Director Mark Cooper, University of Louisiana at Lafayette President Joseph Savoie representing the National Incident Management Systems and Advanced Technologies, or NIMSAT, Institute, and Louisiana State University Chancellor Dr. Michael Martin representing the Stephenson Disaster Management Institute, or SDMI, at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Louisiana Business Emergency Operations Center, or LA BEOC.

A unique effort in the U.S., the LA BEOC represents the first time Louisiana's public, private and academic sectors have coordinated emergency efforts of businesses and volunteer organizations statewide in a structured manner. Serving as an annex of the state's Emergency Operations Center, the LA BEOC will facilitate communication with the state's major economic driver industries, as well as owners and operators of critical infrastructures and key resources to enhance Louisiana's emergency management efforts. The LA BEOC will be led by the NIMSAT Institute, with support from SDMI, under an overarching leadership of LED and GOHSEP.

"This year, forecasters are predicting a very busy storm season," said Gov. Bobby Jindal. "No matter how many storms are predicted though, it's critical that folks start preparing now for the threat of a storm. We know it only takes one storm to change the lives of Louisianians. That's why we always hope for the best and prepare for the worst. We're encouraging everyone to visit www.getagameplan.org and Get a Game Plan right away in case a storm is headed towards Louisiana. At the state level, we continue to enhance hurricane preparedness and response efforts – and we're working with our federal partners to modify existing hurricane plans to meet the unique challenges posed by the BP oil spill."

The LA BEOC will work with businesses to improve their disaster preparedness; improve communication with business and industry before, during and after disaster events; rapidly develop accurate economic impact estimates to support decision making and requests for business assistance; coordinate response efforts to assist businesses in their efforts to return to normal operations as quickly as possible; and help coordinate post-disaster economic recovery.

"Louisiana's business community needs to be equipped with the information, tools and support to rebound quickly from all types of emergency situations," said Moret. "The LA BEOC will help us streamline response efforts for the business community, quickly assess economic impacts and effectively communicate with our existing businesses before, during and after future disaster situations. In turn, the LA BEOC will help us quickly and effectively address the physical damage, disruption of operations and financial loss suffered by our businesses."

"It is extremely important that Louisiana's businesses and industries are prepared for all disasters that can impact our state; and that those critical to bringing communities back on line following a disaster are integrated into the state's emergency planning and response efforts," said Cooper. "The LA BEOC is important for facilitating that relationship and coordinating private sector involvement and support during a time of crisis. The end result is a more resilient Louisiana."

"During hurricanes Katrina and Rita, a team of researchers and staff at UL Lafayette under the leadership of Dr. Ramesh Kolluru recognized the need for public-private partnerships," said Savoie. "They have worked tirelessly for the past five years to establish the NIMSAT Institute and to conduct research and develop technologies to implement these partnerships for the benefit of the state of Louisiana and the nation. Under the leadership of Dr. Kolluru and at the direction of GOHSEP Director Mark Cooper and LED Secretary Stephen Moret, the NIMSAT Institute assisted in the informal deployment of these partnerships during hurricanes Gustav and Ike in 2008. Today, as the LA BEOC is formalized, the university and the NIMSAT Institute are proud to lead this collaborative public-private partnership, under the direction of LED and GOHSEP and with support of our partners from Louisiana State University's Stephenson Disaster Management Institute."

To further support communication between LA BEOC and businesses, LABEOC.org has been activated for businesses to learn about disaster information alerts and provide post-disaster economic impact updates. Louisiana businesses are encouraged to register at the online portal, providing their contact information, as well as details about the products and services they might be able to provide to support the state's disaster response. The portal also offers a secure way to donate money, goods or services.

"The LA BEOC is the result of a truly unique and collaborative effort amongst business, government and academic entities," said Martin. "The LA BEOC will provide real support to Louisiana's business community by providing a direct line of communication for critical industry associations to state government agencies so that resources can be committed to help them get businesses back up and running as quickly as possible. The center's value has already been realized through its involvement with the Gulf of Mexico oil spill response efforts. LSU's Stephenson Disaster Management Institute has been instrumental in making this center a reality. LSU is committed to meeting the needs of our community and state, and is honored to participate in this partnership by working together towards a common goal."

The LA BEOC will have 42 Dell terminals with access to 10 workstations to be used by industry and Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters, or VOAD, decision makers. Louisiana Optical Network Initiative and Cox Communications will provide Internet access. Accessories enhancing the LA BEOC information system include: an audio visual system with two high-definition plasma screens and three high-lumen projectors, high-speed color printers, an electronic white board, video conferencing systems, a wireless network, conference rooms and generator capacity to withstand long disasters without electricity. These features will provide members better connectivity to other EOC systems, and allow them to gain access to GOHSEP's online portal, Virtual Louisiana.

Located at LSU's South Campus, the LA BEOC will seat up to 40 business leaders, industry trade associations and organizations, as well as representatives from the Louisiana VOAD. When activated, the LA BEOC and its representatives will make disaster recovery and response recommendations to LED, GOHSEP and the governor's Unified Command Group.

The LA BEOC industry seats include Acadiana Economic Development, Association of Contingency Planners, Baton Rouge Area Chamber, Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance, Greater New Orleans Inc., Louisiana Hotel and Motel Association, Louisiana Motor Transport Association, Louisiana Oil Marketers and Convenience Store Association, Louisiana Pulp and Paper Association, Louisiana Restaurant Association, Louisiana Retailers Association, Louisiana Telecommunications Association, Louisiana Mid-continent Oil and Gas Association, Louisiana Association of Business and Industry, Louisiana Bankers Association, Louisiana Chemical Association, Louisiana Hospital Association, Louisiana Technology Council, National Federation of Independent Business, North Louisiana Economic Partnership, Northeast Louisiana Economic Alliance, Ports Association of Louisiana, South Louisiana Economic Council and Southwest Louisiana Economic Development Alliance. Each member of the LA BEOC must complete initial disaster management training before actively serving in the LA BEOC.

The following companies have also donated equipment, technology and services to the LA BEOC: Aruba Networks, Citrix Corp., Dell Corp., Entergy, First Call, FrontRow and Polivision.

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