



Government of Saint Lucia

Information Management in Emergencies and Disasters

Document of the Saint Lucia National Emergency Management Plan

Based on the
Jamaica - National Media Plan for Disasters and Emergencies - Date Unknown,
Anguilla – International Media Plan for Emergency Situations – October 26, 2005,
Centre for Risk Communication at <http://riskcommunication.net/>
Risk Communication... at <http://riskcommunication.net/pubs/crc-pl.pdf>

Cabinet Approved 7 May, 2009



Revisions.....	4
Glossary	5
PART ONE - INTRODUCTION.....	5
1.0 THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL MEDIA PLAN	5
2.0 THE SAINT LUCIAN MEDIA ENVIRONMENT	6
3.0 AUTHORITY	7
4.0 ASSUMPTIONS.....	7
5.0 RISK COMMUNICATION THEORETICAL MODELS.....	7
• The Risk Perception Model	7
• The Mental Noise Model	8
• The Negative Dominance Model	8
• The Trust Determination Model	8
6.0 CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS	9
7.0 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP	9
8.0 PROCEDURES FOR THE ACTIVATION OF THE NATIONAL RESPONSE MECHANISM	10
PART TWO – PHASES	10
Disaster Cycle	10
Actions Before A Crisis / Ongoing.....	11
Actions During A Crisis.....	12
Action After A Crisis	14
Warning Alert And Response Notice [WARN].....	16
PART THREE – NATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE	17
1 .The National Media Centre [NMC].....	17
2. Objectives Of The National Media Centre	17
3. The Roles And Functions Of The National Media Centre	17
4. The Location Of The National Media Centre	17
5. Procedures For The Activation Of The National Media Centre	18
6. Who Reports To The National Media Centre	19
7. Roles And Functions Of Key Personnel During The Response Phase Of The National Emergency Operations Centre	19
8. Procedures For The Dissemination Of Information From The National Media Centre	21
9. Deactivation Of The National Media Centre	22

PART FOUR.....	23
National Plan for Emergencies and Disasters, which overwhelm Infrastructure, Roads, Agriculture and Housing.....	23
Existing Systems in each District to facilitate effective communication	23
Procedures for the Dissemination of Information from the District Emergency Operations ...	23
Centre.....	23
CONCLUSION.....	24
PART FIVE - APPENDICES	25
Appendix 1 - Dissemination Of News Releases	25
Appendix 2 – Recommended Procedures For Handling The Media Within The National Emergency Management Organisation Secretariat.....	27
Appendix 3 – Examples: News Release	29
Appendix 4 - Media Contact Listing	31
Appendix 5 - Field Guides	31
Appendix 6 - Media Request Form For Entry To Saint Lucia	31
Appendix 7 – Committee Structure	32

Revisions

	Item Revised	Date of Revision	Date of approval by Committee	Date of Approval by NEMAC
1.	New Part II inserted	July 28, 2008	September 1, 2008	
2.	New Section 5 in Part I [Risk Communication Theoretical Models]	September 4, 2008		
3.	New Appendix 6 - Media Request Form for Entry to Saint Lucia	September 11, 2008		
4.	New section on Warning Alert And Response Notice	October 29, 2008		
5.				

Glossary

GIS	Government Information Service
MCWT&PU	Ministry of Communication Works Transportation and Public Utilities
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoH	Ministry of Health
NEMAC	National Emergency Management Advisory Committee
NEMO	National Emergency Management Organization
NEMO-Sec	National Emergency Management Organization Secretariat
NEOC	National Emergency Operations Centre
NPC	National Printing Corporation
NTC	National Transport Committee
PIO	Principal Information Officer
SLASPA	Saint Lucia Air and Sea ports Authority

PART ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.0 THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL MEDIA PLAN

Public perceptions and opinions often determine the resolution of high concern, high stress, or emotionally charged issues. They have a profound impact on an organization's success.

Trust and credibility are central to effective communication about topics of high concern. Key elements in trust and credibility are:

- Caring/Empathy
- Commitment/Dedication
- Competence/Expertise
- Honesty/Openness



SOURCE: Center for Risk Communication

Hazard analysis and experience have confirmed that Saint Lucia is at risk from numerous hazards, both natural and technological:

- Meteorological Hazard: Hurricanes, Tropical Wave, Tropical Storm, Storm Surge, Flooding, Land Slides, Drought
- Seismic/Volcanic Hazard: Volcanic Eruption, Earthquake, Tsunami
- Technological: Fire, Explosion, Hazardous Material Spill, Mass Poisoning, Pollution, Civil Unrest

- Other: Plague, Mass Causality, Epidemic Outbreak, Dam Failure

These forms of disasters can cause serious dislocation and suffering and can also pose a setback to the country economically. It is therefore prudent that a National Plan be developed which, incorporates a system of coordinated notification and warning by the media working in close collaboration with the National Emergency Management Organization [NEMO].

In this document the term media is defined as the means or vehicle by which information is conveyed to mass or target audience. They are usually referred to as the print media – newspapers and magazines and the electronic media – television, radio and internet. The process must therefore include information and education disseminated before a threat, the information disseminated in response to the threat and the monitoring of the rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts by the media. Media Planning is therefore critical as there must be a coordinated system of how emergency events are handled by all stakeholders.

2.0 THE SAINT LUCIAN MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

Of great importance to how the media operates, is the realization that the media in the Caribbean are now significantly run as businesses within the context of a very competitive environment. Today the media landscape in Saint Lucia comprises five national newspapers, several papers from other Caribbean countries, seven radio stations, five television stations, four subscriber cable operators with cable channels, as well as magazine and book publishers.

Today, the media is completely under private commercial control except that the government information services use legally reserved time and space in the private media. This mode of operation has caused a movement away from a coordinated and consistent representation of social issues and values, to the mass media presenting issues of the market place in order to survive.

The most significant issues facing the media as it relates to disasters is the commitment in presenting disaster management issues in a coordinated and consistent manner. The boundary between sensationalism and accurate reporting is critical in disaster management. In Saint Lucia, there is often the idea that the media tends to sensationalize hazard/disaster information and does not devote enough time to pre-disaster preparedness and early warning. In relation to disasters, it is expected that the media will provide ongoing news about the incident, relate actions by the response agencies, provide warnings and reduce panic and act as communication channels imparting information on response issues, shelter, food, search and rescue, evacuation among others. The NEMO Secretariat is limited in the ability to pay for time in the print and electronic media to highlight disaster management information. Through this National Media Plan, it is therefore expected that representatives of the media fraternity will support the NEMO Secretariat in our mandate towards effective alerting, notification and warning in the event of a disaster and or emergency.

3.0 AUTHORITY

The National Emergency Management Organization will be responsible for all preparedness, response and relief activities for the island as mandated under the Disaster Preparedness and Response Act No. 13 Of 2000. The NEMO Secretariat with the Chair of the NEMO and the Chair of the Information Committee will therefore facilitate the design and review of this plan. This Plan will therefore be a sub plan of the National Emergency Management Plan and will be adopted as such.

4.0 ASSUMPTIONS

- That NEMO and its member agencies will respond to a disaster situations.
- A large scale emergency will result in increased demands on media personnel.
- That the Government of Saint Lucia shall respond to a disaster.
- That Emergencies in Saint Lucia may be categorized in two ways:
 - Those that are preceded by a build-up [slow onset] period, which can provide Saint Lucia with advance warnings, which is used to facilitate timely and effective activation of national arrangements
 - Other emergencies occur with little or no advance warning thus requiring mobilization and almost instant commitment of resources, with prompt support from the Government of Saint Lucia just prior to or after the onset of such emergencies.

5.0 RISK COMMUNICATION THEORETICAL MODELS

[SOURCE: Risk Communication, the West Nile Virus Epidemic, and Bioterrorism: Responding to the Communication Challenges Posed by the Intentional or Unintentional Release of a Pathogen in an Urban Setting]

Risk communication is based on four theoretical models that describe how risk information is processed, how risk perceptions are formed, and how risk decisions are made. Together, these models provide a foundation for thinking about and coordinating effective communication in high-concern situations.

- The Risk Perception Model

Many factors affect how risks are perceived, and these factors can alter risk perceptions in varying degrees of magnitude. To date, at least 15 risk perception factors have been identified that have direct relevance to risk communication. These factors play a large role in determining levels of:

 - concern,
 - worry,
 - anger,
 - anxiety,
 - fear,
 - hostility, and
 - outrage, which, in turn, can significantly change attitudes and behavior.

- The Mental Noise Model

This model focuses on how people process information under stress and how changes in how information is processed affect their communication. When people are in a state of high concern because they perceive a significant threat their ability to process information effectively and efficiently is severely impaired. When people feel that what they value is being threatened, they experience a wide range of emotions, ranging from anxiety to anger. The emotional arousal and/or mental agitation generated by these strong feelings create mental noise.

- The Negative Dominance Model

The negative dominance model describes the processing of negative and positive information in high-concern situations. In general, the relationship between negative and positive information is asymmetrical, with negative information receiving significantly greater weight. The negative dominance theory is consistent with a central theorem of modern psychology that people put greater value on losses (negative outcomes) than on gains (positive outcomes). One practical implication of negative dominance theory is that a negative message should ideally be counterbalanced by a larger number of positive or solution-oriented messages. Another practical implication of negative dominance theory is that communications that contain negatives – e.g., the words *no*, *not*, *never*, *nothing*, *none*, and other words with negative connotations – tend to receive closer attention, are remembered longer, and have greater impact than positive messages. As a result, the use of unnecessary negatives in dialogue with stakeholders in high-concern situations can be highly detrimental, having the unintended effect of drowning out positive or solution-oriented information or undermining trust by stating an absolute that is impossible to defend or maintain. More specifically, risk communications are most effective when they focus on what is being done, rather than on what is not being done.

- The Trust Determination Model

A common thread in all risk communication strategies is the need to establish trust. Only when trust has been established can other goals, such as education and consensus-building, be achieved. Trust can only be built over time and is the result of ongoing actions, listening, and communication skill.

To establish or maintain trust, third-party endorsements from trustworthy sources should ideally be undertaken, as well as the use of four trust determination factors:

- caring and empathy;
- dedication and commitment;
- competence and expertise; and
- honesty and openness.

Surveys indicate that certain organizations and individuals, including citizen advisory groups, health professionals, safety professionals, scientists, and educators, are perceived to have high to medium trust on health, safety, and environmental issues. An advantage of being from a trusted group is that it enables a person to communicate effectively, even when communication barriers exist. However, individual trust overrides organizational trust. Trust in individuals from a highly trusted organization may significantly increase or

decrease depending on how they present themselves (verbally and non-verbally) and how they interact with others.

Perceptions of trust are decreased by actions or communications that indicate:

- disagreements among experts;
- lack of coordination among risk management organizations;
- insensitivity by risk management authorities to the need for effective listening, dialogue, and public participation;
- an unwillingness to acknowledge risks;
- an unwillingness to disclose or share information in a timely manner; and
- irresponsibility or negligence in fulfilling risk management responsibilities.

6.0 CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

This Plan will rely heavily on the activation of National, Sectoral and District Emergency Operations Centres as dictated by the National Emergency Management Plan. The National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) is the hub of operations for coordinating response at the National level. It is where multi agency representatives gather to respond to the emergency needs of the public. These agencies will take appropriate decisions for the alleviation of crisis. These decisions are then transferred to the Media who will then communicate this information to the various publics.

Activities are coordinated at the District level in this same manner. Multi agency representatives from within the impacted Districts will come together to pool thoughts and ideas and response to the emergency needs of the community. These persons will then take timely, efficient and appropriate decisions for the alleviation of crisis situations. The aim here is to relieve chaos, save lives, property and protect the economy.

Decisions taken are filtered to the NEOC and then channeled to the media from the media room, which is an integral part of the NEOCs operations. The media room as referred to here will be called the National Media Centre in this Plan.

7.0 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The committee consists of, but is not confined to the following:

1. Director – Information Services [Chair]

Government Agencies

1. Government Information Service
2. Ministry of Agriculture Communications Unit
3. Ministry of Education Communications Unit
4. Ministry of Health Education Bureau

5. Ministry of Tourism
6. Ministry of External Affairs
7. PRO Royal Saint Lucia Police Force
8. PRO Saint Lucia Fire Service

NEMO

1. PROs for Eighteen District Disaster Committees

Ex Officio - Media Houses

1. Newspapers
2. Radio stations
3. Television stations
4. Subscriber cable operators with cable channels

8.0 PROCEDURES FOR THE ACTIVATION OF THE NATIONAL RESPONSE MECHANISM

7.1 – NOTIFICATION: The Director of the National Emergency Management Organisation [NEMO] must be notified of all MAJOR response activations. This is necessary to allow for notification and the subsequent rapid coordination of resources should the incident escalate to a level requiring National mobilisation.

7.2 – ACTIVATION: A major situation, which threatens population centres will require that the Incident Commander [IC] receives support for its control and management. This will be coordinated by the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC).

The IC shall be the one to advise the Director NEMO of the need for a National Response.

The Director - NEMO will activate the National Media Centre. The Director of Operations for the National Media Centre is the Director of Information Services who will monitor all issues as it relates to the staffing and operations of the media centre.

PART TWO – PHASES

DISASTER CYCLE

The Disaster Cycle comprises of the following elements:

BEFORE

- Prevention
- Mitigation
- Preparedness

DURING



- DISASTER OCCURS

AFTER

- Response
- Reconstruction / Recovery
- Rehabilitation / Rebuilding

ACTIONS BEFORE A CRISIS / ONGOING
--

1. Media database:

- a. NEMO Secretariat with GIS will maintain current database of target media.
- b. Update list whenever new contact is made.
- c. At least once per year make formal contact with all persons on list to verify and update their information.
- d. The Director NEMO shall confirm use of the Media Centre.

2. NEMO Secretariat with GIS Stakeholder database / contact with stakeholders:

- a. NEMO Secretariat with GIS to maintain current stakeholder/resource person contact list.
- b. Arrange face to face meeting with Members of the Information Committee at least once per year to discuss procedures, issues, concerns and specific action plans. Such discussions to include type and format of information most relevant and useful to their constituents.
- c. The Information Committee shall confirm the Media Focal Point.

3. Government Communication Agencies

- a. The Principal Information Officer who normally performs communication functions on behalf of government will maintain list of media and other contacts with whom the Government Information Service normally deal and with whom they will liaise and provide information during a crisis. Such lists should be prioritized based on media/contacts which will be most useful in providing immediate reach to identified target publics, followed by those with longer lead times.
- b. Government Agencies with communication units shall conduct the same maintenance of contact lists.
- c. The GIS shall collaborate with the Council of and for Persons with Disabilities to impart important information and warnings.
- d. The Saint Lucia Met Services shall be responsible for alerts, warnings and watches for:
 - Storms and Hurricanes
 - Extreme Heat Events and
 - Tsunamis

4. **Coordination with stakeholders** – NEMO Secretariat with GIS and stakeholders to ensure their lists are coordinated to prevent unnecessary duplication among agencies but copies of all lists should be kept by all agencies to enable continued dissemination if one agency's systems are down. Lists to be cross-checked and updated at least once per year.
5. **Training for Press Focal Point** - By June each year provide training for Press Focal Point. Topics to include: public speaking, delivering key messages, dealing with media questions, pitfalls to avoid, protocol, etc.
6. **General Readiness** - Ensure facilities, equipment, staff and other resources are available and ready for the execution of the plan. This includes periodic testing of plan and equipment.
7. **Documentation** – The NEMO Secretariat together with the National Archives Authority and the Government Documentation Centre shall maintain information of historic events.
8. **Shadow** – The Saint Lucia Cadet Corps shall ensure that the committee has a Liaison Officer assigned.
9. **District Committee PRO Team** -- Together with NEMO Secretariat develop and distribute messages for public information/education and arrange for community talks.
10. **Local Media Houses**
 - a. Together with the GIS and the NEMO Secretariat to collaborate to educate their staff and the public on all aspects of disaster management. The Local Media House shall also ensure that their Continuity of Operations is up-to-date and shall have a representative at the National Media Centre.
 - b. In collaboration with the GIS media houses shall relay the Emergency Broadcast Signal when tested.

ACTIONS DURING A CRISIS

(When crisis is imminent or, for sudden events, immediately after)

1. **Shadow** – Should the Chair or the Deputy Chair be unavailable to meet their responsibilities in the immediate aftermath of the disaster the Saint Lucia Cadet Corps Liaison shall assume the responsibilities of the Chair. The Officer is to be replaced as soon as immediately possible.
2. **Contact and brief stakeholders**
 - a. Following consultation with National Disaster Management Advisory Committee [NEMAC] the GIS shall contact, brief and consult with communication staff and international stakeholder network on nature of emergency, response procedures and special strategies for this particular circumstance.

- b. Stakeholders to follow-up by briefing their contacts and to return confirmation of contacts made to Media Focal Point.
3. **Activate Facilities** – National Media Centre and other locations / facilities.
4. **Activate telecommunications channels** - Update website and other telecommunications facilities.
5. **Initial press release**
 - a. Prepare and issue release(s) targeted to local, regional and overseas media audiences in consultation with stakeholders of relevant sectors.
 - b. Establish frequency of releases.
 - c. The GIS shall collaborate with the Council of and for Persons with Disabilities to impart important information and warnings.
6. **Initial releases cover be issued (e.g. once per day, twice per day, etc.)**
 - a. nature of situation, what is being done to prepare/respond,
 - b. relevance of situation to target audience,
 - c. types of assistance which government anticipates needing for response/recovery; arrangements for such assistance and plans for initiating requests,
 - d. background information [profile] on Saint Lucia.
7. **Contact and brief press** - Initiate person-to-person contact with target media as means of reinforcing that there is an official source of information on the crisis. Brief media on situation. Briefing to cover:
 - a. Local, regional and overseas contact persons are, how to reach them,
 - b. frequency of releases/briefings,
 - c. where to find official information sources (including the websites),
 - d. criteria and procedures for entry (if they indicate they want to come).
8. **Criteria for entry of press** –
 - a. International Media representatives seeking entry will be required, where feasible, to complete a Media Request for Entry form (See Appendix 7). Press will be allowed entry and facilitation provided:

Their bona fides can be established (i.e., they are pre-accredited by GIS, or they can supply proof of their employment by / affiliation to an established media house)

The airport /other ports of entry are open for incoming craft.

- i. They understand they will be required to observe any government emergency restrictions such as curfews, etc.
 - ii. Entry to and amount of time they are allowed to remain in the Island may be limited by the availability of accommodation.
 - b. The Media Focal Point will approve requests for entry.

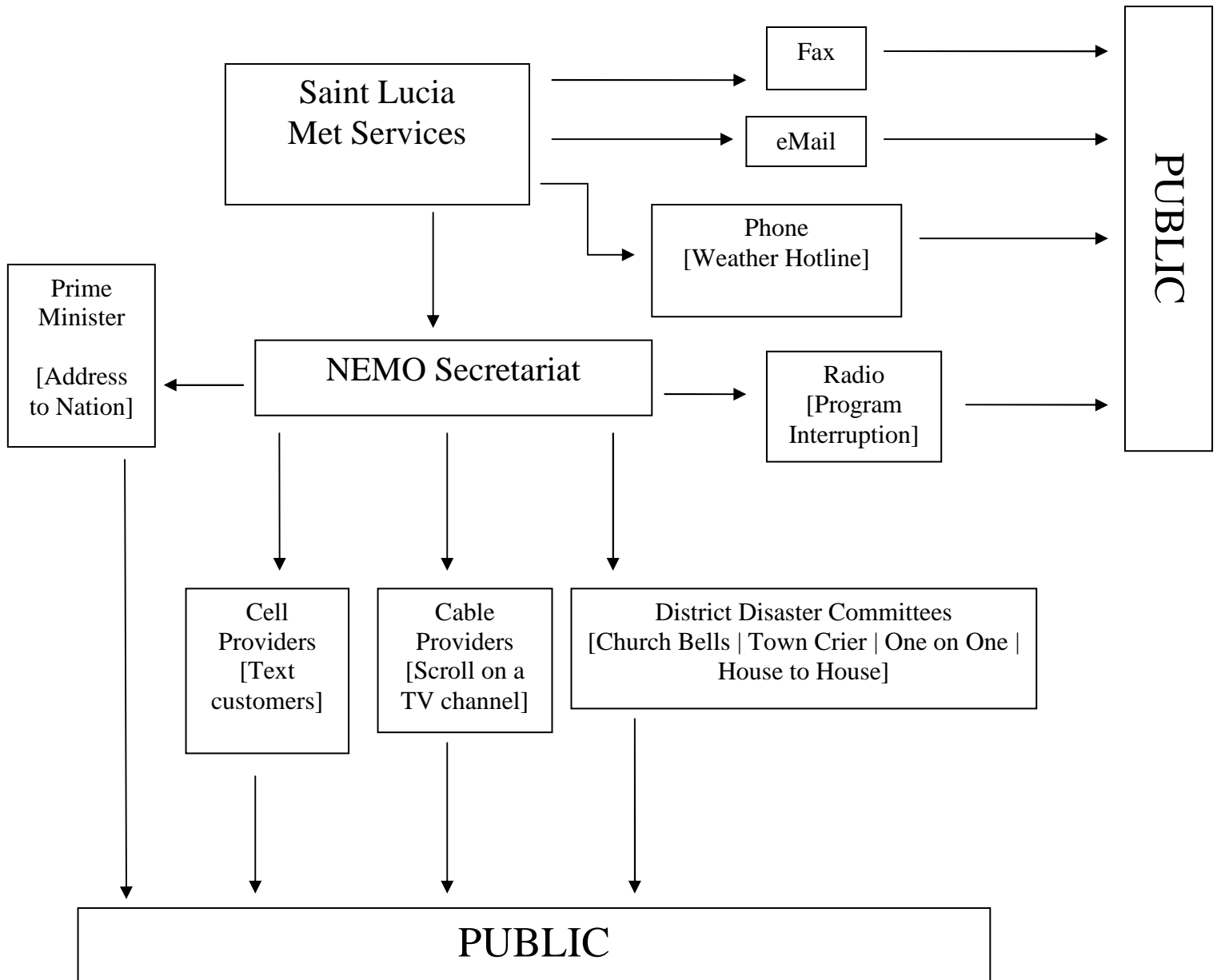
- c. Press approved for entry will be issued with a press pass.
- 9. **Officials reminded of criteria for press entry** - PIO to remind emergency officials and Immigration of criteria for entry of press. Prepare copies of Media Request for Entry form (*See Appendix 7*).
- 10. **Gathering and dissemination of information from emergency management meetings**
 - a. GIS Rep to attend all EOC/emergency management committee meetings. Information will be disseminated to media after these meetings in the form of
 - i. face-to-face briefing, and
 - ii. follow-up press release
 - b. To facilitate this dissemination the agenda of these meetings must include current media concerns/questions; decision on current key messages to be delivered and who the appropriate spokesperson(s) will be. Information officers attending meeting will begin drafting release/briefing statement as soon as enough information is gathered to enable draft to be prepared. Information staff will come to meeting with release outline based on information made available before the meeting (e.g. current location of storm, emergency phase, etc.).
- 11. **Information staff prepare spokespersons for briefings** - Preparation meeting should cover key messages to be delivered; anticipated press questions and appropriate responses. Information staff to prepare briefing sheet and Q&A for more formal press conferences.
- 12. **Documentation** – The NEMO Secretariat together with the National Archives Authority and the Government Documentation Centre shall maintain an on going record of the response for future reference.
- 13. **District Committee PRO Team** -- Assist in danger warning/alert procedures. In coordination with the NEOC provide pertinent information to the public. Refer all media requests to the National Media Centre.
- 14. **Local Media Houses** – Shall operate as per their Continuity of Operations is up-to-date and shall have a representative at the National Media Centre.

ACTION AFTER A CRISIS

- 1) **Releases** - Issue periodic update releases; update websites; brief stakeholders; respond to press enquiries. Releases and information disseminated to include, as soon as available:
 - a. extent & nature of damage;
 - b. number of casualties or procedure for confirming casualties; confirmed fatalities;
 - c. areas of assistance needed; arrangements already made or being made for such assistance, and procedures/contact points for assistance;

- d. address rumours;
 - e. other information relevant to the particular target audience.
- 2) **Press briefings** - Daily, or more frequent if necessary, press briefings to reinforce the above information. Briefings also provide the opportunity for regional and international updates may be made available by satellite link-up, and or conference calls. All press briefings to be preceded by preparation of spokespersons.
- 3) **Stakeholder briefings** - Have daily briefings with main stakeholders to give local situation updates, to get updates on media and overseas public response and to discuss emerging issues/concern and strategies for dealing with them.
- 4) **Monitor overseas reports** and channel information to officials for discussion on how to respond
- 5) **Deal with overseas media requests for entry**
- a. Circulate to all stakeholders criteria for entry of overseas press
 - b. Stakeholders, particularly airline personnel, immigration officers and consular officers to inform Media Centre of press reps wishing to come in. Press to be directed to contact Media centre for clearance.
 - c. Incoming media to be met at airport / port of entry and escorted to media centre.
 - d. Media to be briefed at media centre & issued with restricted press pass.
 - e. Media reps' arrival and departure to be logged at media centre
- 6) **Deal with overseas media who find their way in without going through official procedures:**
- a. Despite mechanisms for managing the entry of overseas press it is possible that a few will be able to gain unofficial access. Stakeholders on the ground are to bring such persons to the attention of the Media Centre
 - b. Officials who are approached for interviews/sound bites by such reporters should be directed to the Government Information Service for accreditation before interview is given
- 7) **Documentation** – The NEMO Secretariat together with the National Archives Authority, the Government Documentation Centre and other relevant agencies shall maintain and store a file on the event for future reference.

WARNING ALERT AND RESPONSE NOTICE [WARN]



PART THREE – NATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE

1 .THE NATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE [NMC]

The National Media Centre is located at the Studios of the Government Information Service, 2nd Floor - Graham Louisy Administrative Building, Castries Waterfront.

The National Media Centre is the designated place from which information pertaining to a disaster event is managed and disseminated to the public. It is the area where media representatives from local, regional and international media organizations gather to collect information about the disaster event from key stakeholders and government officials for ease of dissemination to the public. This National Media Centre is a special room, which is provided for the reception and needs of the media. It is in this room that media briefs will take place, news releases will be prepared and general public information disseminated.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE

- a. To ensure speedy alert and warning on an upcoming hazard.
- b. To provide an efficient and coordinated transfer of information on an emergency event, from a central location to the public by utilizing available media.
- c. To reduce rumors and relieve chaos through the timely delivery of Public Service Announcements and Notices on pertinent matters that may arise on a disaster or emergency event.
- d. To ensure that information disseminated is available from one credible source.

3. THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE

- a. To ensure smooth information flow between the National Emergency Operations Centre and the Media.
- b. To disseminate public information on risk, warning and preparedness for the disaster or emergency event.
- c. To maintain an up-to-date contact list of media personnel and resources that may be needed during an emergency event for ease of accessibility.
- d. To present disaster activities which are actioned, and are to be actioned, to the public's attention.
- e. To notify the public of potential problems, threats to public safety and of the appropriate safety procedures as they relate to the emergency or disaster situation at hand.

4. THE LOCATION OF THE NATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE

Where the National Media Centre is physically located will be dependent on whether there is Partial or Full activation. Full activation implies severity of the incident. In the case of a Full activation the Media Centre will be located at the GIS Studio. This facility will be able to house at least eight [8] representatives at any one time. In the case of partial activation, the Government Information Service [GIS] Officers will disseminate information out of National Emergency Operations Centre.

Should the location of the NMC change due to the nature of the event, the Director of Information Services shall indicate to Media Houses the new location of the NMC.

5. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACTIVATION OF THE NATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE

5.1 PARTIAL ACTIVATION

- Before a disaster

The National Media Centre must be partially activated at least seventy two (72) hours or three days before impact of an event, such as a Tropical Storm or a Hurricane. At this stage the hazard might be in the general vicinity of the island, it may be several hundred miles away, but it might appear to be headed in our general direction. It can at this point change course and go elsewhere. At this stage GIS staff members will operate the National Media Centre from the GIS Studios.

Activities

The general public is immediately notified of any form of organized activity, which may be a threat to public safety, life or livelihood. There is continuous monitoring of the threat and the alerting authority [e.g. Met Services] also notifies Director of Operations of the Media Centre.

5.2 FULL ACTIVATION

- During a Hurricane Watch or Warning

This occurs when the Hurricane is thirty six to twenty four (36-24) hours away from the island and is expected to make landfall. There is still the likelihood at this stage that the system might change course and go elsewhere. The National Media Centre is fully activated. Representatives now begin to act on a twenty-four hour shift system as drafted by NEMO.

Activities

Press Briefings are organized as the information becomes relevant and needed. Briefs are also prepared for the NEOC Director and the Executive. Information is sourced through liaising with the NEOC. Please note that information at this stage should include Shelter procedures, evacuation routes, and precautionary tips.

- During and after a Disaster - an Earthquake

The National Media Centre remains fully activated. All activities continue with timely news releases, press briefings and media interviews with relevant stakeholders. Please note that this also applies to the impact of an Earthquake and is dependent on the severity of the event. In this case notification messages would include possible health risks, blocked and flooded roads and on the relief and rehabilitation process. Depending on the extent of the damage,

town criers will be utilized from the Town and Village Councils in advising persons on safety procedures and precautions.

- During Mass Events

Increasingly Saint Lucia is becoming a Mecca for entertainment. Spectaculars that draw crowds by the hundreds even thousands.

As with the National Response Mechanism, which the Emergency Services and the NEMO Secretariat will operate during any large event (Saint Lucia Jazz, Atlantic Rally for Cruisers [ARC], Religious Events [Crusades, Funerals], Cricket World Cup 2007 [CWC]) the National Media Centre will be on alert during such mega events. Given heightened press interest at times of crisis, it is then that the national communication arrangements would be most stretched. In advance of any such eventuality, the GIS shall their contingency plans for crisis communication – e.g. identifying appropriately qualified volunteers, who could staff the NMC centre in shifts, should the NMC go online 24/7.

It is vitally important that messages are disseminated within the first hour of a crisis. If the ‘Golden Hour’ period is missed, a critical information void can be created. As such the Director of NEMO and the Director or the Information Services MUST be kept briefed by the Response Agency[s].

6. WHO REPORTS TO THE NATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE

Persons who staff the National Media Centre will do so, on a 12 hour shift basis. The National Media Centre will comprise of:

- a. Two representatives from the Government Information Service.
- b. Local, Regional and International representatives from the print, radio and television organizations. In the case of television, allowances will have to be made for two persons to include a technician.
- c. Information Officers from response Agencies such as the Ministry of Health, the Saint Lucia Fire Service the Meteorological Service, the Royal Saint Lucia Police Force, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister’s Press Officer.
- d. For Mass Events a representative of the Organiser.

The Director of Information Services or his/her Representative will have prime responsibility to collect, organize and manage the flow of information from the NEOC to the National Media Centre. He/she must have a presence at all times, with a Secretary or Clerical Officer.

7. ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF KEY PERSONNEL DURING THE RESPONSE PHASE OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRE

In all cases representatives who are expected to form part of the National Media Centre should be briefed and informed as to whether they will be required to be available at the Centre. All

persons and individuals who staff the NEOC and the media will be issued with passes to facilitate their ability to access the area.

- a. Principal Information Officer
 - i. Liaises and consults with the NEOC Director to keep informed of local situations about which the public should be provided information and advice.
 - ii. Monitors situation reports and links with Agency Representatives in the NEOC to keep abreast of all matters as they relate to the event at hand.
 - iii. Prepares brief for the NEOC Director.
 - iv. Collect information from the Operations room and prepares News Releases and Advisories for the Public to include relevant and required information.
 - v. Answers media queries via telephone and schedules media interviews as requested
 - vi. Provides timely information to the Media Houses as represented in the National Media Centre or otherwise.
 - vii. Schedules periodic Press Conferences with Key Stakeholders for the media and general public to keep them informed of the situation.
 - viii. Monitors Media Broadcasts to ensure that information disseminated is correct and employs the necessary skills to correct inaccuracies.
- b. Government Information Service (GIS)
 - i. Ensures that information is accurately represented on the government plans as it relates to managing the disaster event.
 - ii. Prepares the relevant News Releases and advisories with information supplied from the NEOC as required by the GIS.
 - iii. Seek out strategies to ensure timely delivery of information on the electronic media.
 - iv. Prepares Brief for the Director – Information Services.
 - v. Monitors Media Broadcasts.
- c. Response Agency's Information Officers
 - i. Ensures that information on an action carried out by a particular agency is available in the National Media Centre.
 - ii. Verifies information with the respective Head Office and ensures that information supplied is accurate.
 - iii. Communicates issues to the Director – Information Services for presentation in Briefs and News Releases where necessary.
 - iv. Monitors Media Broadcasts.
- d. Media Responsibility
 - i. The main responsibility of the media as it relates to handling disasters and emergency events, is to provide the local and international media with accurate and timely information on the potential of a disaster and if impacted, its impact. It is extremely important that the media understand that they are an important link in the dissemination of information designed to save lives and protect livelihood.

- ii. At the basic level the media is expected to:
 - 1. Have designated times to update the public on the disaster or emergency event and ensure that this information is disseminated in a timely and consistent manner until the passage of the threat.
 - 2. Ensure that a link is maintained between the National Media Centre/NEMO to enhance the broadcasting of accurate information.
 - 3. Have a Contingency Plan in place should the Media House be disrupted and is unable to broadcast from that location.
 - 4. Ensure that the Emergency tone is used when broadcasting emergency messages.
 - 5. Broadcast information which has been verified as factual during an emergency.
- e. Secretary or Clerical Officer
 - i. Typing and filing of information as required by the Information Officers
 - ii. Assist with the operational and clerical needs of the National Media Centre

8. PROCEDURES FOR THE DESSEMINATION OF INFORMATION FROM THE NATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE

During Partial Activation

See procedures for handling the Media within the NEMO

During FULL ACTIVATION

News Releases are prepared by the Director – Information Services, and verified with the relevant Agencies. A draft released is then passed to the Director of Operations and the NEOC, in that order, before it may be released to the public. The information is then immediately sent to all Media houses, International Agencies, Response/Partner Agencies and the Office of the Prime Minister. Media Interviews are also organized with the relevant stakeholders. Town Criers to vulnerable communities are also organized.

Media Briefings

Briefings for the media are arranged every four hours, with the Prime Minister or relevant Disaster and Agency representatives.

Tours of Damaged Areas

Where damaged areas are inaccessible by road, access by helicopter will be arranged when possible, for selected media personnel. Please note that space in the helicopter might be limited therefore only **the GIS** videographers might be allowed and the raw footage shared.

9. DEACTIVATION OF THE NATIONAL MEDIA CENTRE

The Director - NEMO will deactivate the National Media Centre. This will automatically follow the deactivation of the National Emergency Operations Centre.

PART FOUR

National Plan for Emergencies and Disasters, which overwhelm Infrastructure, Roads, Agriculture and Housing

It must be clearly understood that the activation of the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) is automatically followed by the activation of the District Emergency Operations Centre, located at each District. In Part one, the National Emergency Management Plan demands that each District Committee would channel information on impact into the National Emergency Operations Centre, who will then send the information to the Media via the National Media Centre. However, for disaster events as mentioned above, this process might not be possible as it is naturally expected that for such emergencies, telecommunications and the road network might be severely impacted and the processing of information as outlined in Part one might be impeded or be virtually impossible.

This section of the Plan therefore calls for an independent release of information on the disaster or emergency situation at hand as it becomes necessary and as demanded by the information needs of the public. The Public Relations Officer of each District Disaster Committee will release this information.

Depending on the situation at hand and the extent of the damage, town criers will be utilized from the GIS in advising persons on safety procedures and precautions.

Existing Systems in each District to facilitate effective communication

Heavy reliance will be placed on the existing systems that are provided by the Government Information Service (GIS), who are an integral part of the National Emergency Management Plan.

The District Emergency Operations Centre is organized in a similar manner as the National Emergency Operations Centre. This means that the PRO charged with the responsibility to organize and disseminate information particular to the disaster event, will send out the information to the GIS, who will forward the information to local cable stations and to radio stations. It must be clearly noted, however that where contact can be made with the National Emergency Operations Centre, the information must be channeled to that Centre as outlined in Part One.

Procedures for the Dissemination of Information from the District Emergency Operations Centre

1. All information relevant to the disaster event must be passed to the Principal Information Officer [or rep.] on duty at the NMC.
2. News Releases are prepared by the District Committee PRO, and verified with the Chair of the District Disaster Committee. The draft release is then passed to the Principal Information Officer [or rep.] at the NMC for released to the public. It must be clearly

noted, however that where contact can be made with the National Emergency Operations Centre, the information must be channeled to that Centre as outlined in Part One.

3. Periodic Press Conferences are also organized through the Principal Information Officer [or rep.] of the GIS for District Chairs other Local Agency Officials based on the information that must be presented to the public.
4. Town Criers to vulnerable communities are organized.

CONCLUSION

This National Media Plan has been developed to serve as a guide for the treatment, handling and dissemination of information before, during and after an emergency. While usage is encouraged, it may be adjusted to suit a variety of situations, as one is not certain of the nature or presentation of many emergency events.

This Plan is in no way an attempt to restrict or reduce the information which is made available to the media but to ensure that it is delivered in a structured and organized manner. During disasters and emergencies, chaos and panic are often unavoidable especially in a society where the frequency of disaster events is often limited. Disasters and Emergencies can be unusual, startling and often very harmful. The response of the media can therefore be very dramatic and will require a departure from normal routine activities. The idea is to give structure to the information delivery process.

This Plan has been written with a heavy reliance on post disaster/emergency impact. It must however be remembered that there are other important phases of disaster events. These can be grouped into five phases for the purpose of public information:

1. Pre disaster hazard mitigation and preparedness
2. Pre disaster hazard prediction and warning
3. Disaster impact
4. Post impact emergency response
5. Long term rehabilitation and reconstruction

An informed media is critical to the action, which is taken at each phase. There is in fact public recognition of the constructive and necessary role of the media in imparting disaster information. Reference must be made to the DRAFT Broadcasting Act which makes specific reference to broadcast houses halting their normal routine to facilitate the Broadcast of Emergency Information. The Broadcast media are therefore of paramount importance in disseminating warnings and stimulating reactions that will save lives.

PART FIVE - APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - DISSEMINATION OF NEWS RELEASES

1. The Information Officer or Director of Information Services on Duty drafts the Release.
2. The Director – Information Services or PIO then reviews the Release.
3. Corrections and or amendments are then done
4. The PIO, who signs and states that it is now ready for dissemination to the Public.
5. The Release is then disseminated to the Relevant Agencies as Listed in Appendix 1.
6. Verification that the relevant media houses have received it is then done by the Secretary.
7. The News Release is then filed in the News Release File.

NEWS OR PRESS CONFERENCES

When a news release or media inquiry is inadequate for handling important news, then a Press Conference must be called. Speakers must be available to provide media persons and reporters with ‘hard’ and or factual information. Media persons will have the opportunity to clarify and or expand announcements made by spokespersons, which would ensure that coverage is more accurate and complete.

PRESS OR MEDIA KITS

Press or Media Kits must be used every time there is a news conference, or at any other event which brings out media coverage. It must include details on the Speaker’s background on the reason for the event and any other illustrative material and artwork that will make plain the purposes of the Conference or the event.

TIPS FOR INTERVIEWEES

Some people, such as politicians, have considerable experience in dealing with the media and have little problem providing interviews and briefings. Most groups that will be approached during times of crises (e.g. scientists, NGO representatives, the police, health officer and members of the emergency services) may not be as experienced with the media and may find being interviewed difficult and intimidating. Here are some tips to help you cope with an interview:

- a. Always have your basic message prepared beforehand. Practice it aloud if necessary, so that it is delivered in a confident manner.
- b. Make it short and interesting, using words that will show confidence and control over the situation (such as “definitely”, “absolutely” and “certainly”).
- c. Whatever you are asked, move the question towards your basic message (e.g. “This is important but the main point to remember is not to enter the evacuated zone”).
- d. Repeat it if necessary, so you are sure it gets through (e.g. “This zone is definitely unsafe. It is really dangerous. People should not enter it under any circumstances.”)
- e. If your interview is pre-recorded, your message may later be edited into a short “sound-bite” (usually 10-15 seconds) for news items. Try to keep your answers short and concise.

- f. Avoid chains of reasoning. Go directly to the point and make sure you get your basic message across.

GENERAL TIPS

- a. If possible, choose a familiar location for the interview.
- b. If you have to go to a studio, arrive some 10-15 minutes before the interview. This will give you time to settle down.
- c. Wear comfortable clothing.
- d. Nervousness can cause perspiration, so use light and airy clothes and pale shirt colors.
- e. Take deep breaths before the interview and try to relax.
- f. Avoid extending vocals (“aahm” or “eehh”) because these can suggest doubt.
- g. Sweets to suck on (e.g. boiled sweets or mints) can help to settle your stomach and prevent coughing.
- h. If you have a cold or sinus problems, avoid milk and dairy products shortly before an interview.

TELEVISION TIPS

- a. Look at the interviewer, not at the camera and maintain eye contact.
- b. Transmit a message with your clothes: Dress formally to communicate concern and a sense of urgency. Dress more casually as the emergency receded.
- c. In front of a camera, try not to move about too much (even if you are moving only your legs or feet). Movement implies nervousness and you may also shift out of focus. If you are sitting in a studio, ask for a stable, non-rotating chair.

The responsibility for communication and dissemination of information is a shared responsibility. The Crisis Communications Guide is a Document of the Saint Lucia National Emergency Management Plan and is a stand-alone Volume.

APPENDIX 2 – RECOMMENDED PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING THE MEDIA WITHIN THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION SECRETARIAT

MEDIA GUIDELINES

1. All media inquiries must be routed to Director – NEMO [or Deputy if Director is not available]
2. The Director must be informed of all media requests for information and Interviews
3. The organization has two named spokespersons on policy issues and official positions – the Director and Deputy. In cases where other representatives from the organization will be required to make statements, the Director will make the necessary recommendations.
4. During non-emergency times when information is requested on general matters/ activities, NEMO Staff are authorized to provide such information after consultation with the Director.
5. The Director will make arrangements to have any Officer cognizant in the field of query to call back the inquirer with a full response. All such statements will be from a written text, which has been vetted by the Director.
6. During emergency incidents/ disasters, the Director is authorized to provide a news release to the media, via the National Media Centre once the information has been verified and approved by National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) Director.
7. During emergency incidents/ disasters, news releases shall be sent out at least once every three hours or as information on changes in the situation or new developments become available.
8. The Director - NEMO is to be notified as to how media queries were dealt with and that form will be filed for future reference.
9. In responding to inquiries all Staff should be cognizant of the fact that there are no off-the-record responses and that their answers must be compatible with the organization's positions and policies.
10. The Director – NEMO shall maintain an ongoing relationship with media personnel i.e. media list, contact names, etc.
11. Inquiries will often deal with sensitive matters which for whatever reasons cannot be answered. In such cases the following responses should be given:
 - a. Don't be afraid to respond, "I cannot answer that".
 - b. If the questioner is insistent, respond, "I cannot answer that because I do not know", or "I cannot answer that at this time".
 - c. Avoid the cliché response of "No comment". It infuriates the media and when published or broadcasted, sounds as if there is something to hide
12. During an emergency, all media queries are to be referred to the Principal Information Officer on Duty and or the Director of Information Services.
13. If a live interview is requested and the Director/ Deputy Director is not available and cannot be contacted, the media is to be told that arrangements will be made for the interview and they will be contacted.
14. All requests for information / reports from the Committees / Embassies / Mission etc. are to be passed to the Director – NEMO.
15. All Press Inquiries must be replied within fifteen minutes of receiving the calls.

FORMULATION OF NEWS RELEASES

1. Any Officer may draft a Release.
2. The Director – NEMO or the Deputy Director then review the Release.
3. Corrections and or amendments are then done and returned for changes to the drafting Officer.
4. The Approving Officer then signs approval [In all cases the approving officer is the Director - NEMO, in instances where she is not available then the Deputy Director will approve).
5. It is now ready for dissemination to the Public. The Release is then disseminated to the Relevant Agencies.
6. Verification that the relevant media houses have received it is then done.
7. The News Release is then filed in the News Release File.

ARTICLES FOR PUBLICATION

All technical articles are to be reviewed by at least two persons in-house. Articles should be given to the Director or reviewed at least five working days before publication. For areas in which no technical expertise is available internally, the article should be handed to the relevant technical Agency for review and comments.

NEWS OR PRESS CONFERENCES

When a news release or media inquiry is inadequate for handling important news, then a Press Conference must be called. Speakers must be available to provide media persons and reporters with 'hard' and or factual information. Media persons will have the opportunity to clarify and or expand announcements made by spokespersons, which would ensure that coverage is more accurate and complete.

PRESS OR MEDIA KITS

Press or Media Kits must be used every time there is a news conference, or at any other event which brings out media coverage. It must include details on the Speaker's background on the reason for the event and any other illustrative material and artwork that will make plain the purposes of the Conference or the event.

APPENDIX 3 – EXAMPLES: NEWS RELEASE



SAINT LUCIA

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION SERVICES

TEL. (758) 468-2116 / 468-2118

FAX (758) 453-1614

E-MAIL gis@candw.lc

<http://www.stlucia.gov.lc/>

2ND FLOOR

***GREAHAH LOUISY ADMINISTRATIVE
BUILDING***

***THE WATERFRONT, CASTRIES
SAINT LUCIA, WEST INDIES***

PRESS RELEASE

(FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE)

Castries disaster committee welcomes drainage project

March 10, 2005 - With only three months away from the 2005 hurricane season, the Castries Central Disaster Preparedness Committee is preparing for its official launch in April, at the Castries City Hall. Chairman of the committee Davis Paul said the grouping would be celebrating its first anniversary this year as an established entity.

The committee he said, is concerned not only with disaster preparedness, but places heavy emphasis on prevention, and would be working closely with the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO).

“There s always the flooding in the Central Castries area; a lot of houses are in low lying areas and prone to flooding, so we are really happy and we are welcoming the flood mitigation program. That would assist us and that would be preventing the whole situation whereby every rainy season, we have a major problem within the Central Castries area”, said Mr. Paul.

The committee was expected to meet on Friday 11th to fine tune plans for an upcoming workshop to be held next week in collaboration with NEMO. The workshop is intended to among other things, assist with developing a comprehensive plan for the 2005 hurricane season.

MEDIA ADVISORY: Saint Lucia Met Service

METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES, (M. C. W. T. & P. U.) ST. LUCIA

HEWANORRA METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE, VIEUX FORT ST.LUCIA

HOTLINE...4543452...WEBSITE...<http://www.slumet.gov.lc>.
[e-ail...info@slumet.gov.lc](mailto:info@slumet.gov.lc)...forecast@slumet.gov.lc

1:00 P.M...DATE...MARCH 07, 2005...FORECASTER....EMMANUEL DESCARTES.

PRESENT WEATHER AT HEWANORRA.....FAIR.
AT GEORGE CHARLES...FAIR

PRESENT TEMPERATURE AT HEWANORRA.....30 C OR 86 F.

LAST NIGHT'S MINIMUM TEMPERATURE AT HEWANORRA.....24 C OR 75 F.

WIND AT HEWANORRA IS COMING FROM THE EAST AT 19 M.P.H.

24 HOUR RAINFALL ENDING AT 8:00 A.M. AT HEWANORRA.....0.7 MM.

SUNSET TODAY....6:14 P.M.....SUNRISE TOMORROW....6:18 A.M.

FORECAST FOR ST.LUCIA VALID FOR THE NEXT 24 HOURS

WINDS WILL BE COMING FROM THE EAST-NORTHEAST NEAR 17 M.P.H.
WITH A FEW GUSTS.

WEATHER...FAIR TO PARTLY CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF ISOLATED
SHOWERS.

MARINE OUTLOOK

TIDES FOR CASTRIES HARBOUR...LOW AT 7:12 PM...HIGH AT 1:47 A.M.
TIDES FOR VIEUX FORT BAY.....HIGH AT 1:32 P.M...LOW AT 8:39 P.M.

SEAS...MODERATE WITH WAVES NEAR 5 FEET.

OUTLOOK FOR THE LESSER ANTILLES

FAIR SKIES BECOMING CLOUDY AT TIMES WITH A FEW SHOWERS.

TROPICAL WEATHER

A MODERATE EASTERLY WIND FLOW IS EXPECTED ACROSS THE LESSER ANTILLES.
FAIR TO PARTLY CLOUDY CONDITIONS SHOULD PREVAIL DURING THE NEXT 24 HOURS.

APPENDIX 4 - MEDIA CONTACT LISTING

“Media Contact Listing” is a stand alone document and is provided by the NEMO Secretariat.

APPENDIX 5 - FIELD GUIDES

“A Manual of Policies and procedures for Emergency Broadcasting in the Caribbean” is a field tool produced by Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency [CDERA], European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office [ECHO] and Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication [CARIMAC], that all Media Houses should possess.

It is a stand alone document and provided by the NEMO Secretariat by email request at slunemo@gmail.com

“Disaster Information Kit for the Media” is a field tool produced by Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency [CDERA], United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] and Pan American Health Organization [PAHO], that all Media Houses should possess.

It is a stand alone document and available at

http://www.cdera.org/doccentre/publications/Media_Kit_Ver06_2004_v3.pdf

APPENDIX 6 - MEDIA REQUEST FORM FOR ENTRY TO SAINT LUCIA

“Media Request Form for Entry to Saint Lucia” is a stand alone document and may be obtained from the Government Information Service at

Telephone: (758) 468-2116

FAX: (758) 453-1614

Postal address: Greaham Louisy Administrative Building, Waterfront, Castries, Saint Lucia, W.I.

Electronic mail: General Information: info@dis.gov.lc

Webmaster: webmaster@stlucia.gov.lc

APPENDIX 7 – COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

As of September 4, 2008

