



For Immediate Release
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National Hurricane Center Director Calls Build it Better Leadership Forum an Important “Meeting of the Minds” in How to Boost Community Resilience in the Wake of Disasters

Charlotte, NC – National Hurricane Center Director Rick Knabb, PhD addressed attendees of the Build it Better Leadership Forum in Charlotte today and called the Forum an important ‘meeting of the minds’ among experts on how to best increase community resilience in the wake of natural disasters.

Knabb addressed nearly two hundred scientists, meteorologists, construction experts and safety advocates at the Forum which opened today at the Charlotte Marriott City Center and will continue through tomorrow afternoon.

“Getting experts on all kinds of hazards to have a meeting of the minds to figure out how we can get the right information into the hands of everyone that is trying to be more resilient and be better prepared for disaster is critically important,” said Knabb.

North Carolina Insurance Commissioner Wayne Goodwin also addressed Forum attendees today. In his remarks, Goodwin applauded North Carolina’s lower than average insurance premiums in comparison to other states and said the lower rates were “largely due to in part to improvements made to our Beach Plan and excellent working relationships with our stakeholders.” Goodwin also underscored the value of mitigation in keeping rates lower and reducing property in losses in disaster.

Additional featured speakers and experts at the conference included:

- Bill Read, Former Director of the National Hurricane Center; currently Severe Weather Expert at KPRC-TV, Houston
- Margaret Davidson, Director of NOAA Coastal Services Center
- Chris Estes, President and CEO, National Housing Conference
- Dr. Ernst Kiesling, PhD., a professor of civil engineering at Texas Tech University and the co-inventor of the modern tornado safe room
- Leslie Chapman-Henderson, President & CEO of the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH)
- Julie Rochman, President & CEO of the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS)

Panel discussions addressed the unforeseen consequences from Hurricane Sandy with on the ground experts addressing the complexity of the emergency management and rescue efforts along with the compounding effects of wind and water on community infrastructure.

Other panels addressed commercial and residential building exposure in the face of severe weather with a look at steps some communities have taken to better protect themselves through building codes, natural protections, better construction designs and the application of modern building science.

A review of which states are most and least prepared for severe weather showed how communities at risk can better protect themselves through innovative efforts in infrastructure, training, forecasting, building codes and public awareness. Finally, the Build it Better Forum tackled the unique challenges of low income communities facing natural disasters and how vulnerable communities and low income families can better prepare to respond to and recover from disasters.

The Build it Better Leadership Forum was sponsored by the RenaissanceRe Risk Sciences Foundation along with the Coastal Hazards Center, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence, the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH), the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS), the National Housing Conference and the Center for Housing Policy, the UNC Center for the Study of Natural Hazards & Disasters and WeatherPredict Consulting, Inc.

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