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Against the Backdrop of Hurricane Alex, Disaster Safety Specialists, Policy Makers, Scientists and Affordable Housing Advocates Convene to Discuss Enhancing Disaster Readiness in Texas and Other Gulf Coast States

Texas Lt. Governor David Dewhurst and National Hurricane Center Director Bill Read Keynote

Two-Day Texas Risk Mitigation Leadership Forum

Austin, TX....As Hurricane Alex made landfall as a Category II storm, the first named hurricane of the 2010 season had the State of Texas on alert as forecasts called for a possible Texas landfall. This all unfolded as a group of nearly 200 state and federal officials, emergency managers, scientists, housing advocates, and disaster safety specialists concluded the [Texas Risk Mitigation Leadership Forum](#) in Austin, TX. The wide ranging discussion centered around the policy and public safety issues associated with making Texas and other states more disaster resistant.

Texas Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst delivered a keynote address in which he called for public-private cooperation in addressing not only Tropical Storm Alex but all natural disasters. "The key to disaster mitigation is developing a public policy in which we have bridges and partnerships between all levels of government and the private sector to make sure that our people are safe and that our physical infrastructure is fully protected," Lieutenant Governor Dewhurst said.

National Hurricane Center Director Bill Read presented his scheduled keynote address to the delegates via live video feed from the [National Hurricane Center](#) in Miami. Read, a Texas resident, provided a fresh update on NWC's most current estimates of Alex's path while applauding delegates for their push to make Texas and other states more disaster resistant.

While Texans were urged to step up their level of disaster preparedness, they were also credited with recent successes in becoming more disaster resistant. Julie Rochman, CEO of the [Institute for Business and Home Safety](#) (IBHS), showcased a high profile Texas disaster mitigation success story from Hurricane Ike. Rochman showed dramatic photographs of a group of homes built on Bolivar Peninsula that

survived Hurricane Ike because they were built to IBHS's code-plus Fortified for Safer Living Standard, which among other requirements, calls for building the homes high enough to avoid storm surge.

Leslie Chapman Henderson, President and CEO of the [Federal Alliance for Safe Homes](#), said the Forum helped inject a much needed sense of urgency for Texans living in harm's way to better prepare for natural disasters. "Unfortunately, the memories of Hurricane Ike and its important lessons are beginning to fade which makes it imperative for those of us involved in disaster safety education to sound the alarm about the needed for greater preparation."

"Our goal in convening the [Texas Risk Mitigation Leadership Forum](#) was to facilitate a discussion around the scientific and public policy options to reduce the risk of loss of life and property from natural catastrophes, and to raise awareness of these issues among consumers, businesses, officials and other stakeholders," said Steve Weinstein, Chairman of the RenaissanceRe Risk Sciences Foundation, the Forum lead sponsor. "It was a privilege to host Lt. Governor Dewhurst, Director Read, Texas Senate Insurance Chairman Michael Jackson, Texas House Insurance Chairman John Smithee and the other leaders and experts who donated their time to address our delegates and share their visions for a more disaster resistant Texas."

The Texas Forum included panel discussions on disaster mitigation strategies for businesses and homeowners as well as a forum on the unique challenges confronting low income housing residents and other vulnerable populations in the face of natural disasters. Forum speakers, including officials from the Federal Emergency Management Authority, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Texas Department of Insurance, and the Texas Forestry Service spoke about the lessons learned from Hurricane Ike, mitigation success stories, consumer education and communication, and developing public policy initiatives. Speakers and delegates expressed consensus that disaster preparation and recovery plans for businesses, families and communities must be in place before disaster strikes to ensure the best possible response to a natural disaster.

The Texas Risk Mitigation Leadership Forum, the fifth in a series of national and regional discussions about disaster safety sponsored by the Renaissance Re Risk Sciences Foundation, was co-sponsored by WeatherPredict Consulting, Texas Tech University, the National Weather Service, the Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) and the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH).

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