



Joint Press Release
For Immediate Release

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BIG BUSINESS - SMALL BUSINESS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM LAUNCHES FOR ENHANCED DISASTER RESILIENCY

(Falls Church, Va. – June 1, 2012) Statistics from the Institute of Business and Home Safety indicate that 25% of all businesses do not reopen after a major disaster. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce reveals that this number rises sharply to 43% when a business does not have a formal emergency plan in place. The National Incident Management Systems and Advanced Technologies (NIMSAT) Institute at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette has partnered with the U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM-USA) to launch the *Big Business – Small Business Emergency Management Mentorship* program to strengthen small business disaster preparedness by engaging willing and able big businesses as mentors.

In January 2012, FEMA announced a new campaign “Small Business is Big,” aimed at increasing outreach and educational opportunities to small businesses in the emergency management arena. The *Big Business – Small Business Emergency Management Mentorship* program is directly inspired by this FEMA campaign and is an effort to help small businesses often lacking the resources to be better prepared for all-hazards disasters. The program’s main objective is to connect the dots between the big businesses that are willing to mentor and the small businesses that are preparing for, protecting against, responding to, recovering from, and mitigating against all-hazards emergency events, such as hurricanes, floods, power outages, snow storms, and other natural or man-made events. Participation in the program is voluntary and open to all businesses. While the new program is just being launched and promoted publicly, the Walt Disney Company, Verizon, Lowe’s Companies Inc., LEAM Drilling Systems Inc., Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Sam’s Club, among others, have demonstrated stellar leadership by already registering with the program, either as mentors, protégés, or sponsors.

The program offers large corporations the opportunity to make positive impacts in the communities they serve and within their own supply chains, resulting in greater business and community resiliency. By participating in this program, the mentors may share their ideas and experiences related to disaster mitigation and management with small businesses. Big Business wins by strengthening supply chain and community resiliency, positive branding and reputation management, sharing valuable lessons learned and best practices within the industry, and developing mutually beneficial business relationships. Small

Business wins by learning about business continuity and resiliency from industry leaders with a proven track record, fostering an environment for business growth, developing the tools to recover from disasters, and building beneficial relationships with big businesses.

“The uniqueness of the *Mentorship* program lies in its simplicity and its non-prescriptive, non-proscriptive nature. It is not yet another government-mandated program that small businesses feel they are forced to implement. Instead, it is seen as an opportunity by small businesses to voluntarily learn from and emulate their aspirational role models – successful big businesses, who actually have the experience of having walked the talk,” said Dr. Ramesh Kolluru, executive director of the NIMSAT Institute. “The NIMSAT Institute has led several innovative efforts in the area of public-private partnerships; we are now excited to extend that to a high-impact, low-lift private-private partnership model.”

Program partners and sponsors include the NIMSAT Institute, IAEM-USA, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Wal-Mart Stores Inc., and Sam’s Club. The NIMSAT Institute will lead and administer this program with participation from IAEM-USA as well as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in helping make connections between mentors and protégées. Wal-Mart Stores Inc. and Sam’s Club have already been proactive in advancing small business resiliency through their Small Business Hurricane and Disaster Preparedness Expos.

“IAEM-USA is pleased to be part this initiative by the NIMSAT Institute that focuses on building valuable relationships to improve community resiliency,” said Julie Kachgal, IAEM-USA Public-Private Partnership Caucus chair. “Big businesses are well versed in emergency management; mentoring small businesses that do not have an emergency specialist on staff, is simply the right thing to do. Connecting small businesses with big businesses willing to offer guidance is a simple and genius concept that has the power to make a difference in each community.”

“The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is committed to enhancing the resiliency of our nation’s small businesses,” said Ann Beauchesne, vice president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s National Security & Emergency Preparedness Department. “As the world’s largest business federation representing more than three million businesses, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations, we believe this program will have a great impact on businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, and are pleased to support the NIMSAT Institute in this program.”

Mentors or protégées register in less than five minutes at www.DisasterB2bMentor.org. This effort will help improve disaster resiliency of the registrant’s company, their supply chain, the community, as well as the nation. The Mentorship Guide, with much more information, is posted on the website. Companies and organizations that have joined the effort, such as the NIMSAT Institute, IAEM-USA, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Walt Disney Company, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., Sam’s Club, Verizon, Lowe’s Companies Inc., and LEAM Drilling Systems Inc., urge others to join and be among the businesses making our nation more resilient every day.

*Conceived based on lessons learned from hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the **National Incident Management Systems & Advanced Technologies (NIMSAT) Institute** is a homeland security and emergency management Institute at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. The Institute enhances national resiliency to all-hazards by conducting research leading to innovative tools and advanced technologies that empower emergency managers through education, training, outreach and operational support. Through public-private partnerships, the Institute enhances disaster resiliency capacity of communities, businesses, and critical infrastructures that support our way of life. The NIMSAT Institute leads the Louisiana Business Emergency Operations Center (LA BEOC), under the direction of Louisiana*

Economic Development (LED) and the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP). Please visit www.nimsat.org for more information.

***IAEM-USA** is our nation's largest association of emergency management professional with more than 5,000 members, including emergency managers at the state and local government levels, tribal nations, the military, colleges and universities, private business and nonprofit sector. Most of our members are city and county emergency managers who perform the crucial function of coordinating and integrating the efforts at the local level to prepare for, mitigate the effects of, respond to, and recover from all types of disasters including terrorist attacks. Our membership includes emergency managers from large urban areas as well as rural areas.*

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