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**NATIONAL NEWS RELEASE**

**TEACHABLE MOMENTS – ARE WE AWAKE YET? THE NEED TO TAKE  
COORDINATED HOLISTIC ACTIONS - Robert Wible, Principal Robert Wible &  
Associates**

WASHINGTON, DC – JUNE 15, 2011

For all concerned with construction, economic sustainability and disaster resiliency the first half of 2011 has been momentous.

Christchurch's quake reminded us of the need for effective seismic retrofit programs; Japan's triple disasters and shattered supply chain documented for us again the fact that preparing for just a single disaster scenario does not match real world events; the record late April tornado outbreak proved the value of better warning systems and tornado shelters; and the death on May 1st of Osama bin Laden has caused many of us to reflect on actions we have either taken or not over the past decade to try better protect our people and our buildings from the intentions of terrorists.

Each of the above has brought all of us in the construction, economic development, public safety communities and our elected officials wave after wave of "teachable moments."

How many people live? How many die? What are the immediate, medium and long term impacts on our nation, our people, infrastructure, and economy if we don't rapidly apply lessons being learned by these catastrophic events? What happens to our economic recovery if we take multiple hits equivalent to the size of the Japan disasters, Hurricane Katrina and the April tornadoes?

Do our public and private sectors continue to look at and treat economic sustainability, (including energy) and community resiliency to floods, fires, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis and acts of terrorism as isolated and totally unrelated events? Do we treat the scenarios we fund, prepare and train for as single issues - - separate issues with their own interest groups, competing against each other for ever more precious public and private sector funding? Or do we step back from the legislation and budget drafting sessions, the grant and program planning and implementation meetings and see that these are not individual issues that can be effectively addressed by stove

pipe or picket fence bureaucracies and programs but rather as a part of a whole – a part of the fabric of the human condition – and that sustainability means resiliency and resiliency means sustainability – life and growth?

March 2-3 in Washington, D.C.: Engineering News Record, McGraw-Hill and the National Building Museum's Industry Council for the Built Environment brought together over 150 experts from the construction, insurance, emergency and building and land use regulatory communities to consider effective actions for "Mitigating Disasters Through Construction Codes & Standards." Presenters and moderators from the above communities repeatedly expressed concern over the lack in this nation of a holistic approach towards sustainability and disaster resiliency. Speakers voiced their fears that in the Federal, state and local budgetary crisis spending priorities supported by more well organized and powerful interest groups will eviscerate even a coordinated public outreach campaign to adequately fund critical sustainability and disaster resiliency actions.

ENR and McGraw-Hill are now in the process of preparing a final report from the March conference. That report will include recommendations to Congress, government agencies and the private sector to support a more holistic approach to prioritize and take actions to make the nation both more disaster resilient and sustainable.

Reflecting back on the events of the past five months, as the moderator of one of the panel sessions at the March 2-3 program, I want to share both some good news that emerged from the conference and two of the recommendations from our panel.

The Good News:

- While too many communities continue to believe "it won't happen here," an increasing number are paying more attention to the disaster resiliency provisions in the building codes they are adopting.
- There are initial efforts to conduct regional disaster exercises that include more than one simultaneous disaster event.
- A small but growing number of companies are seeing it as a "good business practice" to spend funds to assure that their buildings (and employees) are more resilient to multiple disaster scenarios.

Recommendations from our panel:

- The nation needs a cohesive multi-disciplinary approach to the content & updates to building codes and land use regulations to strengthen both disaster resiliency and economic sustainability. The current piecemeal system is confusing, costly, and burdensome.

- The public and private sector must work together to identify and take actions to streamline the regulatory system to reduce and/or strengthen statutes, rules, regulations, processes and procedures that will speed disaster preparedness and recovery.

We all have been through an incredible set of “teachable moments.” There will be more from Mother Nature and from revenge-minded terrorists. If we have learned nothing else from the past five months it is that only thoughtful, coordinated, prioritized national action can effectively mitigate the deaths and damage done to our people and economy. “It can’t happen here” and “we can’t afford to address the real dangers” never have been and never will be an effective response.

Please join in this endeavor to holistically address the lessons that are being learned from our recent catastrophes.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT CONTACT:

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