



MINISTRY OF
FINANCIAL SERVICES
& HOME AFFAIRS
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

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**Statement by
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Update on Home Affairs Activities: Strengthening Resilience

First Meeting of the Legislative Assembly 2018/2019, September 2018

Members of the Honourable House know that the strength of our economy and the resilience of our communities depend (in part) on our ability to respond to critical incidents when they occur. During the 2018/2019 budget process, this Government administration and indeed this Legislature supported an increase in the budgets of Home Affairs agencies, and in doing so recognised significant deficiencies that must be addressed. I am pleased to provide a brief update on progress in a number of key areas.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Members will recall the briefings held a few months ago to provide each of you with an update on disaster preparedness. Work is continuing to further strengthen the resilience of our islands. New tools to assist our first responders are also being explored, and more will be announced at the appropriate time. Hazard Management Cayman Islands is at the centre of these discussions. HMCI has been energised by its new director and has already undergone several organisational changes to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. Notably, the telecommunications functions have been moved to the Department of Public Safety Communication (“DPSC”) in order to capitalise on the natural synergies that exist with those

functions. The partnership between DPSC and HMCI is strong, and I have confidence that the passion and dedication of the directors of both of those agencies will continue to yield further organisational improvements.

Our ability to effectively respond to disasters is a function of the collaboration and communication of several agencies and organisations, and HMCI is continuing to build strong partnerships and pursue new initiatives with a range of stakeholders. As an example of this, I would like to congratulate the 52 persons that were trained by HMCI in partnership with the Red Cross as part of the two Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTS) here in Cayman Brac. Mass Casualty Management / Incident Command and Shelter Management training will also occur this year in Cayman Brac. Work is also underway to refresh and increase training for the teams in Grand Cayman as well.

Building on these partnerships, training exercises allow our first responders the opportunity to practice and determine where improvements are necessary. For example, a mass casualty and incident command training exercise was held earlier this year and more recently the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS), Cayman Islands Fire Service (CIFS) and the Department of Public Safety and Communications (DPSC) participated in an inshore search and rescue exercise. The aim of this exercise was to test the protocols in place and test the inshore search and rescue (SAR) capability provided by the CIFS when responding to an inshore SAR incident to ensure effective and timely SAR exercise.

In addition, HMCI has recently filled the mitigation officer role which is a significant development and will work to address the current gaps in our capacity to forecast storm surge, tsunami wave heights and run up flood prone areas. The officer will also assist in the production of evacuation zones for tsunamis, inundation models for storm surge and sea level risk models and forecasting.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION (NEN) SYSTEM

Phase I of the National Emergency Notification (NEN) System – “Radio Interrupt” commenced in March 2018 with the installation of equipment at Radio Cayman, which is the primary site. All local radio stations agreed to partner with Government in support of the system and the final installation and system testing is slated for completion by the end of June.

This system will allow for the interruption of any radio programme that is being broadcast to enable a public advisory to be issued about an impending disaster. This is of critical importance, particularly in the face of sudden onset events like tsunamis and earthquakes.

The system was tested in the annual tsunami warning exercise in March 2018 and proved to be effective.

The Government plans to support the implementation of Phase II which will enable the interruption of television programs to broadcast public advisories. The final phase will see citizens informed via a centralized portal that supports multiple communication channels including:

- i. Wireless Emergency Alerts via Cell Broadcast
- ii. Mobile Networks via SMS
- iii. Internet (via social media), and
- iv. E-mail

NATIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY RADIO SYSTEM

The National Public Safety Communications Radio System hardware is progressing very well. The main administrative and system management locations have been energised to enable the RF network capacity and other new system functionality. The Dispatch Radio Consoles and other relevant items have been staged at the DPSC in preparation of larger scale testing with mobiles & handset in the field. Radio system equipment has been installed at 5 of the 8 radio

transmitter sites, and advanced programming by the system engineers continues as scheduled. The new radio equipment for Cayman Brac & Little Cayman has been shipped to Cayman Brac. The installation process in Cayman Brac commenced on 15th August and is expected to last for 5 more weeks. The equipment for the Little Cayman public safety radio site will be delivered via barge later this month.

The aim is to complete all installations and have the new equipment ready for the final testing phase by early December. Whilst these works may actually be completed sooner, the old system will continue to be operated in parallel until mid-December to ensure maximum operability and business continuity, particularly through the end of Hurricane Season.

As Members can tell, there has been a tremendous amount of effort to improve the response capabilities of several key agencies. Preparedness is not an area for complacency, and we are fortunate to have dedicated persons – both within government and the public – who stand ready in the event that they are needed to support our resident and our communities. The activities that I have outlined clearly demonstrate the Government’s commitment to promoting a safer and more resilient Cayman Islands and I look forward to bringing future updates to this Honourable House.