EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The tourism industry is a vital economic force in the Caribbean, and its continued health is an important factor in generating jobs, revenue and infrastructure development throughout the region. To maintain its long-term viability, the tourism sector must be prepared to endure and recover from a wide range of hazards and emergencies. Two of the most significant threats to the industry are hurricanes and terrorist incidents, which can both cause significant physical and structural damage, lead to human injuries and loss of life, and impact the attractiveness of a destination to potential visitors.

Model Disaster Management Institutional Framework for the Tourism Sector in Caribbean Countries

The most successful multi-hazard emergency planning processes will take place within the context of an effective institutional framework for disaster management, allowing the tourism sector to more fully understand and address its particular vulnerabilities to hurricanes and terrorism – at a national, sectoral and establishment level. Such a framework would consist of two key types of organizations:

- **National Disaster Organizations** operate continuously, even during normal times, and oversee general coordination of disaster management, with a particular focus on vulnerability assessment, mitigation and preparedness. At the national level, this role is filled by the National Disaster Office or *National Disaster Committee*, which should include a representative from the tourism sector. Within the sector itself, the Ministry of Tourism should establish a Tourism Emergency Management Committee (TEMC) which will coordinate and implement disaster management activities. Finally, each individual tourism business (or group of businesses if they are small) should create an internal *Emergency Committee* to coordinate the industry's response at the venue level.

- **Emergency response services are mobilized** at the time of an emergency or disaster to coordinate response. At the national level, the *National Emergency Operations Center* coordinates activities throughout the country and serves an important communication and emergency public information function. The *Tourism Emergency Operations Center* serves as the sectoral organization responsible for coordinating the tourism industry's response during emergencies and disasters. In each individual hotel or tourism establishment that is planning to continue operations during a disaster, a *Hotel Command Center* can coordinate operations during and after the impacts of a critical event.

The National Disaster Organizations should remain in constant contact during normal times when there is no immediate emergency or disaster, with each ensuring that its emergency response plans and procedures are up-to-date and ready for use. When an emergency or disaster occurs, the disaster response organizations should coordinate closely together, and with other national, regional and international response mechanisms.

Tourism networks

Tourism establishments should also plan to work together with other businesses during a critical incident, supporting each other with resources such as facilities, shelter, personnel, equipment, supplies or communications. A group of tourism establishments located nearby to one another can form a *Tourism Emergency Response Cluster* to cooperatively assess, organize, combine and control their collective capabilities and resources to prepare for, respond to and recover from a hurricane or terrorist event.

Hurricane Preparedness and Response

Hurricanes are an inevitable part of doing business in the Caribbean, where each year several major storms may cause millions of dollars of damage to homes, hotels and businesses. Hurricanes, which are tropical cyclones with internal wind speeds in excess of 74 mph (119 km/h), bring storm surges, destructive winds, excessive rainfall and floods that can cause physical damage, impact crops and food supplies, threaten public health, and disrupt transportation and communication systems.

There are five basic phases of a hurricane event:

- **Phase A –Severe Weather Alert:** Hurricane entering the region that will likely impact the country.
- **Phase B –** Tropical Storm/**Hurricane** 36 hours to landfall.
- **Phase C** – Tropical Storm /**Hurricane Warning:** 24 hours to landfall.
- **Phase D – Emergency Phase:** Impact.
- **Phase E – Recovery Phase:** After the emergency response phase is over

Hurricane preparedness

Preparedness activities should be ongoing throughout the year. Full preparation is the key to minimizing loss of life and property, and to ensuring a speedy resumption of business. Although all departments in a hotel/resort or other establishment will have important assigned tasks, leadership generally falls to the General Manager and the Emergency Committee. Ten specific steps can help the hotel and the staff be better prepared to respond to hurricanes:

1. **Create your Emergency Committee.** This committee determines how, and whether, the hotel will continue to operate during an emergency, designates responsibilities, designs the Hurricane Plan and Emergency Procedures, and helps the rest of the staff to become familiar with the plan and procedures, and their assigned tasks.

2. **Assess vulnerability and risks.** This can be done by conducting a structural vulnerability assessment of all buildings and a twice-annual non-structural vulnerability assessment, ensuring that the facility is in compliance with national building codes, creating and implementing a hurricane maintenance program, and preparing a basic maintenance budget.

3. **Establish a warning system.** Coordinating with the National Disaster office to track hurricanes and ensure an early warning can help the Emergency Committee to take effective and timely action in the event of a hurricane.

4. **Involve staff and guests in your plan.** It is important to provide relevant information to staff and guests at each phase of a hurricane and again after impact, so they understand their roles and responsibilities during the event.

5. **Liaise with tourism and disaster management organizations.** Establishing a connection with the national Tourism Emergency Management Committee and the National Disaster Organization can help ensure that an establishment is prepared in case of disaster.

6. **Identify your needs and establish mutual aid agreements.** In preparation for a disaster, estimate needs in terms of services, equipment and supplies, and create mutual aid agreements with goods suppliers, other hotels, neighboring facilities and operators on other islands to meet these needs.

7. **Get insurance coverage.** The policy should cover physical structure, liability and loss of profit.

8. **Write your own hurricane plan and emergency procedures.** This plan should be specific to the particular establishment and staff, based on the guidance in this manual.

9. **Revise, update and test your hurricane plan and procedures regularly.** This review should be done annually, just before the onset of hurricane season. Staff training is also a vital part of effective implementation of hurricane preparedness and response plans.

10. **Follow the hurricane plan and procedures in an emergency.** The EC should meet each time a new storm threatens and after every new phase of a hurricane.

Severe Weather Systems response

There is usually plenty of warning before a tropical storm/hurricane hits, allowing hoteliers time to prepare and implement emergency procedures to protect their guests, staff and property. These procedures will differ at each of the five phases of a hurricane. General emergency response activities should begin as soon as a hurricane advisory has been issued, when a storm is in the region and is likely to hit the country. In addition, each member of the Emergency Committee – including the General Manager/Emergency Coordinator, Guest Relations/Services Manager, Human Resources/Staff Manager, Food and Beverage Manager, Engineering/Maintenance Manager, Executive Housekeeper, Public Relations Officer/Hotel Spokesperson, Financial Controller/Accounts, Front Desk Manager, Security Manager/Chief of Security, and Environmental Officer – will have his or her own set of assigned tasks.

The types of tasks that will be included in any hurricane response procedures include:

- Tracking the progress of the hurricane and keeping guests and staff up-to-date on the current situation;
- Assigning staff members to designated tasks and locations;
- Ensuring that there are sufficient emergency supplies, such as food, water and fuel, to meet the establishment's needs during and after the hurricane;
- Checking that all equipment, including telecommunications devices, generators and vehicles, are in good working order;
- Ensuring that all furniture, equipment and valuables are secured in safe locations;
- Accounting for all staff members and guests, through occupancy lists and roll call forms;
- Backing up any vital records and storing them in a secure location;
- Preparing the buildings and structures for the impact of the storm (i.e. closing shutters, tying down loose objects, clearing drains);
- Helping any guests who want to leave the area, and ensuring that those who remain have shelter in a safe location;
- Liaising with the Tourism Emergency Management Committee and the National Disaster Office;
- Beginning damage and needs assessments immediately after the event;

- Reporting any damages and requesting relief;
- Beginning the clean-up and reconstruction process; and
- Restoring normal business operations as soon as possible.

Loss-Reduction Techniques

An important part of being prepared to weather and respond to a hurricane includes establishing a medium-to-long-term plan for upgrading the physical structure of all buildings, to enable them to better withstand the impacts of hurricanes. Hotels and other buildings should be designed and built, or retrofitted, to withstand the strong winds, heavy rains and storm surges of hurricanes. Avoidable structural damage, most often roof failure, is the most common problem for hotels and other facilities in the Caribbean. Annual *structural vulnerability audits*, conducted in March or April before hurricane season begins, can help to identify any weaknesses before they lead to costly damage. Ensuring that structures meet the highest standards of design and construction can reduce the element of surprise by providing predictable performance and can also reduce insurance premiums, which are rising rapidly in the Caribbean.

A formal *maintenance* program should be included in every disaster mitigation plan, to ensure that buildings and equipment are kept in the best condition. This program should include semi-annual reviews to identify any new deterioration or previously overlooked problems, benefit from new knowledge, and review maintenance procedures. *Reporting* is an essential part of any maintenance system.

For existing structures, *retrofitting* to increase hurricane resistance can be relatively easy and inexpensive, especially if the building is well-maintained. Roofs, windows and doors are usually the key targets for retrofitting.

Terrorism Preparedness and Response

Terrorism is a growing concern for the tourism industry, and recent terrorist targets have included civilian locations such as hotels, resorts, restaurants and night-life attractions. Although Caribbean nations have not yet experienced terrorism on their home soil, and the risk in the area is considered low, it is still vital for the region's tourism industry to include terrorism preparedness in its disaster contingency planning. Although being prepared for terrorism is a challenge in the tourism sector, which strives to provide a warm, welcoming and accommodating environment to visitors from around the world, good customer service should not prevent tourism establishments from understanding and addressing their risk and vulnerability to acts of terrorism.

Terrorist acts, which may include bomb threats, vehicle bombs, suicide bombings, or biological, chemical, nuclear or cyber attacks, can impact tourism establishments by causing physical damage and human injuries or fatalities. Terrorism can also have a profound effect on an establishment's – or even an entire destination's – ability to attract customers, deliver services and generate revenue.

Tourism businesses, such as hotels, restaurants and small crafts markets, have many characteristics that may leave them vulnerable to terrorist threats or terrorist events. All venues that attract large crowds and are easily accessible by foot and/or vehicle provide attractive "high-value" targets to terrorist groups. In addition, hotels, which by their very nature provide a welcoming and accommodating environment, respect the privacy of their guests and offer numerous services and amenities, can be used by terrorist groups to prepare or stage an attack. Restaurants and small crafts markets are less easily exploited by terrorists or terrorist groups during the attack-planning stage, as people generally spend a shorter period of time there and have less privacy.

Terrorism preparedness

As with hurricane preparedness, the members of the tourism establishment's Emergency Committee should be responsible for developing and implementing a terrorism preparedness plan and procedures. One key difference is that the security department will play a larger role in this plan than in the hurricane plan. A number of steps are involved in developing a tourism establishment emergency plan for terrorist events:

- ✓ **Take a closer look at your tourism establishment's current level of preparedness.** Evaluate the vulnerability and preparedness levels of the establishment's buildings, equipment, supplies and systems; assess the current personnel and the skills they have to offer in case of an attack; and review the current plans, protocols and procedures to determine what make it more vulnerable to a terrorist attack.

- ✓ **Decide how the establishment would respond.** It is important to determine an evacuation plan ahead of time, designating exit routes and a rally point and creating an employee roll call list to account for each individual. Preparedness should also include a plan for sheltering in place, a medical emergency plan, and protocols for how to communicate with law enforcement officials.

- ✓ **Ensure the establishment's business continuity.** This requires ensuring that guests and employees are prepared and that there are adequate supplies to meet critical needs in the first few days following an attack. A business continuity plan should include designated backup locations for

business operations, the assembling of critical needs and supplies, and the creation of "grab-and-go" supply kits for employees and guests.

- ✓ **Understand how emergencies will impact your employees and customers.** Terrorist events can profoundly impact the physical, mental and emotional states of both staff and guests, and tourism establishments should be prepared to address this stress and assist people in getting the help they need.

- ✓ **Determine how you will manage the media in case of an emergency.** Poor media management can result in inaccurate information, loss of credibility and confidence, rumors, confusion and possible panic and unnecessary duplication of effort. It is important to carefully coordinate with the tourism sector and national disaster organizations in conveying an accurate picture of the situation.

All tourism establishments should develop emergency preparedness protocols and designate tasks and responsibilities to key employees. At hotels and resorts, each member of the Emergency Committee should have a specific set of responsibilities, while at small craft markets (both roaming and at airports and seaports), business owners and business associations will each need to have their own designated procedures and protocols.

Terrorism response

The initial minutes or hours after a terrorist attack are crucial for taking actions that can protect people and property. The response process includes two general stages:

- **Stage 0:** In the first four hours after an incident, the focus should be on finding out what has happened and taking action to minimize its impact to employees, customers and property. Before taking action, you should conduct a rapid scene assessment, using all your sense to obtain initial information about what has happened. Initial actions should include activating emergency plans, heading to safety, deciding whether to evacuate or shelter in place, taking roll call, evaluating injuries or fatalities, communicating within your cluster and assessing physical damage and transportation access. An initial situation report should be compiled within the first four hours after the incident.

- **Stage 1:** Between four and 48 hours after the event, you should continue to focus on protecting life safety, conduct an urgent damage assessment, determine what resources are needed for survival, and communicate with key people and organizations, including employees, guests and customers, your cluster and the national Tourism Emergency Management Committee. Any communication with the media should be handled through the Tourism

Emergency Operations Center and coordinated through the establishment's Media Coordinator.

Multi-hazard recovery plan

After the disruption of a hurricane or terrorist event, the steps you take to recover following the immediate response period will determine how quickly you can return to normalcy. Some business disruptions may be resolved in minutes or hours, while others may require days, weeks or months. The recovery process includes two general stages:

Stage 2: Between 48 hours and seven days after the incident, it is crucial to maintain communication with the national Tourism Emergency Management Operations Center to understand the local and regional situation and coordinate your activities with others. During this time, you should also compile a list of priority restoration actions, ascertain whether it is safe to return to the establishment, conduct a comprehensive damage assessment, determine additional resource needs, and understand the effects critical incidents can have on employees. A daily situation report should be completed as long as it is needed.

Stage 3: From seven to 21 days after the incident, you should continue to assess both physical and financial damage to your business. Once you have ensured all critical needs for survival have been met for any affected employees and customers, you can begin the transition to long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction. As soon as possible, begin to repair and rebuild, and reevaluate risks and vulnerabilities, to ensure better preparedness in the future.