



Galveston - Houston Alliance for Response Kick-off Forum

July 29, 2011

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas

On July 29, 2011, Heritage Preservation sponsored the Galveston-Houston Area Alliance for Response Forum at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Over 80 participants joined distinguished speakers to launch the formation of a regional network that will raise the profile of cultural heritage in the world of emergency response. The Galveston-Houston Forum was the 19th forum sponsored by Heritage Preservation's Alliance for Response initiative since 2003.

The day opened with a welcome from Wynne Phelan, Director of Conservation at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and Minnette Boesel, Mayor's Assistant for Cultural Affairs, City of Houston. Minnette extended a welcome from the Mayor and applauded the effort to start a road map for better city preparedness. She noted that cultural institutions are a huge asset to the community, and in the Gulf Coast region they are also very vulnerable.

Lori Foley closed the morning session with some suggestions of activities a Galveston-Houston Alliance for Response network might undertake. She suggested ensuring that all participating institutions have or are working on disaster plans. dPlan and other models are available online, and Amigos Library Services in Dallas is available to help review disaster plans. Once they are complete disaster plans should be provided to your local first responders and city and county emergency managers. Touring a local Emergency Operations Center or a disaster recovery facility like Blackmon Mooring will lead to new Chairs in the emergency response world. Opening your facility to first responders for training and getting involved in the local hurricane conference are also ways to begin to get to know your emergency responders. Ms. Foley repeated the theme of the morning that "it is incumbent upon all of us to reach out and help each other."

After lunch, a panel of speakers presented information on the importance of disaster planning and the tools to use when making a disaster plan. Kristine Barbier, Public Assistance, Program Specialist / Outreach Officer for FEMA Region VI, spoke first about the process of gaining federal disaster assistance from FEMA. Following a major disaster, FEMA's recovery division provides individual/public assistance, housing and unemployment assistance, and hazard mitigation planning assistance. FEMA cost shares the funding; generally you are responsible for 25% of the costs, but this can be reduced in bigger disasters.

Lori Foley and Dwayne Jones closed the day by noting that networking is critical in emergency response, and the goal of the forum was to be an impetus for a long-lasting regional network.