

Discussion Draft

Meeting Minutes of the Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction

05 June 2008, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Department of Commerce Room 5215

Italics indicate absent members. "T" indicate members participating via teleconference.

Officers

David Applegate (USGS), Chair
Margaret Davidson (NOAA), Vice-Chair (T)

NSTC Liaison

Gene Whitney (OSTP)

Working Group Chairs

Earth Observations Working Group

Steve Ambrose (NASA), Co-Chair
Tim Battista (NOAA), Co-Chair
Bruce Quirk (USGS), Co-Chair

Infrastructure Task Group

Joy Pauschke (NSF), Chair

Resource Impacts Task Group

Susan Conard (USFS), Chair

Designated Representatives

BLM *Edwin Roberson*
Ronald Huntsinger
CDC *Mark Keim*
DHS Bruce Davis
DHS/FEMA Mike Buckley
David Maurstad
DHS/USCG *Steven Cohen*
DOD Al Johnson
DOE *Patricia Hoffman*
DOT Sheila Duwadi
Lori Putman
EOP / OSTP Gene Whitney

EDA Audrey Clarke
EPA *Peter Jutro*
FERC *Berne Mosley*
HUD *David Engel*
NASA *Steve Ambrose*
NGA Stephen Homeyer
NGB *Daniel Bochicchio*
NIH Allen Dearry (T)
NIST William Grosshandler
Jack Hayes
NOAA Margaret Davidson (T)

NSF *Joy Pauschke*
Dennis Wenger
OPHS Sven Rodenbeck (T)
State *Fernando Echavarria*
USACE *Barbara J. Sotirin*
Dimitra Syriopoulou
USAID Sezin Tokar
USDA *Melissa Simpson*
USFS *Susan Conard*
USGS David Applegate
Paula Gori

Other Attendees

NOAA Nell Codner
Mark Gunzelman
Margaret McCalla
Nathalie Valette-Silver (T)

NGA Joseph McQuade
USDA Kari Smith
USFS Michael Hilbruner
USGS Bill Leith

Secretariat Emily Wallace
Barbara Haines-Parmele

Agenda

10:00 Welcome and Introductions
10:05 Presentation: Sichuan Earthquake
10:30 Presentation: Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar (Burma)
10:55 Update on Disaster SBA
Contribution to USGEO Strategic Assessment
11:15 Approval of Meeting Minutes
11:20 Report from the Chair
11:35 Report from the Vice-Chair
11:50 Report from the NSTC Liaison
12:00 Close and Next Actions

Handouts

- Agenda
- May Meeting Minutes
- USAID Fact Sheet on Burma - Cyclone
- Draft Retreat Agenda

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I. Call to Order and Introductions

Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction (SDR) Chair David Applegate (USGS) called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

II. Presentation: May 12th Sichuan Earthquake: A global challenge – David Applegate, Sr. Science Advisor for Earthquake and Geologic Hazards, USGS

Applegate began his presentation by referencing the Subcommittee's role as a forum to discuss current events. Further, to underscore the relevance of the Subcommittee's work, his presentation was framed in terms of the *Grand Challenges for Disaster Reduction*.

To provide hazard and disaster information where and when it is needed, the USGS Prompt Assessment of Global Earthquakes for Response (PAGER) system provided initial estimates of the number of people and the cities exposed to severe shaking within 30 minutes of the magnitude-7.9 earthquake. Through the State Department, the US provided the Chinese government with imagery analysis requested for the fault trace. The earthquake triggered hundreds of landslides, images of which were also acquired under the International Charter, Space and Disasters. In addition to aftershock probabilities. The Chinese also requested aftershock probability estimates from the US. Fear of aftershocks beyond the immediate area of quake damage drove a tent shortage, making the task of gathering the three million plus tents needed to temporarily house the earthquake homeless in the most affected areas very difficult.

Applegate noted that although initial requests from the Chinese were for technical assistance and imagery analysis that could be provided remotely, a National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP) team led by Jack Hayes (NIST) was invited to Beijing to explore opportunities for joint technical investigations of the affected area in order to develop and promote the adoption of effective measures for earthquake loss reduction and improve the understanding of earthquakes and their effects on communities, buildings, structures, and lifelines consistent with *Grand Challenges* #2-5.

Applegate concluded his presentation with *Grand Challenge* #6, promote risk-wise behavior. The devastation from the Sichuan earthquake provided dramatic context for the public unveiling of the Great Southern California ShakeOut, a week of special events that will take place in November 2008 featuring the largest earthquake drill in U.S. history. Organized to inspire Southern Californians to get ready for big earthquakes, and to prevent disasters from becoming catastrophes, the ShakeOut is based on the scenario impacts of a magnitude-7.8 magnitude earthquake on the southern San Andreas Fault. The ShakeOut will include public drills, an international earthquake conference in Los Angeles, the Golden Guardian emergency response exercise and community activities to promote additional preparedness.

Bill Leith (USGS) indicated that the research version of the PAGER system is being developed to provide fatality estimates. The research system estimated 50,000 fatalities within 24 hours of the earthquake. Current estimates are at 70,000 fatalities. PAGER does not directly consider secondary effects of earthquakes such as landslides, fires or tsunami.

Dr. Gene Whitney (OSTP) indicated that PAGER data was helpful in scaling the response from the White House National Security Council.

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Dr. Sezin Tokar (USAID) asked what level of access is required for the PAGER website. Applegate indicated that the operational version, which estimates population exposure to strong shaking, is completely open to the public. In the past month, which included the widely felt Illinois earthquake and the Sichuan earthquake, the USGS earthquake web site received a half billion hits. The Chinese have translated information from the USGS site and posted it to their web sites.

Paula Gori (USGS) mentioned an article in the *New York Times* indicating that rumors were circulating in China that the large death toll stems partly from a failure to heed clear warnings of a devastating earthquake in the area by Chinese scientists. Whitney noted that the Chinese have central government authority over land use but there were still tens of thousands of people living in a vulnerable area. Also, due to corruption in the construction industry, secure structures in China are not as secure as they could be.

Sheila Duwadi (FHWA) noted that FHWA is interested in the road and bridge design specifications utilized in China because FHWA has previously provided such specifications. FHWA is interesting in accompanying post-earthquake reconnaissance teams to China.

Dennis Wenger (NSF) noted that despite a NSF agreement with the Chinese Earthquake Administration, they had so far been unable to get an official invitation to send an earthquake engineering research team to China. The NEHRP is seeking to coordinate research on foreign earthquakes and hopes to get approval from the Chinese Embassy for such teams to travel in the coming weeks.

Mike Buckley (FEMA) asked if an estimate of fatalities caused by landslides was available. Applegate indicated that he was not aware of those numbers.

III. Presentation: USG Humanitarian Assistance to Burma – A. Sezin Tokar, Hydrometeorological Hazard Advisor Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, USAID

Applegate introduced Dr. Sezin Tokar to discuss USAID's humanitarian assistance to Burma.

Tokar began the presentation by introducing USAID and the Office of US Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA). USAID supports long-term and equitable economic growth and advances U.S. foreign policy objectives by supporting economic growth, agriculture and trade; global health; and democracy, conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance. USAID provides assistance in four regions of the world. Within USAID, OFDA responds to all types of natural disasters, provides assistance when lives are threatened by accidental or human-caused catastrophes, coordinates and facilitates U.S. Government response to international disasters, and promotes preparedness and mitigation activities.

Tokar continued her presentation by discussing OFDA's response to disasters. Once a disaster is declared, OFDA immediately releases \$50,000 to purchase relief supplies and deploys regional advisors to assess conditions and identify needs, an assessment team to evaluate the disaster situation, and/or a Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) to coordinate responses. On May 5, U.S. Charge d'Affaires Shari Villarosa declared a disaster in Burma due to the effects of Cyclone Nargis. In response, USAID/OFDA deployed a USAID/DART to the region and immediately provided \$250,000 for emergency food, water, sanitation, and shelter assistance to the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF), U.N. World Food Program, and Office of the U.N. High Commissioner

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for Refugees. Food aid and logistics assistance was also provided by USAID's Office of Food for Peace. In addition, 25 C-130 aircraft were deployed by the Department of Defense to airlift relief commodities into Rangoon. Total U.S. humanitarian funding for Burma currently totals over \$26 million.

Tokar indicated that the Cyclone Nargis impact in Burma is estimated at 77,000 fatalities by the Government of Burma and 63,000-101,000 fatalities by the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Most fatalities have likely been caused by storm surges. Missing persons have been estimated at 55,900 by the Government of Burma. OCHA further estimates 110,000 displaced persons staying in settlements. The India Meteorological Department issued a forecast in advance of the cyclone via TV, radio, and Internet. The forecast, however, failed to reach many people due to the unreliability of electricity.

Tokar concluded her presentation by providing an update on the current situation. On June 2, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that approximately 1.3 million of the 2.4 million people affected by Cyclone Nargis, or 54 percent have received some humanitarian assistance to date. In the Ayeyarwady (also known as Irrawaddy) Delta, the percentage of affected individuals reached has increased from 23 percent to 49 percent since May 25. However, OCHA noted that most of the individuals reached have received limited and inconsistent assistance, due to limited access and supplies. In the less affected areas of Ayeyarwady Delta, camps temporarily housing displaced populations continue to decline as people return to home villages after receiving basic relief commodities and food assistance, according to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). Unconfirmed international media and human rights reports state that the Government of Burma began to close some government-run relief camps in affected areas on May 30. OCHA reports that contributions to the \$201 million U.N. Flash Appeal for Burma have reached approximately 40 percent. On June 1, IFRC reported that humanitarian access remains static following the May 25 donor conference and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's visit. Six IFRC staff continue to wait for Government of Burma permission to access the Ayeyarwady Delta.

Dr. Whitney (OSTP) reported that the U.S. Navy stood offshore for 3 weeks ready to assist Burma and asked if Burma's lack of willingness to accept assistance would impact future disaster responses. Dr. Tokar indicated that it would not. Al Johnson (DOD) indicated that although Burma's refusal to accept assistance was very frustrating, it would not affect future responses.

Mark Gunzelman (NOAA) reported that relief is not being received as quickly as it should because of limited access to the delta. All harvests have been destroyed and there is a current lack of food and shelter.

Applegate thanked Tokar for presenting and announced that the presentation will be posted to the SDR members only website.

IV. Presentation: Update on Societal Benefit Area (SBA) Contribution to USGEO Strategic Assessment – Bill Leith, USGS

Applegate introduced Bill Leith from USGS to provide an update on the disaster reduction Societal Benefit Area (SBA) contribution to the U.S. Group on Earth Observations (USGEO) Strategic Assessment. On behalf of the Subcommittee for Disaster Reduction (SDR), Leith is serving as the team lead for the disaster assessment.

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Leith began his presentation by providing an overview of the USGEO's Strategic Assessment Group (SAG) report. The SAG is consolidating and prioritizing Earth observation priorities by SBA. Bi-weekly meetings of the SAG have been held since last August. Dr. Whitney noted that individual agencies require observation systems with no coherency at the national level. The SAG is taking a cross-government look at Earth observation needs and capabilities. Whitney also noted that a USGEO Earth Observation policy document is being formulated to focus on process (standards and protocols) and research to operations transition.

Leith reported that each SBA is preparing an Earth observations white paper. The disasters and climate white papers are the furthest along due to the extensive amount of research and work already completed in these areas. For disasters, the goal is to consolidate all SDR documents that reference Earth observations and extend that body of knowledge (e.g. human resources, economic benefit, data management and stewardship) to other SBAs. Leith indicated that a writing team has been formed to elevate the SBA drafts and consolidate team efforts. Drafts are due to the SAG on Monday, June 9th. The working group expects to solicit review comments from SDR representatives on the next draft.

Applegate thanked Leith for the update.

V. Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the previous meeting (May 1, 2008) were approved with amendment.

VI. Report from the Chair

Applegate reminded the committee about the 2008 Annual Hazards Research and Applications Workshop, being held from July 12-16, 2008 at the Omni Interlocken Resort, just outside of Boulder, Colorado.

Applegate also announced that the SDR all-day retreat will be held July 24, 2008 at the National Science Foundation. Applegate reviewed the agenda and asked members to provide comment to Emily by June 27, 2008.

VII. Report from the Vice-Chair

Margaret Davidson announced that two U.S. Climate Change Science Program (CCSP) reports are available for comment.

Comments to the Draft Report of Synthesis and Assessment Product 5.2: "Best practice approaches for characterizing, communicating, and incorporating scientific uncertainty in decision making" must be received by **June 9, 2008**. The Draft Report is posted on the CCSP web site at: <http://www.climate-science.gov/Library/sap/sap5-2/public-review-draft/default.htm> for review.

Comments to the USGS-led Draft Report of Synthesis and Assessment Product 3.4: "Abrupt Climate Change" must be received by **June 16, 2008**. The Draft Report is posted on the CCSP web site at: <http://www.climate-science.gov/Library/sap/sap3-4/public-review-draft/> for review.

Davidson reported that Synthesis and Assessment Product 4.1 "Coastal elevation and sensitivity to sea level rise" has been pushed back for another 3 months.

In conclusion, Davidson requested SDR members to contact her or Emily if interested in funding the National Research Council Study on Measuring Community Resiliency.

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VIII. Report from the NSTC Liaison

Whitney announced that the National Research Council (NRC) is undertaking a review of the U.S. readiness for tsunami and is utilizing the SDR publication *Tsunami Risk Reduction for the United States: A Framework for Action* as its starting point. Their first meeting is scheduled for July 1st.

Whitney also announced that this would be his last SDR meeting. He is leaving the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to run the Energy group at the Library of Congress Congressional Research Service. Applegate recognized Whitney's service and thanked him for his attention to SDR issues. The Subcommittee gave him a heart-felt round of applause.

Whitney thanked the group and indicated that his successor has not yet been appointed. He encouraged the SDR to stay active through the Presidential transition.

Dennis Wenger (NSF) announced that the Natural Hazards Center in Boulder, CO is currently seeking agency contributions. Contact Diane Smith at diane.smith@colorado.edu or (303) 492-6818 to discuss making a contribution or visit www.colorado.edu/hazards/about/contribute.html.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

X. Future Meetings

The SDR meets on the first or second Thursday of every month from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. unless otherwise noted. The July 24th meeting will be an all-day retreat focused on issues related to the Presidential transition. The retreat will be held at the National Science Foundation. There will be no meeting in August.

July 24, 2008 (all-day retreat)

September 4, 2008

Friday, October 9, 2008 (note change)

November 6, 2008

December 4, 2008

VII. Agenda Items and Other Communications with the Subcommittee

Please send proposed agenda items and any other items intended for distribution to the full Subcommittee to Emily Wallace (ewallace@grs-solutions.com).

VIII. Contact Information SDR Leadership

David Applegate, Chair, 703-648-6714, applegate@usgs.gov

Margaret Davidson, Vice Chair, 843-740-1220, Margaret.davidson@noaa.gov

Gene Whitney, NSTC Liaison, 202-456-6081, gwhitney@ostp.eop.gov

Secretariat

Emily Wallace, 703-560-7448, ewallace@grs-solutions.com

IX. Summary of May Actions

Action	Lead	By When
SDR financial support: Contact Dave (applegate@usgs.gov) if you would like a personalized support request letter to your	SDR Members	Standing

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agency		
Contact Emily (ewallace@grs-solutions.com) to receive copies of the Grand Challenges for Disaster Reduction Implementation Plan packets or CD	SDR Members	Standing
Let Emily or Dave know how you use the implementation plans, including when you link to the plans from your agency websites.	SDR Members	Standing
Send Emily or Dave additional distribution suggestions, including relevant contact information	SDR Members	Standing
Contact Diane Smith at diane.smith@colorado.edu or (303) 492-6818 if you are interested in contributing to the Natural Hazards Center in Boulder, CO.	SDR Members	ASAP
Provide comments to the Draft Report of Synthesis and Assessment Product 3.4: "Abrupt Climate Change".	SDR Members	16 June
Let Emily know if you are interested in funding the National Research Council Study on Measuring Community Resiliency.	SDR Members	27 June
Send Emily revisions to the draft SDR Retreat Agenda.	SDR Members	27 June