

**Statement by Harold W. Brooks
President and Chief Executive Officer
American Red Cross Bay Area**

**U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
Disaster Prevention and Prediction Subcommittee
April 18, 2006**

Chairman DeMint and Senator Boxer, thank you very much for the opportunity to meet with you on this very significant and historic day in the Bay Area. Most of us disaster geeks were up early to join with kindred spirits at 5:12 a.m. at Lotta's Fountain to commemorate the Centennial of the Great Earthquake and Fire of 1906. April 18, 1906 pushed this chapter of the American Red Cross into a very critical role. At a time when the national organization was reeling from the transition from founding President Clara Barton to a new national executive, Mabel Boardman – the Red Cross was charged by President Teddy Roosevelt and the United States Congress with overseeing the recovery and rebuilding of the city. The organization performed very well. It is a role that has been treated as a sacred trust by the volunteers of this community ever since.

Another big test for this chapter was the Loma Prieta Earthquake of 1989. The chapter had some challenges. We grappled with how to work with our homeless populations as they became disaster victims. We were humbled by the fact that we could not take care of the community alone. We were thrilled to have spontaneous volunteers and organizations join us – shoulder to shoulder to respond to the needs of the community. We were shocked to learn that no matter how much money was needed for the devastation wrought by Hurricane Hugo in the Caribbean and Carolinas, we were obliged to use dollars raised for the earthquake on the earthquake. We learned how serious the concept of donor intent was. Although there had been severe losses in disasters elsewhere, people throughout the nation responded quite generously when they saw San Francisco's Marina District on Fire in an earthquake that many saw live as they watched the World Series game between the Oakland A's and The San Francisco Giants.

The most powerful lesson of Loma Prieta was the one of collaboration and community partnerships. The volunteers in this community vowed to build the best disaster response team in the nation. We believe we have that. They also learned that no one organization can handle a major disaster by itself. Through our corporate partners, the public sector, volunteer centers, Salvation Army, United

Way and a series of non-government and faith-based organizations; we have learned to look to one another to ensure a great response.

We have not rested since Loma Prieta. We continue to expand our operating capacity to enable us to handle any emergency that comes our way. Chevron provides us with a warehouse and distribution center (in the city of Dublin) where national assets of cots, blankets, comfort kits, and other disaster supplies can be used here or distributed wherever the need is. We have a great relationship with chapters throughout the Pacific of mutual assistance. We have a great Pacific service area team – one of eight of our service areas across the country – located in Sacramento. They help us to coordinate and deploy more staff from throughout the state or nation and effectively communicate with State government agencies.

We have developed very exciting relationships with the leading technology companies headquartered here in the greater Bay Area. They are beginning to help us better manage the quick and efficient delivery of assistance to our clients and track their progress. We are also using software that allows us to share confidential data and forms with our collaborating agencies – so our clients don't have to fill out duplicate forms from each agency with whom they meet. We are using debit cards for displaced families. We have always thought of our worst case scenario being the need to handle 300,000 displaced people in the aftermath of an earthquake on the Hayward fault. We learned from Katrina that our response was able to handle 100,000 people. We ultimately served 1.2 million people. This is a sobering new reality. We want to do our part to ensure that the organization can handle the surge of one million affected families within a ten-day period and two million over the longer term. This chapter has always been a leader in helping our national organization build the systems and processes needed to expand our reach and improve our efficiency.

This chapter, in conjunction with the American Red Cross national organization, is continuing to evaluate the response efforts to the hurricanes of 2005 and implement initiatives that will enhance our capacity to effectively respond to disaster caused needs of a magnitude we previously had not imagined. As mentioned, we will be focusing even more on our partnerships with other organizations in the community – government, faith-based, community-based, business – and taking a lead in ensuring that the entire community is capable of implementing an effective response. No one agency or organization can do it all, and we are looking at new ways that we can lead and/or support other organizations when it comes to increasing the readiness level of the entire Bay Area. These partnerships will not only increase our capacity, but will help ensure

that all segments of the community receive the services they need in a sensitive and culturally competent manner. All segments of the community should realize that they will be part of the response and must be prepared to offer their services, and the Red Cross will ensure that we assist in incorporating their resources and knowledge into the overall community response.

The Bay Area Chapter of the American Red Cross has worked hard to build these community relationships, and cultivating additional relationships that can help the community with the initial needs of sheltering and feeding hundreds of thousands of people is our highest priority task. We have worked with our government and community partners to identify and evaluate hundreds of schools, churches and other facilities that can serve as shelters. We continue to build on our relationships with the Salvation Army, Southern Baptists, institutional food producers, large caterers, Food Banks, and other community feeding organizations to ensure coordinated feeding efforts can be executed as quickly as possible after a disaster. We have strong relationships through Citizen Corps, local Emergency Services coordinating groups, VOAD (Voluntary Agencies Active in Disaster) with our community response partners to ensure we all understand how our response plans work, and how they will work together. We also maintain strong ties with our Volunteer Center partners to ensure we have a coordinated response to the surge of spontaneous volunteers that will want to help with the feeding and sheltering efforts. We continue to explore new ways to ensure all of the community responders are included in an efficient and coordinated response effort. Drills, exercises, and joint planning efforts have been very beneficial and we are confident that these relationships, as well as those we are working to form, will take our response readiness to a new level.

We work diligently to help people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. We are visible and actively serving more than 4.5 million people in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Solano Counties. Through a team of 85 paid and 3,000 plus volunteers we help our communities prepare for life's emergencies.

We live in one of the most seismically active regions in the world. The US Geological Survey says there is a 70 percent chance of another catastrophic earthquake here within 30 years. The terrible events of September 11 raised the spectrum of terrorism that must be confronted from a disaster response perspective. The San Francisco Bay Area is a vibrant, high profile area that has been identified as among the top potential targets for acts of terrorism. We prepare for all hazards, including terrorist attacks and even pandemics.

One of our favorite corporate partners, PG&E has provided the initial funding for a wonderful new campaign called Prepare Bay Area. Just last week they joined with Red Cross, the Mayors of Oakland and Martinez, The Fire Chief of San Francisco and leaders from every sector of our community to launch the most ambitious preparedness campaign ever. Prepare Bay Area has a goal of preparing one in four (over one million people) here in the Bay Area. The logic behind that number is, we want one person in each household to be able to save the lives of their loved ones, neighbors and others. Put simply we want everyone to take three steps: 1. Make a family disaster plan; 2. Build a disaster supplies kit; 3. Get trained in CPR, First Aid and/or disaster preparedness.

To get started on this campaign, we conducted a six county survey. The results reinforce the importance of our campaign. Those surveyed were asked whether they had:

1. Made a family plan outlining what to do in the aftermath of a disaster.
2. Prepared a disaster supplies kit suitable for sustaining them for 3 – 5 days.
3. Received training in disaster preparedness, CPR and/or first aid.

Only 6% indicated they had taken all three of the steps that Red Cross considers essential to being prepared.

Katrina repeated the lesson clearly that our economically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities require special attention to get prepared. Not surprisingly our survey tells us that there are many differences between demographic sub-groups in regards to reasons for not being prepared. Hispanics and Asians are much more likely than Caucasians or African Americans to say a major reason why they are not prepared is because they do not think an emergency situation is likely to happen. This is also the case with lower income respondents. African Americans, Hispanics and Asians are significantly more likely than Caucasians to say the major reason why they have not prepared is because they do not know what to do in order to prepare. We are working with community influencers to either help us or actually do the preparedness training with their communities. These community partners will promote Prepare Bay Area's "how to" preparedness plan by using their unique influence to compel their constituents to take action—to become fully ready for disasters.

In the Spanish Speaking communities we have *Sabados por la familia* training. It is highly successful. We have a Youth for Chinese Elderly Program, where high school students learn then help prepare the elderly Chinese in their communities. Oracle and Chiron are just two corporations who have adopted schools near their offices and funded preparedness training for the students.

In the aftermath of Katrina we registered and served 5,000 evacuees. Our directors of Emergency Services at the state, county and city levels were amazing to work with in mobilizing the community. Many of the leading faith based organizations stepped forward and opened their doors. They provided volunteers to house and feed evacuees. The community came together and did a great job. It is clear we must build upon what we saw happen here as well as throughout the Gulf Coast. The Red Cross concept has always been neighbor helping neighbor. We are working hard to enable the citizens of the Bay Area to prepare for and alleviate human suffering from emergencies.

Henri Dunant started this International Red Cross movement 143 years ago in May of 1863. Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross in May of 1881 - 125 years ago. The Red Cross in the Bay Area started 108 years ago with the support to our troops deploying to Manila for the Spanish American War. They elevated the organization with their disaster response when the nation needed it 100 years ago. We are privileged to live in one of the most beautiful places on the planet here. It is an awesome responsibility to also make it the most prepared place on the planet. Standing on the shoulders of the great community leaders that showed us they way, we take on that responsibility with confidence and humility.

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.