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PROTECTION | PREVENTION | PREPAREDNESS | RESPONSE | RESILIENCE | RECOVERY

EXTREME WEATHER 2017 HURRICANE SEASON

Interview with Jesper Holmer Lund of INSARAG; Geopolitics & Climate; Resilience in Qatar; Security & Conflict; Immersive Counter-terror Training; Reintegrating Violent Extremists; Business Continuity; Communities & Policing; Risk Communication; Leadership; Humanitarian Action; Junior Health Volunteers in Refugee Camps

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CRJ aims to identify and highlight future trends that could manifest as life-threatening hazards and events which will, in turn, confront all those whose concern is to protect lives, livelihoods, the environment and businesses, and consequently the wellbeing and sustainability of nations and communities. We then propose practical solutions.



In many ways, it is a simple matter to isolate and trace the threads in this complex global tapestry of climate, geopolitics, politics, conflict and disputes, modern tribalism that is often fuelled by social media, food insecurity, human encroachment of land previously considered unsuitable for settlement – the list is long but the clues are all there.

This issue's narrative thread provides a timely reminder – if one were needed – that nature can be the biggest threat of all, with reports on the cataclysmic devastation caused by a particularly active hurricane season. And, as CRJ goes to press, wildfires in California have led to 23 deaths, hundreds more missing and thousands of structures destroyed.

On p30, Casey Brunelle traces links between climate, resource scarcity and conflict, before we move on to John Drake's analysis of stabilisation progress in the Middle East on p34. The long term and wider ramifications of protracted conflicts are examined on p36, and we consider the impact on communities and individuals on p38. As countries prepare themselves for the return of foreign fighters or their children (p44 and p46), we look at reintegration and peacebuilding, which are not only said to cost less in the long term, but also create the peaceful and sustainable societies in which we all want to live (p48 and p50).

Turning to learning, David Stewart draws lessons on national resilience from the recent blockade of Qatar (p58); Rob McAllister examines leadership on p62 and Christoph Schroth looks at the supplies all businesses should put together in the form of battle boxes (p64). The persistent and malevolent threat of cyber attacks is examined on p68, before we move on to even more practical solutions.

Page 72 presents developments for the treatment of traumatic brain injury, followed by articles looking on inter-service co-operation and how technology is being harnessed to create more secure and resilient communities.

This all serves to demonstrate that the whole picture, complex as it is, can be redrawn with positive outcomes. It is a challenge, but the will and human creativity are in place.

Emily Hough

National resilience p58



Stewarts | CRJ

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Peace One Day

Averting catastrophe in high-rise building fires

While fires cannot be entirely prevented, proper emergency planning and safety systems are being called into question around the world as more high-rises are being built to meet the need for housing, reports **Anna Averkiou**

When a manual control point (MCP) was triggered on the 62nd floor of Dubai's Torch Tower, staff didn't hesitate to take action that averted a major catastrophe and potential loss of life. The protocols that stood them in good stead when a fire broke out in the same building two-and-a-half years previously, worked again in August 2017 and all occupants escaped unharmed. Dubai Civil Defence (DCD) crews were called within six minutes of the initial alert and it took just 47 minutes to evacuate the 87-storey tower.

The alarm was raised at 00:35hrs by residents who had spotted something suspicious above their balcony. They activated the MCPs in the common lobby areas, which triggered an alarm throughout a 20-storey zone around the call, and set off indicators located on the main fire control panel in a technical office on the ground floor next to reception.

"A building the size of the Torch has to be taken care of day and night, and there were 15 staff on site when the fire broke out," explains Mark Maynard, Head of HR, Site Operations for Kingfield Owner Association Management Services, which manages the building.

"Staff drills are conducted every month and we include different scenarios," he said, explaining that although there is no mandatory requirement for residents to be included, they are all provided with information sheets detailing evacuation and response in the event of fire when they move in; these are available at all times through a residents' intranet portal. Reminders are sent several times each year.

"On the night of the fire, five of the staff had been trained as first responders and fire wardens and could use either extinguishers or the full fire hose reel. However, as first responders, they are instructed not to tackle something which is beyond an initial ignition," said Maynard.

Staff immediately went to investigate, but the apartment in question was locked and the residents were out. Further investigation from the floors above and below confirmed the alarm was genuine. Within six minutes of

the initial MCP trigger, emergency response and evacuation procedures were activated and alarms set off around the whole building.

The first priorities were to call DCD and escalate the incident to senior managers from facilities management and the owners' association. The Torch's technical manager, who up to this point had been acting as fire controller, handed over control and 'Red Box' – a file compiled by Kingfield containing floor plans, locations of different services and support assets, such as fire hose reels, mechanical floors and any storage units containing hazardous types of materials in the building. They were also provided with the elevator override keys. The building's two elevators automatically went to the ground floor when the alarms went off so they couldn't be used, enabling DCD to reach the fire location as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile the first responders worked their way down the building's two staircases. At each level, they went through in a circle to the next staircase, hitting any MCPs as needed and in some cases raising the alarm by knocking on doors.

Escalation process

"We also manage the neighbouring Princess Tower, along with same facilities management company, Emrill, which provides staff for all services in the building – technical, housekeeping, concierge and security," says Maynard. "Although these are two different freehold buildings, built and developed by different companies, we are able to pull resources from the other building if required. Torch also triggered the escalation process inside Princess. By 02:00hrs, we had two additional staff from Emrill and five Kingfield staff."

Within 47 minutes of the initial alarm, 671 people, including two disabled residents, were successfully evacuated. Staff were deployed on the ground floor to guide occupants to an assembly point outside. Because the fire was deemed to be major, they were joined by Princess Tower staff, who directed them to the residents' observation lounge at the top of the Princess Tower.

Once registered, some residents made their own arrangements and stayed with friends, while the remaining 419 were provided with mattresses, seating, blankets, water and other basics. Staff maintained a constant presence to deal with any requests and inform them of updates from DCD.

Kingfield deployed extra staff through the night. At 02:30hrs they began calling hotels for assistance with emergency accommodation. Police also contacted hotels, saying that if they had empty rooms they should accommodate residents. However, they did not address numbers required or how payment would be managed and one hotel was particularly difficult. Kingfield staff persevered and by 04:35hrs, residents started to move to four hotels that were able to assist. The Police arranged for Dubai Road Transport Authority to send buses to transport residents to accommodation.

The flames spread both upwards and downwards, but there was no immediate threat to nearby people, as the elevation and direction of the fire faced an empty plot of land to the front and one side. A large amount of debris fell on the Princess Tower's podium recreation deck, which was closed at night.

In total, 92 out of 678 apartments – mainly the balconies – were damaged. DCD confirmed the fire was completely extinguished at 04:30hrs. Within 24 hours, residents were gradually permitted access to obtain emergency items and valuables. Within 48 hours, access was granted to unaffected apartments. By August 14, less than two weeks after the fire, residents started to move back.

"In terms of local laws and regulations, there is no obligation for the building insurance to provide emergency accommodation for tenants or owners. However, it does have to provide compensation in terms of loss of rent and damage to an owner," explains Maynard, adding that Kingfield had spoken to some hotels beforehand about supporting emergency situations, but this is almost impossible to tie down because no one knows what hotel occupancy will be at any given time.

“There is a 14-day emergency accommodation clause built into our policy, so throughout the following morning we arranged accommodation for those who needed it,” he adds.

In Dubai, most people do not seem to bother with insurance. If a tenant’s apartment is still affected after the two weeks, they have to break their contract with the owner or landlord legally, by asking Dubai Municipality, which has jurisdiction over city services and the upkeep of facilities, to confirm the apartment is affected. They can then break their tenancy contract and the landlord is obliged to refund any unused rent. The landlord is covered by buildings insurance.

The fire alarm company has ensured that the Torch has an operational and workable system in all areas, including those that are damaged and uninhabitable. The replacement of detectors and sprinkler heads is an ongoing process.

Meanwhile, the insurance company is assessing the damage; appointing companies, contractors and consultants to undertake and check the jobs and obtain relevant permits from the authorities.

Maynard believes the restoration process will be considerably quicker than after the previous incident. DCD agreement and approval of the repairs have been obtained, and insurance and ownership issues agreed.

His company has also been negotiating its way around the red tape involved with the legal framework of the associations in respect of buildings in Dubai.

At the time of writing, the DCD report into the fire has not been released and while speculation is rife, its cause may never be known.

There has been plenty of debate about the safety of composite cladding used on high-rise buildings’ facades, including the Torch. DCD took some time in assessing whether the cladding should be changed after the last fire, which affected about 10 per cent of the facade.

“There have been a number of different concepts, ideas and proposals, but nothing has been ratified and subsequently included in any fire code – including the new one that came out earlier this year. The fact is that Torch, like countless buildings in this town and around the world, adhered to the rules and regulations at the time of construction and to pull everything off and replace it all is an extremely difficult proposition,” states Maynard. However, he emphasises that the protocols to mitigate against the threats worked two-and-a-half years ago, and were also effective in this latest incident. CRJ

Author



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Fire damage inside one of the apartments

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