

On the occasion of the Emergency Management Services (EMS) Gala Dinner, Expo Centre
09 November 2007

**SPEECH BY THE EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF JOHANNESBURG, CLR AMOS
MASONDO, ON THE OCCASION OF THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
SERVICES (EMS) GALA DINNER, EXPO CENTRE (BATELEUR CONFERENCE
CENTRE), NASREC - JOHANNESBURG**

Building leadership Towards Sustainable Emergency Management Services Programme
Director

MMC for Public Safety: Clr Thomas Phakhathi

Members of the Mayoral Committee

Fellow Councillors

Emergency Management Services Chief: Dr Ntombi Gule

City Manager: Mavela Dlamini

Managers and Officials of Council

EMS Senior Managers and all the Staff

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Programme Director, thank you for the opportunity to say a few words at this important
occasion - the EMS Gala Dinner, referred to in the past as the Chiefs Gala Dinner.

The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) in its report "Cities in a
Globalising World - Global Report on Human Settlements 2001" makes the following
observation:

In Honduras, the public law, which authorises disaster functions at a national level was
amended six (6) months after Mitch to reconstitute the lead disaster agency, COPECO, as a
civilian group operating independently of military authority for the first time in the country's
history. This action was observed by one executive staff member to be a move towards the
"municipalisation of emergency services" which will enhance local stakeholder involvement
in administering disaster programmes during future emergencies.

The report continues to say that what exist in terms of social class and economic conditions
in society prior to the disaster will define to a great extent the shape of a long-term recovery.
The four periods of recovery are listed as:

1. "The emergency period covering the first few days following the disaster when
services are disrupted and response is organised regionally, nationally and
internationally.
2. The period of restoring major urban services, combine with debris clearance.
3. The replacement period when homes, jobs and major civil and commercial activities
are restored.
4. The development reconstruction period, when improvement of previous public and
private production and distribution systems occurs as part of future growth and
expansion".

The report says that these periods do not necessarily follow in perfect stepwise sequence,
and their application can be uneven. Political, technical, institutional and class factors

intervene to direct the placement and delivery of recovery services. For example, an affluent neighbourhood with more direct access to outside assistance usually recovers faster than heavily damaged, and largely ignored, low-income neighbourhoods.

Programme Director, I am raising these points merely to point out how critical the kind of work done by EMS is and to indicate the need to ever raise the bar and aspire for higher standards of performance.

We meet this evening to talk about Emergency Services and the quest to ever improve the security and safety of citizens and property. To talk about Emergency Services and the benefit to the public and all our citizens. Programme Director, let me remind all of us gathered here this evening that we have an obligation to serve all without any form of discrimination.

Safety issues are central to matters of development. According to Wikipedia (the website), "Safety is the state of being "safe" (from French *sauf*), the condition of being protected against physical, social, spiritual, financial, political, emotional, occupational, psychological, educational or other types or consequences of failure, damage, error, accidents, harm or any other event which could be considered non-desirable. This can take the form of being protected from the event or from exposure to something that causes health or economical losses. It can include protection of people or of possessions".

Programme Director, the Wikipedia website state that there are three emergency services which are almost universally acknowledged as being core to the provision of emergency care to the populous (densely inhabited), and are often government run:

- Police - providing community safety. Acting to enforce the law and protect persons and property.
- Fire Service - providing fire-fighters to deal with fire and rescue operations, and may also deal with some secondary emergency service duties, such as mine rescue, coastguard, drowning, etc and
- Emergency Medical Services - providing ambulances, staff and other relevant resources to deal with medical emergencies.

Programme Director, emergency care and safety have been rendered in different forms since the beginning of recorded history. The New Testament contains the well known parable of the Good Samaritan, where a man who was beaten was cared for and taken to safety by a Samaritan. Luke 10:34 "He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him".

The Good Samaritan provided a comprehensive service: medication, care, transport, food and accommodation. All of this at own cost and no strings attached.

We are gathered here tonight to express how much we value and appreciate the work and effort undertaken by EMS Management and Staff. Programme Director, we know that equipment alone, however sophisticated, cannot lead to a successful EMS. Critical to success is skilful, dedicated and committed Emergency and rescue personnel. Men and women who when duty calls will spare neither strength nor courage to serve and save lives. \

This year's theme is "collectively creating safe communities". If we translate this into reality we know that we shall have gone a long way to create safe and secure communities in every neighbourhood. In this regard, through this dinner, we have created a platform to recognise service and excellence. This EMS Gala Dinner is indeed a good idea.

In order to ensure that the process of the employee recognition awards is fair and credible EMS this year reviewed the document it developed in 2005 detailing amongst others: the criteria for the awards, the nomination process, the adjudication as well as possible prizes. Besides changing the name from Chiefs Gala Dinner to EMS Gala Dinner, which is more inclusive, it has added a new category, which is relevant to this year's theme - the Safe Community Awards.

This new award category is designed to recognise communities and the media. This includes Regions or communities' Disaster Management Forums and Community Emergency Response Teams (Cert) who have had good performance as well as journalists who may have written stories that positively or proactively contribute to community safety.

In this City, we acknowledge that the resources available are by definition limited. Having said this, it is also equally true that the resources available to emergency services in every community may be far greater than what may be perceived. And if properly co-ordinated and managed the availability and utilisation of such collective resources could make a far greater impact.

Programme Director, we acknowledge creativity and innovation. We salute the effort of those who, over and above the display of ordinary management capabilities, demonstrate leadership. But above all, we have great admiration for those who go out of their way to identify, nurture and develop other leaders. We are also of the view that specific attention should also be reserved for those who seek to strengthen partnerships, especially by helping to leverage community and private sector resources.

We know that EMS personnel are highly sought after, not just in developing countries but all over the world.

As we said in the past year, some of the men and women who are here tonight are not necessarily without this kind of pressure. What we need to note, however, is that instead of succumbing and eloping elsewhere, they have chosen to stay on. This is so because they know and understand that their community, their City and their country need them. For this we remain eternally grateful. For this, they deserve a round of applause.

Programme Director, moving towards conclusion, I think it is proper that we should pause for a moment at this point and reflect not on achievements, but on our collective loss. This evening is also dedicated to the ultimate sacrifice shown by those members of staff who gave their lives trying to make this a better City for all its residents. This reminds me of the prayer of the fireman .. fireperson ...

Fireman's Prayer

*When I am called to duty, God,
Whenever flames may rage;
Give me strength to save some life,
Whatever be its age.*

*Help me embrace a little child
Before it is too late
Or save an older person
From the horror of that fate.
Enable me to be alert
And hear the weakest shout,
And quickly and efficiently
To put the fire out.
I want to fill my calling
And to give the best in me
To guard my every neighbour
And protect his property.
And if, according to my fate,
I am to lose my life,
Please bless with your protecting
My children and my wife/husband.
- Author Unknown*

Programme Director, this is a special category of people who deserve a dignified applause.

I am also pleased to announce that in two consecutive years, that is from 2006 to 2007, we have not lost a single soul in the line of duty. I suppose, Programme Director, this is testimony that safety measures adopted by EMS are becoming more effective in reducing the number of fatalities.

Today we salute the staff and all EMS personnel.

Please allow me congratulate MMC for Public Safety, Clr Thomas Phakathi and the Chief of EMS, Dr Ntombi Gule as well as the entire management for all their effort in managing the team in such a manner that both the human and financial resources are used and directed in such a way that the Emergency Management Services delivers a better quality of life to all our citizens. I would also like to express an appreciation to those who were presented with awards in the year 2006 and to say good luck to this year's nominees.

Let me conclude by saying: what this organisation needs is people with excellent leadership qualities. Men and Women of character, who love the work that they do - who are passionate, who know that for every problem they must find a solution, who are ever eager for knowledge and ready to work within a collective and do so with the necessary courage to break new ground. Thank you