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CEAS is designed to help resolve access restrictions following a disaster or emergency

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Business Network of Emergency Resources, Inc.

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What would happen if your building was evacuated following an emergency and you were prevented from returning for 3 days, 7 days, a week or more? What about your tenants and their critical business operations? This scenario is an unsettling one for tenants and property managers alike; unfortunately this “what if” situation is often overlooked in many businesses’ crisis management plans. Even the best business continuity or building safety plan cannot account for the access limitations often put into effect by public safety agencies following a disaster or serious emergency.

The Business Network of Emergency Resources (BNET), a New York based not-for-profit company, has dedicated itself to establishing practical and effective emergency and crisis management solutions through partnerships between the public and private sector. Its Corporate Emergency Access System (CEAS) is designed to help resolve “access restrictions” through means of a pre-event credentialing program, which authenticates “critical business employees” for access to restricted areas following a disaster

or serious emergency using a secure identification card recognized by the police. Governments must adopt the CEAS program for use in their jurisdiction before businesses can enroll in the program and receive ID cards. The local authorities can implement CEAS following an emergency once immediate threats to life are stabilized. The CEAS card helps critical employees get past a police line and assists police in determining who belongs in an area and who doesn’t.

CEAS is a true public-private partnership in every sense of the word. BNET works very closely with local governments and business associations like BOMA and the Real Estate Board of N.Y. to ensure the legitimacy of the program before entering into an agreement to deploy CEAS. The chief elected official must support the program before a Plan of Administration can be developed, usually in cooperation with the local emergency management office. The local police department must develop written procedure in the form of a department order, before the program is officially implemented. Companies who wish to participate in the program must execute a Participants Agreement, which indemnifies the jurisdiction as well as provide

proof of insurance before being able to enroll. BNET facilitates this program through its on-line software, provides web-based training to individual participants and produces and delivers the physical ID cards to a corporate representative. The CEAS program is supported solely by the participating companies through an individual, two year participation fee of \$50. CEAS is offered to local governments at no cost.

While property managers are major participants in CEAS in the cities where it is offered, another advantage to the program includes the ability to credential critical suppliers necessary for building recovery. During the Northeast blackout many building managers found that while they were able to maintain basic operations through emergency generation, that generation was limited by the amount of fuel they had on hand. Police officials had restricted access into Manhattan, which thwarted critical fuel deliveries and other necessary supplies and service providers from entering the city to support property managers. In almost every disaster scenario, including 9-11, the inability of businesses to gain access to their facilities to maintain or restore operations has been proven to be

a serious impediment to recovery and a major contributor to business failure.

Coordinating with tenants is a critical function in a post crisis situation that is often overlooked or improperly managed. CEAS provides a means of developing this relationship at the building level. Post disaster expectations can be better managed by meeting and coordinating with tenants as part of the normal emergency planning process. Managers can help their tenants be better prepared by encouraging their participation in CEAS; more importantly, CEAS participation by management can be an enticement to potential tenants, knowing that their property manager takes emergency planning seriously.

Businesses in New York City, Buffalo, N.Y., Boston and Cambridge, Mass. and Stamford Conn. are taking advantage of the CEAS programs in their respective cities. CEAS will soon be coming to Philadelphia, Penn., additional NYC metropolitan area counties and new locations in New England. For any property manager who takes their emergency preparedness seriously, CEAS is an excellent way to make certain that you can get access to your facilities when you need to the most. Anyone interested in enrolling can do so at www.CEAS.com.

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