



NEWS



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INNOVATIVE EMERGENCY RESPONSE MODEL KEEPS NEW YORK BUSINESSES OPERATIONAL DURING A CRISIS OR DISASTER

Recent events, such as last year's natural disasters in the Gulf Region, have tragically demonstrated the inadequacy of many emergency response plans not only to the needs of the general public but to the needs of the business community as well. A new solution has been implemented in New York City in the form of the Corporate Emergency Access System (CEAS – www.ceas.com) designed by the Business Network of Emergency Resources (BNet). BNET is a 'not-for-profit' corporation, dedicated to establishing practical, effective emergency and crisis management solutions for businesses through partnerships with local government.

CEAS is a credentialing program for businesses, operating in conjunction with local government the program allows companies to get their staff access to their workplace quickly during an emergency event that results in travel or access restrictions. By enabling businesses to initiate a reentry and recovery process as quickly as possible, CEAS allows companies to maintain core IT systems, meet regulatory requirements and secure critical data and records in the aftermath of an emergency; all with the aim of continuing the functions of business throughout or soon after a disaster.

"We all recognize the importance of the business sector and its impact on the nation's economy, as well as on the lives of New Yorkers," Commissioner Bruno said. "The CEAS program will make it easier for businesses to recover in the unfortunate event of an emergency or disaster. It also improves the City's ability to more quickly recognize the legitimacy of employees trying to gain access to a restricted area. It is a win-win for everyone."

"The best response to any emergency is getting the City back on its feet as quickly as possible. It is important to get critically needed people back to work in an emergency. This makes it happen and it helps the police know who is who," said Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly.

"Security and uniformity are paramount factors in our program," said Peter Picarillo, Executive Director of BNet, Inc. and former Director of Public-Private Initiatives for the New York City Office of Emergency

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Management. “We have made certain that the CEAS credential meets the physical standards set forth by the Federal Government. We continue to work diligently to ensure that when applicable CEAS cards can be recognized across State and regional boundaries.”

Controlled reentry should encompass private enterprise, particularly the critical financial sector and other businesses required to support a reentering population and not be limited to utilities and governmental services. In many regions, the loss of certain business sectors can have a profoundly detrimental effect on the economy, as seen recently with the energy sector in the Gulf of Mexico. Businesses that recover quickly help limit the economic damage locally, regionally and even nationally. They also help to limit business failures, reduce unemployment, retain commerce, and enable the displaced population to begin their recovery.

"This is a great tool for businesses and a great example of how government and the private sector work together to keep our City prepared," said Robert W. Walsh, New York City Commissioner of the Department of Small Business Services. "In collaboration with OEM and the NYPD we'll provide greater assurances to the wide array of businesses that are the foundation of the City's economy."

The CEAS program allows businesses to maintain control of their cardholders by identifying their critical employees as well as managing turnover and re-assignment of personnel. The local government ensures that police agencies enforce CEAS through a written protocol, which is integrated into local emergency operations plans. The CEAS high priority access cards are an easy way for local law enforcement to differentiate between critical business employees approved for entry to an area and those who need to be evacuated from the site.

“While the CEAS program itself does not meet the classic example of ‘first responder’ credentialing, it none the less is becoming a best practice solution for governments who are looking for a cost effective solution to private sector credentialing,” commented Robert Leviton, M.D., President of BNet, Inc. “We soon hope to expand our credentialing efforts to the areas of private sector critical infrastructure and health care, both of which clearly require regional interoperability.”

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BNet's CEAS program, in addition to New York City, has also been implemented in Buffalo, New York, Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Stamford, Connecticut. More cities nationwide are expected to participate in the near future. Any city, county or state can adopt CEAS through a written agreement with BNet. Once adopted by a municipality, any business can elect to participate in the program, assigning a designated number of CEAS cards to critical employees or contractors, prior to any emergency or disaster. This approach of 'pre-credentialing' was a key recommendation of a study carried out in 1997 by the Joint Loss Reductions Partnership (JLRP).

"Response to a disaster is clearly more than just getting people out; it is also about getting people back in," says Picarillo. "By facilitating a system of priority access for critical private sector employees we, at BNet, can speed the recovery of our essential infrastructure, vital businesses and bring our cities back to prosperity quickly."

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