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**WALDEN RESIDENT PIONEERS INNOVATIVE
BUSINESS EMERGENCY RESPONSE MODEL**

Executive Director of BNet, Inc. Aims to Keep Businesses Operational During a Crisis or Disaster

Peter Picarillo, a resident of Walden, New York, and Executive Director of BNet has been highlighting the need for improved emergency response plans after recent events, such as the 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. Now a new solution is here in the form of the Corporate Emergency Access System (CEAS – www.ceas.com) designed by the Business Network of Emergency Resources (BNet), a ‘not-for-profit’ corporation, based in New York City, which is 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.

CEAS was presented this month to government and business leaders from Orange and Rockland Counties at a Public-Private Joint Security Meeting in Pomona, New York. After the presentation, the Committee Chair asked of the private sector representatives, who would be interested in a program like this? “Every private sector member of the committee raised their hands,” said Picarillo. “I see this reaction time and time again, clearly access following a disaster is still a significant unmet need of the business community”.

“Protecting people is the central reason we plan for emergencies, which is inextricably linked to safeguarding and restoring businesses and the critical infrastructure they rely on,” said Picarillo, a former Director of Public-Private Initiatives for the New York City Office of Emergency Management. “With 85% of this infrastructure being privately owned, the CEAS comprehensive reentry system is essential for making business a priority during an emergency.”

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“Business disruptions or emergencies can cost a company millions of dollars, and can even end its trading days,” commented Robert Leviton, M.D., President of BNet, Inc. “A company’s productivity and profits are dependent upon the safety and effectiveness of its operations. The ultimate goal of BNet's program is to help organizations resume critical business functions as soon as possible after a business disruption occurs.”

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.

BNet’s CEAS program has already been implemented in five northeastern cities: New York City and 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).

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.

“CEAS is an important initiative for the business community,” said Dennis Friedrich, President and COO of Brookfield Properties U.S. Commercial Operations. “Having experienced the distress of recovering from a disaster first hand, we are grateful to have a new system in place.”

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“We have made CEAS an important part of our emergency response and business continuity program since its inception in Buffalo, New York,” said Jeff D. Shaw, Vice President of Business Continuity Planning at M&T Bank. “It gives us peace of mind knowing that we will be able to continue to meet our customers needs for banking services.”

The businesses and cities involved have already given such a positive response, not only to the concept of CEAS but to the practicalities of such a system, that BNet has been encouraged to plan further products and services. BNet is now working towards holding symposiums and conferences designed to educate companies and governments on how best to plan for reentry and recovery after a disaster.

“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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About Business Network of Emergency Resources, Inc (BNet)

BNet, headquartered in New York City, is a not for profit corporation dedicated to establishing emergency and crisis management solutions in partnerships between the public and private sector. Created by BNet, the Corporate Emergency Access System (CEAS) uses an ‘critical employee access card’ system to mitigate the economic loss incurred through any business emergency and accelerate recovery time for both business and government. For more information see www.ceas.com