



NEWS

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MDC and UNC-CH lead effort to inform poor communities about natural disasters

Chapel Hill, NC – MDC, Inc. and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill have received a \$1.5 million grant to find ways that poor communities can better prepare for natural disasters. The study will focus on six states – Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia – and the District of Columbia where MDC and UNC’s Center for Urban and Regional Studies will research disaster preparedness.

“This country has developed communication systems second to none,” says MDC president David Dodson. “There is no reason why we cannot provide all citizens with timely, accurate information that may save their lives. We are determined to find ways to avoid future catastrophes where people are stranded or lost simply because they are poor. They deserve better. This country can do better.”

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) made the grant in July, 2005. The grant was prompted by the concern that disadvantaged communities do not receive adequate information about impending natural disasters and how to prepare for them. The project will examine what has been done in the past and will develop educational initiatives and technical assistance for use in the future. Demonstration sites in all six states and the District of Columbia will participate in the project.

The project is designed to provide a model for use in disaster preparedness for disadvantaged communities throughout the country. MDC is the lead partner for the two-year program and Dr. John Cooper is the project director.

Note: Dr. Cooper spent two years with the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management and worked on the response team for hurricanes Fran and Floyd. He has researched how to better account for disadvantaged groups in disaster mitigation and preparedness.

About MDC: MDC is a private, nonpartisan nonprofit headquartered in Chapel Hill, NC. Founded in 1967 to identify and help remove barriers to progress for the South, MDC has been publishing research and developing programs and policies focused on expanding opportunity, reducing poverty and building inclusive civic cultures in the American South for the past 38 years.

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