

the Cayman Spirit



Cayman Islands Government Information Services

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Dockside Expansion: Port Authority Better Prepared for Demand

By Lennon Christian

With almost an acre of new space for its dockside operation, the Port Authority is now prepared to better handle the increasing volume of cargo shipments.

Port Director Paul Hurlston said the new expansion was handed over by the contractors — Meisner Marine — last week. It allows some 300 by 65 feet of additional dockside access to commercial vessels. The 0.8-acre space is already in use, allowing increased storage and mobility, as shipments are offloaded and taken to the Cargo Distribution Centre in the North Sound.

Mr. Hurlston reports that work is also progressing well on the adjacent project on the north end of the dock, the new Royal Water Cruise Terminal. The 2.2-acre site, complete with a new finger pier for cruise tenders, is now in the final stages of ground preparation for surfacing. Following this, cruise passenger offices for Customs, Immigration, the Port and the Department of Tourism will be built, as well as premises for commercial stores.

To be completed by mid-year, this new site will facilitate up to eight cruise ships in George Town (to include continued use of the existing north and south terminals).

UNDP Reports on Future Disaster Mitigation

Aimed at increasing capacity of the Cayman Islands Government to reduce vulnerability to hurricanes or other natural disasters, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has produced a draft report which has now been reviewed by Government's chief officers.

The draft report was prepared by Dr. David Smith, UNDP Jamaica. The report was last week circulated among permanent secretaries and chief officers, asking comments or advice. Permanent secretaries and chief officers were asked as well to solicit input from relevant heads of departments.

Input garnered has been forwarded to Dr. Smith for finalization of the report prior to its presentation to Cabinet.

Temporary Homes Bring Respite

By Lennon Christian

With the arrival of the first 28 temporary travel-trailer homes this week (Wednesday, 19 January), CIRO's Temporary Housing Committee is on the threshold of achieving its goal — bringing welcome respite to some of Cayman's hardest hit by Hurricane Ivan.

First priority in the allocation of the new trailer homes has been given to single-parent families with children under 17 years, as well as to the elderly and sick. Thirty-four homes have already been allocated to persons in this category.

The mobile homes each have a queen-

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Port Director Paul Hurlston paces out the expanded dock area

Editorial

Disaster Mitigation Calls for All Hands Aboard

As the Cayman Islands moves into its “restoration” phase of post-Ivan recuperation, it is heartening to see initiatives unfolding and beginning to bear fruit.

Trailer homes arrived this week, bringing some welcome respite to those most affected by Ivan; district work teams are being assembled and options are being explored as to feasibility of bulk purchasing — all aspects of government’s housing assistance initiative which has so far funded 225 housing projects; and schools have received temporary classrooms as they prepare for the massive, \$18-plus million rebuilding programme.

Another ray of light filtering through at this time is the dockside expansion initiative. Along with other measures, this should soon translate into faster movements of cargo on an increasingly widening scale.

At the same time, the government is sensitive to the importance of planning now for future disaster mitigation, evidence by the UNDP draft report. We have all learned some very valuable lessons from Ivan and we must apply these so that we are much better protected and prepared in the future.

And this effort must be approached on a national scale as well as from the perspective of what we each can do in the way we structure our lives. For example, in this week’s *Spirit* we call homeowners’ attention to hurricane proofing your homes as you rebuild. *Spirit* pinpoints one key prevention strategy – making sure exterior doors are well sealed – and that they swing outward. Providing they are properly installed with appropriate hardware, exterior doors that swing outward seal tighter with the force of wind and water against them. And your aim must be to prevent the ingress of wind and water into your house.

Doors are, of course, only one factor, but a critical one that is often overlooked. The point is, if we don’t pay attention to details, small chinks can snowball under pressure, becoming a major factor in enabling rampant destruction and threat to lives within our homes.

We therefore urge all residents to take stock now of your roles in future disaster mitigation within the spheres of your homes, families and businesses.

Temporary Homes Bring Respite

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sized bed and bedroom, a pullout sofa-bed, a dinette area, a 14 cubic-foot fridge, a microwave and a three-burner propane stove, bunk beds, shower, toilet facilities and air conditioning.

Safety features include smoke alarms and propane detectors. Each unit is wired for telephone, cable, sewage and water services.

An additional 12 temporary homes are slated to arrive by the end of January. Other shipments will follow, with an additional 44 homes slated for the government scheme.

Each home is made available at a cost of \$500per/month and may be leased on a quarterly basis, for up to two years.

Project Manager Thomas Ebanks is coordinating the preparation and installation at three government sites. The three designated sites are the old Dr. Hortor Hospital site, off Fairbanks Road; property behind the Frances Bodden Girls’ Home, and the Ed Bush Field in West Bay.

Qualifying individuals may also opt to have trailers installed on their existing property.

The homes have been taken from the dock into storage prior to allocation to respective district or individual home sites.

A CIRO representative will be stationed at each of the three community compounds to manage the sites. Community and corporate support may include the establishment of playgrounds for the benefit of children.

Mr. Doss Solomon, deputy chairman of the committee, said that private individuals may also import trailer homes. To do so, they must obtain a licence from the Financial Secretary’s Office and provide a \$2,000 bond to ensure the trailers are returned (off-island) when they are no longer necessary, at which point the deposit will be returned.

The committee is developing an “exit strategy” for all CIRO-imported homes.

Mrs. Joy Basdeo, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Education, heads the Temporary Housing Committee. Having allocated all priority one applicants, the committee is now moving to assign homes to approved individuals in order of priority.

Temporary Classrooms Arrive Schools Prepare for Post-Ivan Re-Building Programme

By Lynsay Brown

Twenty modular classrooms ordered as a short-term solution to accommodate students while the school rebuilding process continues are now on island.

Modular classrooms have been allocated as follows:

John Gray High School - 11
Savannah Primary School - 4
George Town Primary School - 3
East End Primary School - 1
Bodden Town Primary School - 1

The Public Works Department is responsible for installation, currently in various stages at the different schools.

Meanwhile, schools are preparing for a major reconstruction programme. This includes securing containers to supplement schools’ limited storage facilities while rooms and buildings are being rebuilt. The George Hicks and John Gray high schools will each receive four containers, whilst North Side, Savannah, and Bodden Town primary schools will receive one container each.

CIRO Explores Bulk Purchasing

By Cornelia Olivier

The Cayman Islands Recovery Operation (CIRO) is exploring options for bulk purchasing of building materials.

This is aimed at alleviating the current shortage that is hampering repairs of homes funded by the Government’s Housing Recovery Grant (administered by the Cayman Islands Development Bank).

Recovery Manager Orrett Connor said CIRO is still reviewing options before making any final decisions: “How we go about bulk purchasing – buying locally or using an overseas firm – will depend on where we can get the best value for money,” he said.

Government’s programme to purchase and distribute construction materials is intended to complement the district work teams that are to be established this month.

“We have asked local construction companies to put together four- to five-person teams to repair houses for those who have received allotments from the Housing Recovery Grant (HRG). So far, between seven and nine firms have joined the project,” Mr. Connor explained.

More than Meets the Eye: Clean up Brings Added Value

By Cornelia Olivier

As journalists took advantage of this week's guided tour of Grand Cayman's dump sites, they learned that all was more than meets the eye, as the clean-up operation creates jobs and transforms garbage into useful byproducts.

Stopping at the West Bay dump site on Northwest Point Road, the group, led by Operations Manager Mark Scotland, saw the "tub grinder" in action, as it pulverised massive pieces of debris within minutes.

"The best part of the grinder is its ability to reduce debris to only 20-30% of its bulk, while leaving something useful in the form of mulch," said Mr. Scotland. This will ultimately be made available to the public.

Mr. Scotland further praised the clean-up effort for creating job and business opportunities for residents: "More than 100 local trucks are registered with MC Restoration for purposes of debris removal. The operation provides an additional 200 or more persons with work and, while this number will lessen as the operation winds down, the processing of resulting debris will continue to create work."

So far more than 160,000 cubic feet of debris

has been removed under the CIRO operation. (MC Restoration has been contracted to remove up to 300,000 cubic feet of debris, the processing of which it is responsible.)

Currently three dump sites remain open—one each in West Bay, Bodden Town and East End. Mr. Scotland emphasized that the Spotts-

Newlands site will remain closed.

Derelict vehicles are all taken to a separate site, located off Sparky Drive, behind CUC. More than 1,000 already await soon-to-be commenced processing. All oils, fuel and other hazardous materials will be removed before vehicles are readied for off-island removal, Mr. Scotland said.



The tub grinder in action.

Hurricane-proof Your Home: Exterior Doors Critical

By Cornelia Olivier

Hurricane proofing your home is not only about building a strong roof and walls. Post-Ivan repairs should also pay attention to all exterior openings, especially doors.

When installing exterior doors, make sure they swing outwards. Building engineers in Florida found that almost all doors that opened inward blew in during Hurricane Andrew. Local contractors agree that outward swing doors hold up better against flooding and high winds.

Mr. Tommy Bodden, owner of Bodden ST Construction, explains: "Outward swing doors have the added strength of the threshold and the doorframe to press against. Inward swing doors lack this extra support and can break away from the frame or tear the hinges. Most people I've spoken to that are busy repairing their homes are changing their doors to outward swing."

One of the key advantages of outward swing doors is that, if properly installed and effectively sealed, they will offer tight resistance to the ingress of water. Some Cayman residents whose houses were not flooded during Ivan observed that they escaped in spite of high water levels on the outside. And in most, if not all of these cases, external doors swung outward.

People with inward swing doors that aren't going to be replaced should protect them with hurricane panels or shutters in case of a storm, keeping in mind that the strongest door should be left un-shuttered for continued access.

On everyone's to-do list should be a check-up of all exterior doors and their frames before the next hurricane season. Cracked or decaying wood jambs should be replaced. All exterior doors should preferably be made of thick steel and should be hurricane rated. For extra strength, install locks that slides into the

frame of the door and into the floor.

Mr. Ali Sabti, from Apec Consulting Engineering, says that although the majority of doors in hurricane prone areas should swing outward in order to resist wind pressure, this is not the only consideration when strengthening a home.

"Every part of the building should be hurricane proof. If you have a strong door, but weak windows, it won't mean much as wind only needs to get its finger in somewhere for the destruction to start."

Mr. Sabti notes that using a consulting engineer specializing in hurricane resistance to assess every element of a house is a worthwhile investment: "Most houses fail because of water that gets in through an exterior opening and not because of structural weaknesses. It is therefore important that every part of a house should be hurricane proof, including doors, windows and even air conditioning vents."

Housing Grants Top \$2.6 Million

By Ruth Smith

As the reconstruction phase of Hurricane Ivan recovery commences, the housing sector gets a shot in the arm with CI\$2.6 million in grants for some 225 projects.

These projects have so far been approved from among 650 applications received by the Housing Recovery Grant (HRG), government's assistance programme for those affected by Hurricane Ivan. The HRG is funded by Government (up to CI\$5.5 million) and administered by the Cayman Islands Development Bank (CIDB).

While applications continue to come in, HRG managers at CIDB are committed to ensuring that all are dealt with fairly and on a timely basis. "We treat all applications equally," says CIDB Director Angela Miller. "Each one has to be processed thoroughly in order to fairly assess and validate the damage the applicant

received. All those who have applied are being reviewed as quickly as possible in order that work can begin."

All districts on Grand Cayman are represented among approved applications, though George Town and Bodden Town have received the highest number of approvals so far.

Contractors are anxious to begin working on the approved homes. A key factor in delays has been lack of readily available supplies.

The Cayman Islands Recovery operation (CIRO), the umbrella agency overseeing the reconstruction process, is working at alleviating this problem and expediting repairs. These include bulk purchasing of supplies and establishment of district work teams, both of which initiatives are now in the pipeline.

Persons wishing to submit applications should visit the CIDB on Dr. Roy's Drive in George Town, or call 949-7511.

"Where Is It?"

By Susan Watler

Contact information for Government agencies continues to be frequently requested. Here are some changes made during the past week:

· The **Education Department**, 3rd Floor Royal Plaza, has a new telephone number: 945-1199.

· The **Agriculture Department** is having trouble with its land line and asks people to call 925-5764.

· **Children and Family Services** will be working out of its George Town district office in the Mirco Centre above Reflections while its main office in the West Wind Building is renovated. The department expects to be in the Mirco Centre until the end of January. Telephone: 925-5349 or 925-5350

· The **Civil Aviation Authority** has moved to its new location, Units 3 & 4 of Grand Harbour. Telephone: (345) 949-7811. Fax: (345) 949-0761.

· The **Cayman Islands Airports Authority** now occupies the former CAA Building on Owen Roberts Drive. Telephone: 943-7070. Fax: 943-7071

For a fuller listing see the 'Government Directory' in the Local Issues section of Government's website: www.gov.ky. (Local Issues is near the bottom of the home page; scroll down.)

CIG London Office Organises Fundraiser

The Cayman Islands Government Office in London, in conjunction with the 'Friends of Cayman' is planning a fundraising dinner and auction to aid in reconstruction.

The dinner, hosted by Nigel Evans MP, Vice Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Cayman Islands, will be held at the Palace of Westminster on Friday, 25 February 2005.

A number of institutions and individuals have sponsored £2,000 tables to

support this event, which is now fully booked. The occasion will give those associated with the Cayman Islands an opportunity to contribute to the continuing recovery effort.

Mrs Jennifer Dilbert, the Cayman Islands Government Representative in the UK, said that she was thrilled by the overwhelming response and expressed her great thanks to members of her vibrant and committed team for their hard work in preparing for this event.

Ministers Association Helps Out

By Lynsay Brown

Through their *Love in Action* programme, the Cayman Ministers Association, along with the First Baptist Church and Pastor David Jorge, is continuing its efforts to put roofs over people's heads.

The programme provides materials and labour to those in need throughout the community, helping them undertake essential roof repairs or sheet-rock work. Roof repairs to churches are also being conducted as part of the programme. As of last week, 18 homes had

been completed, with teams working on a further eight. Materials have been supplied to over 140 homes and help provided to nine churches.

In West Bay, 55 people have applied for materials, with 37 already receiving some or all of the assistance sought.

Twenty-two applications for materials came from East End, with ten receiving all or part of what they had asked. The greatest reported need was for zinc, which was necessary in order to utilize the sheet-rock.

In Bodden Town, materials have been supplied to two applicants, with several oth-

ers under assessment.

Applications for the programme are being made through local churches and Pastor Al Ebanks of the Agape Church in George Town, who chairs the Ministers' Association, has helped to lead the efforts of ministers to approve applications and identify those most in need.

Funding for materials has come from donations made by local services and overseas charities, including the *Samaritans' Purse* and *Operation Blessing*.

Multi-agency Team Remedies Ivan-triggered Environmental Threat

By Angelique Crowther

Photos By Shannon Mckenzie

A multi-agency team is finalizing containment while mitigating and preventing environmental threat from dislodged oil-storage drums that were swept through the George Town landfill during Hurricane Ivan.

The four-phase plan agreed by representatives of the five local agencies involved in the project includes on-site remediation advice from overseas experts and a long-term monitoring plan.

During the hurricane, a five feet-plus surge swept through the landfill from the North Sound, dislodging drums containing used oil. The drums had been stored at the landfill's recycling area awaiting shipment overseas.

"We have now secured about 98% of the drums which had been deposited in the landfill boundary and the few drums that travelled as far as the Harquail bypass have been found and will be removed by the end of the week," said Roydell Carter, Chief Environmental Health Officer.

Mr. Carter explained that the reason the landfill had been storing such a large number of oil drums was that there was a backlog for shipping them to Florida due to delays caused by the three hurricanes prior to Ivan. The DEH has been recycling oil abroad since 1993 and periodically sends it off island for processing.

The area of concern with respect to the Ivan-triggered oil spill includes MRCU canals on the perimeter of the landfill—which are generally not for public access.

In handling the project, the Department of Environmental Health (DEH) has joined forces with the Department of the Environment (DOE), the Chief Petroleum Inspector, Mosquito Research Control Unit (MRCU) and the Water Authority.

"DOE surveyed the area shortly after the hurricane and we believe that oil from the landfill did not enter the North Sound," said Scott Slaybaugh, assistant director (operations), DOE. He added: "The network of MRCU canals in the area surrounding the landfill had been blocked several years ago to prevent oil and toxins from entering the North Sound."

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DEH workers process drums of waste oil pulled from the canal



DEH officers use an innovative "sling-method" to safely lift oil drums.

Multi-agency Team . . .

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Oil did flow through culverts under the Harquail by-pass, entering the MRCU canals to the west, but DOE installed temporary oil booms in early October and cleaned much of the oil from the canals on the western side of the road.

Over the weekend of 15 January, a team of six DEH officers, including two excavator operators, worked to remove nearly 450 of the 55-gallon metal drums in the perimeter of the landfill and secured them in the landfill compound.

Drums collected from canal waterways did show signs of leaking but investigation of the area has found no evidence of dead fish or wildlife.

"Our DEH officers have received training from the National Spill Control School at Texas A&M University," said Ms. Antoinette Johnson, DEH Laboratory Senior Research Officer. "They demonstrated their expertise and creativity this weekend. They safely removed the drums by developing a sling system that carefully picked the barrels up individually, thus ensuring none were punctured."

A four-phase course of action has been outlined and includes:

Phase One: Removal of drums and building dams in canals to prevent further leakage thus stopping pollution at source. This work will be completed by 21 January.

Phase Two: Over a two-week period DOE will place special absorbent pads to remove oil product in canal water and used pads will be incinerated locally. Mulch produced as a by-product of processing vegetative matter and wood in the newly purchased tub grinder will be used to absorb oil on land. DOE will also begin construction of a permanent oil boom to prevent any spread of oil beyond the canals on the perimeter of the landfill.

Phase Three: The oil spill group will secure advice on remediation from directors of the Texas A&M University's National Oil Spill Control School in Corpus Christi when they arrive on 1 February. Over 30 individuals in the civil service are currently trained by internationally recognized Texas A&M National Spill Control School to deal with hazardous material situations.

Phase Four: Long-term monitoring to assess impact on environment and public health.



DEH worker, Rohan Lawrence, pumps waste oil from drum into container for further processing.

Operating Hours for Vehicle Licensing & Transport

The regular operating hours for the Department of Vehicle Licensing and Transport are as follows:

Elgin Avenue

Monday through Friday- 8:00am – 4:30pm

Walkers Road

Monday through Friday- 8:30am – 4:30pm

West Bay

Sunday- Closed

Monday- Closed

Tuesday- 8:00am – 3:00pm

Wednesday through Friday- 1:00pm – 8:00pm

Saturday- 9:00am – 3:00pm

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Do you have essential public information or an inspirational recovery story to tell? Give us a call or send an email.