



Anabaptist loss.
MDS volunteers in Pennsylvania watch as a track hoe dismantles the remains of the Smoker barn, destroyed by a tornado in July. Read more about the Smoker tornado on page 5.

behind the hammer

STORIES AND IDEAS ABOUT PEOPLE CONNECTING THROUGH MENNONITE DISASTER SERVICE



Photo credit: David and Orpha Herr

Anabaptist communities affected by disaster

On an otherwise normal August evening, Anabaptist farmers in Ontario struggled with the same problem as urban churches in New York City - The switch would flip, but the lights would not come on.

The largest blackout in the history of North American electricity wove an instantaneous web of darkness across the United States and Canada. Without warning circular saws ground to a halt, traffic lights turned black and conveyor belts stopped spinning. In the 20 seconds that it took for the power to go out, millions were threatened by disaster. All of us learned that every community is at risk.

This issue of *Behind the Hammer* is about Anabaptist communities at risk. Instead of focusing on the places where MDS goes, the articles will challenge you to consider the risks in your own community. Power outages are only the beginning of a long list of woes. Natural disasters such as tornadoes, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes and fire pose real threats for our communities. While some areas are more vulnerable than others, disasters can strike in

any place at any time.

A recent wave of tornadoes affected Anabaptist communities in Paris, Tenn; Deshler, Neb; and Pekin, Ill. A separate tornado destroyed the Smoker farm in Pennsylvania. Once stable urban communities are threatened by flooding as new construction alters flood plains. Fires are currently burning in British Columbia. And now, hurricane season is in full swing. The Institute for Business and Home Safety reports that over 4000 residents move to Florida each week. Some of these growing communities are favorite destinations for Anabaptist vacationers and retirees. They are also prime candidates for hurricane damage.

The MDS commitment to respond to the needs of disaster survivors does not overshadow our responsibility to prepare for tragedies in our own communities. Enjoy this issue as an opportunity to initiate conversations with leaders in your church and community. What are the risks in your community? Are your buildings safe and secure? How would you respond to large-scale needs in your own backyard?

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2: Disaster Viewpoint

3: Chuuk Report

4-5: Communities at Risk

6: Binational News

7: Region II Update



Disaster Viewpoint

by **Tom Smucker**
Executive Coordinator

Recent fires, tornadoes and blackouts have proven that our Mennonite communities are at risk for disaster. We know the fastest recoveries come to those who are prepared, but most of us still have a “wait and see” attitude about disaster. This attitude is dangerous. A little bit of planning can go a long way towards saving lives and properties in a disaster.

How much planning has your community done? What would you do if 300 neighbors were homeless by the end of the day? Where would they sleep? How would you feed them? Because MDS has the knowledge of over 50 years of disaster response, our church family should be efficient and effective in response to disasters within our own communities. Follow these steps to assure your preparedness.

Assess

Know the needs of your community. Who is most at risk? Where is fire or flooding most likely to occur? Where are your storm shelters located? Which areas are difficult to access with rescue equipment? Who would have special needs in the event of an evacuation? Is your church available to house and feed displaced persons? Do you have access to generators, tarps and heavy equipment?

Discuss

In 1999 MDS encouraged churches to hold discussions about Y2K. Ongoing discussions of this nature are important. How would your church work together in response to fire, wind, or water damage? Extend your thinking beyond natural disasters and discuss the possibility of a hostage or mass-shooting situation at a Mennonite school or institution? How would the needs of those disasters be different?

Mitigate

What can your church do to reduce the risks in your community? Are there weak structures that could be reinforced? Can you do anything to prevent the spread of fire? Is their debris in your streams that could lead to flooding? Have you installed backup power at key locations?

Respond

As Mennonites, Brethren in Christ, and Amish, we value church community. Protecting our communities will be much easier if we plan response before a disaster occurs.

Using the downtime between disasters to plan and prepare

by **Nathan Koslowsky**
Administrative Coordinator

Ask about a major disaster in Canada and most MDS volunteers will dig up memories of 1997 and the great flood in Manitoba. Despite the tornadoes in Alberta, the ice storms in Quebec, and the recent fires in British Columbia, there has been little opportunity to keep the volunteer network in shape on the CN side of the border.

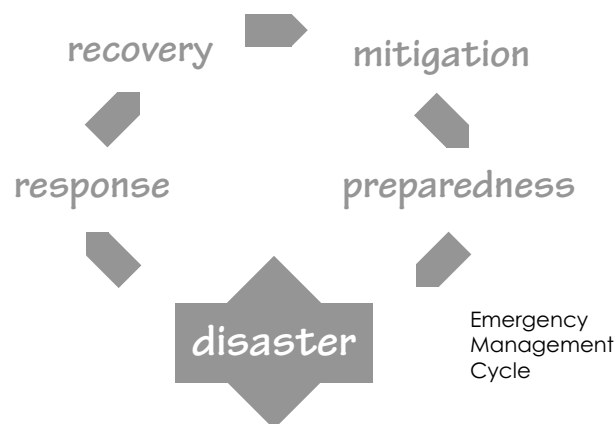
Will we be prepared when the next big catastrophe storms across the provinces? How can we assure a readiness to respond among our CN volunteers? After a number of seasons sheltered from disaster, it is time to sharpen the tools of response and prepare for the unknown.

In Canada, preparedness means using the calm time between disasters to develop leaders and relationships. Leaders in our churches and relationships with other response agencies are the building blocks of disaster response. When disaster strikes, our leaders will organize and motivate volunteers while our relationships will help us to connect with those who are in need.

Our leaders come from our churches. Congregations and conferences that understand and support the ministry of MDS are more likely to develop MDS leaders and challenge individuals to get involved with disaster response. Our leaders often gain experience by responding to disasters in the US. When they return home they bring along the skills that are necessary to respond locally.

As church leaders become enthusiastic about MDS, they will make contacts in their communities with other response agencies. These contacts become natural channels of communication in the event of a disaster.

For information about developing MDS leadership and helping your Canadian community prepare for disaster, contact the MDS office in Winnipeg, 1-866-261-1274.



My experience as a volunteer in the island state of Chuuk

by Jordan Miller

I realized that this project was going to be different when the pilot came over the intercom and warned us that the sudden stop on touchdown would be normal. We landed safely with a screech on the short island runway. The airport was hot and humid, crowded with the Micronesian relatives of those on my flight. My fun had begun in the South Pacific.

Waking up to perfect silence is something that I appreciated about Chuuk. Some mornings were filled with sunshine and others brought a relentless rain. We ate our cereal on the porch while watching the hustle and bustle of morning traffic at the boat dock. Families arrived from other islands to sell their goods on Weno (the largest island in Chuuk).

Others were coming to work and buy supplies. After eating we gathered our tools and prepared for another day on the outer islands. We were rebuilding homes destroyed by Typhoon Chata'an. Fuel, batteries, life jackets and water were a few of the things on our daily checklist. Each of us had packs equipped with hand tools, government-issued MREs (Meals Ready to Eat), first aid kits, FM radios, and satellite phones.

As we left we called the boat operator to report our departure from Weno. After forty rough minutes at sea, we docked again. The local construction crew was already working and we greeted them with Chuukese sayings. My first job was to see if there were any problems with the construction of the home. We then continued on to prepare new sites for construction. Before leaving, we would sit down and have coffee and "donuts," locally-made breakfast crackers.

For our noon meal we often ate coconut, breadfruit, rice, sardine soup, and fresh fish. During these meals with locals, I used a translator to ask questions about life in Chuuk. The

Typhoon Chata'an project closes early

AKRON Pa. -- On August 2, after building more than 85 homes, MDS completed an early close of the volunteer response to the July 2002 typhoon that caused extensive landslides in the Micronesian island state of Chuuk. The original project was expected to last through October of 2003.

In 2002 the Federal Emergency Management Agency contracted MDS to provide volunteer labor and training for the reconstruction of the 16' x 16' island homes. A new federal option, introduced in July 2003, provided immediate delivery of building materials to homeowners who opted out of public construction assistance. The number of families seeking aid from MDS declined and MDS finished early.

older people and village chiefs shared stories about countless storms and the dangers of WWII. They are survivors who appreciate every day that is given to them.

At the end of the day we returned to Weno to recuperate and plan for the next day. The sunsets were gorgeous. After dark we played games as we were eaten by mosquitoes.

Evenings and weekends gave us a chance to relax and enjoy the South Pacific. Diving and snorkeling trips were welcome breaks from our work week. On Sundays I worshipped with a small Nazarene congregation. These people were hungry for opportunities to serve the Lord and their pastor often brought them out to help MDS.

In the short two months that I was on the other side of the world, I built several relationships that will forever be with me. It was a privilege to be able to work and grow with the appreciative people of Chuuk.

Each of us had packs equipped with hand tools, government-issued MREs, first aid kits, FM radios, and satellite phones.



The construction of Chuukese homes was very simple and went quickly. The houses were set on core-filled concrete block piers that rested on poured concrete footers. J-bolts ran from the footers up into the stud walls, tying the house directly into the ground. From there the house was built using standard dimensional lumber. The floors were wooden with a 2x6 joist and beam system. These 16'x16' and 16'x32' structures were framed conventionally and covered by a shiny new tin roof. With wooden siding and a few windows and doors, the house was complete. Several local crews were working at once, so we were able to put up several houses a week. Jordan is at right in this photo.



Photo credit: Menno Unger

The incinerated remains of a home caught by the Barriere Fire in British Columbia.

Forest fires in British Columbia

BARRIERE BC -- At least 100 homes have been destroyed by this summer's forest fires in British Columbia.

Early reports indicate up to half the homes destroyed were uninsured. The MDS British Columbia Unit is in the process of setting up a volunteer project location in Barriere where residential areas bore the brunt of the damage.

The first phase of response will be cleanup, including the removal of burned appliances, tin, trees and mobile home frames. Call (866) 261-1274 for additional information.

Farmers prepared for blackout

LOWVILLE NY -- Farmers in upstate New York were prepared on Aug. 14 when the largest power outage in history shut down businesses between New Jersey and Ontario.

"Most of them learned their lesson during the ice storm of '99," said Llewellyn Zehr, chair of the MDS New York Unit.

The ice storms caught farmers off guard when transmission lines came down and interrupted power supply for operations that depend on electricity to care for animals.

When the power went out in August, many of those same farmers switched over to generators purchased after the storm of '99. The animals never knew the difference. "At this point, even the largest dairy farm south of here, with 2000 head, is doing okay," said Zehr during the blackout.

As power gradually returned to areas affected by the blackout, farmers turned off their generators. Milkers and ventilators were once again running off the grid.

Zehr lost power at his home in Lowville shortly after 4 pm on Thursday. He said power was restored by 8:30 pm.

In downtown Lowville, businesses stayed open with diesel generators purchased by emergency management services after the '99 storms. Most of the generators used by farmers run from the power take off on a tractor.

Zehr believes that the power outage reflects a growing demand for electricity. "We keep using more electricity, but we are not updating the transmission lines," he said.

Zehr observed one population that was seemingly unaffected by the blackout. "I'm not even sure the Amish know what's going on," he said with a chuckle.

Goodbye Nathan Koslowsky, hello Lois Nickel

Staff transition in Winnipeg office

WINNIPEG Man. -- Lois Nickel is the new Winnipeg Administrative Coordinator, replacing Nathan Koslowsky who is now studying theology at Canadian Mennonite University.

Nickel comes to MDS with experience as Technical Service Manager for Powerland Computers. She brings church experience as Camp Director at Camp Elim in Sask. and Camp Valaqua in Alberta. She was Camp Coordinator for the Conference of Mennonites in Sask. and served as Minister of Youth at North Leamington United Mennonite Church in Ontario.

Nickel has a Bachelor of Religious Studies from Mennonite Brethren Bible College, a Bachelor of Arts from University of Winnipeg and a Master of Arts in Theological Studies from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary. Nickel attends Hope Mennonite Church with her husband and 3 children.

Koslowsky leaves MDS with a legacy of ambition. At the age of 24 he became one of the youngest project directors in MDS history. In 2001 he pioneered the opening of the MDS office in Winnipeg. He has managed the growth of that office for over two years, connecting CN volunteers with response opportunities in the US and Canada.



Lois Nickel (left) replaced Nathan Koslowsky (right) as MDS Administrative Coordinator for the Winnipeg Office.



Photo credit: David and Orpha Herr

Understanding tornado damage

The crumpled hulk of a silo lies where it fell in July when a tornado destroyed two houses and about half a dozen farm buildings at the home of Kevin and Judy Smoker. The silo contained 10-12 feet of silage at the time of the storm. Vehicles from a flattened garage were recovered up to 600 yards away. Pieces of the timber-frame barn are visible in this photo. MDS volunteers responded immediately to assist with cleanup and fence repair. Using the scale below, how would you classify the damage to the Smoker farm? Answer printed at bottom of page.

The Fujita Tornado Damage Scale

Developed in 1971 by T. Theodore Fujita of the University of Chicago

F0 < 73 MPH **Light damage.** Some damage to chimneys; branches broken off trees; shallow-rooted trees pushed over; sign boards damaged.

F1 73-112 MPH **Moderate damage.** Peels surface off roofs; mobile homes pushed off foundations or overturned; moving autos blown off roads.

F2 113-157 MPH **Considerable damage.** Roofs torn off frame houses; mobile homes demolished; boxcars overturned; large trees snapped or uprooted; light-object missiles generated; cars lifted off ground.

F3 158-206 MPH **Severe damage.** Roofs and some walls torn off well-constructed houses; trains overturned; most trees in forest uprooted; heavy cars lifted off the ground and thrown.

F4 207-260 MPH **Devastating damage.** Well-constructed houses leveled; structures with weak foundations blown away some distance; cars thrown and large missiles generated.

F5 261-318 MPH **Incredible damage.** Strong frame houses leveled off foundations and swept away; automobile-sized missiles fly through the air in excess of 100 meters (109 yds); trees debarked; incredible phenomena will occur.

The above information was borrowed from a wealth of statistics available online at the National Weather Service Web site: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov>

MDS includes safe rooms in home design

When rebuilding in a tornado or hurricane-prone area, MDS recommends that a safe room be included in the design. A safe room is a structure designed to withstand the forces of a tornado and protect the people and belongings stored inside. Often constructed of concrete, safe rooms can be located above or below ground, inside or outside of the home. A well-designed safe room is easy to access and is anchored securely to the ground. Care is taken to minimize the chances that the exit will be blocked. While a safe room does not mitigate the entire home from damage, it is an important preventive measure that is proven to save lives.

Storm survivors

Anabaptist communities in recovery from disaster

Disasters strike without warning of place and time. While MDS volunteers usually travel to help those in need, there are times when our own Anabaptist communities are in the path of disaster. The following communities were hit by disaster in the last 12 months.

REGION I

- Ellisburg, PA, tornado

REGION II

- Crossville, TN, tornado
- Howard, IN, flooding
- Paris, TN, tornado
- Peoria, IL, tornado
- Whiteville, TN, tornado

REGION III

- Deshler, NB, tornado
- Kansas City, tornado
- Oklahoma City, OK, tornado
- Rutledge, MO, tornado

REGION V

- Alberta, drought
- Kamloops, BC, forest fire
- Sandy Beach, SK, wind
- Saskatchewan, drought



MDS Field Consultant Jim Shelly kneels on top of an underground safe room in Mulhall, Okla. The prefabricated concrete structure has a steel door and roof vents.

WANTED!

RESPOND TODAY!
(602) 467-9513

PINEDALE Ariz. -- MDS is now recruiting volunteers to assist with the construction of four new homes at the fire-response project in Pinedale, Ariz. Volunteers are needed between now and December. The Pinedale area was scorched by wildfires that hopped across the Southwest last summer. Volunteers who are able to serve from 1-2 weeks should contact Freeman Hershberger to schedule their term of service: (602) 467-9513. If you wish to serve for a longer period, please contact the MDS offices in Akron or Winnipeg. Construction is expected to be completed by the end of the year.



Carpenters
Cooks
Tradespersons



Carlos and Irene lived in a mobile home on a lot that was in the direct line of the fire. The mobile home was burned to the ground, along with all their personal effects. They purchased another property with a mobile home that is substandard and does not meet code. They have been living in this home since the fire. Both have significant health concerns, and it was determined by the Rodeo Recovery Team that they needed a permanent house with handicap facilities. Carlos and Irene will receive one of the MDS homes. They have a positive attitude and are looking forward to helping the volunteers.

VOLUNTEERS

PINEDALE ARIZONA

September - December, 2003

Please post this notice in your churches.

Region II

Trailer theft draws attention in Jackson

When a flatbed utility trailer disappeared from the MDS project in Jackson, Tenn, project director Fred Kathler reported that the trailer had been “borrowed.”

Local television and newspaper coverage of the “borrowed” trailer culminated in a headline that read, “Mennonites lose trailer, not spirit to help.”

The story, complete with pictures of volunteers roofing, focused on the fact that the return of the trailer would make work easier for the crews who traveled from as far away as Canada to assist with the tornado recovery.

As the story traveled through the community of Jackson, immediate offers of assistance poured in to the MDS project. A total of seven different trailers were offered. One gentleman wanted to donate two trailers, one to replace the missing one and an

extra one for MDS. The original trailer was on loan to MDS from a volunteer who lived nearby.

Later that same afternoon, an anonymous donor delivered a trailer to the MDS parking lot. He said that God told him to simply get up and buy MDS a trailer.

The story of the trailer shows that when MDS pours love into a community, that same community gives it back. With a commitment to stay in Jackson through the summer of 2004, the cycle of love will continue.

MDS has a long list of clients in Jackson who need assistance with their homes. If you would like to volunteer in Jackson, contact the project directly at (731) 664-5188 to schedule your stay.

Financial contributions for the Jackson project can be sent to either of the MDS offices listed to the right.



Photo credit: Fred Kathler

A man who wishes to remain anonymous donated a flatbed trailer to MDS after learning that a trailer was stolen from the MDS project in Jackson. He stands here with the trailer, surrounded from the left by Paul Keers, Pam Denlinger, Ottis Mast and Tom Smucker.

Get involved

connect locally with MDS

Region I Meeting: Oct. 11 2003

Bernard Martin, (540) 434-1916

Region II Meeting: Feb. 2004

Ottis Mast, (662) 738-5366

Region III Meeting : Nov. 14-15 2003

Paul Unruh, (316) 327-2755

Region IV Meeting: Sept. 19-20 2003

Wilmer Leichthy, (541) 928-8294

Region V: Nov. 21-22 2003

Gord Friesen, (204) 257-9048

behindthehammer

MDS Executive Coordinator

Tom Smucker, tes@mdsbinat.org

Editor

Ted Houser, tdh@mdsbinat.org

MDS Binational Office

1018 Main Street, Akron, PA 17501

Phone: (717) 859-2210

Fax: (717) 859-4910

E-mail: mds@mdsbinat.org

MDS Extension Office

306-2265 Pembina Highway

Winnipeg, MB R3T 5J3

Phone: (866) 261-1274

Fax: (204) 261-1279

E-mail: regionv@mdsbinat.org

Behind the hammer is published quarterly by the binational office of Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS). MDS is a non-profit agency that responds to the needs of disaster survivors. MDS volunteers cleanup, repair and rebuild damaged homes.

Behind the hammer is an opportunity for MDS volunteers, donors and clients to share about their common experience. Our stories encourage others to continue expressing the love of God through MDS.

We welcome your stories and ideas for print in this publication or for use online. Submit your ideas to Ted Houser, Editor, binational office.

Enjoy a free subscription. Contact the binational office to subscribe to this publication or notify MDS of an address change.

News updates from MDS projects are available by fax and E-mail or by calling 1-800-241-8111. You can visit us online at www.mds.mennonite.net for current photos and volunteer project information.



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behind the hammer

STORIES AND IDEAS ABOUT PEOPLE CONNECTING THROUGH MENNONITE DISASTER SERVICE

Avoiding hurricane damage adopted from a checklist developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency

- Do you have enough flood insurance?
- Is your roof sheathing properly installed?
- Are end gables securely fastened to the rest of the roof?
- Are double entry doors secured at the top and bottom?
- Has the garage door been properly secured?
- Are windows protected by storm shutters?
- Is the roof fastened to the walls with hurricane straps?
- Do you know the projected flood elevation for your area?
- Are major appliances and electrical circuits located above potential flood waters?
- Is the fuel tank anchored securely?
- Does the sewer system have a backflow valve?

more hurricane information is available online at www.fema.gov