

Jamaican Documentary Focuses on Impact of Haiti-level Earthquake

“QUAKE: Haiti in Jamaica”, a documentary dealing with the implications for Jamaica of an earthquake similar to the one which struck Haiti on January 12, 2010, will be aired during Earthquake Awareness Week locally and across the region.

The documentary, which was launched at the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), in Kingston, tells the story of what happened when the 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti and how Jamaica would cope with such an event.

In his remarks, General Manager, NEM Insurance Company Limited, Chris Hind, explained that the documentary is aimed at helping the country prepare for an earthquake, which can occur without any warning.

“This is all about helping us not to forget what happened and helping us to be as prepared as we can,” the General Manager added.

For his part, Director General of ODPEM, Ronald Jackson, said it is very difficult to really speak about how prepared Jamaica is if a magnitude 7.0 earthquake were to hit the island.

“It’s difficult to really speak to that. Any country that is developing, that has the gross domestic product that we have and the kind of economy, it is always going to be very difficult to say that we are prepared. We are never really prepared for those types of catastrophes,” Mr. Jackson said.

He informed that ODPEM has invested heavily in the training of personnel from the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF), Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), Jamaica Fire Brigade and other key stakeholders.

“We have invested in training in terms of first aid and search and rescue, in particular. But there is much more that needs to be done in terms of resourcing these first responders; and the equipment required to operate in these kinds of conditions, doesn’t abound. However, we continue to build on that,” Mr. Jackson said.

He pointed out that there are serious efforts being made to make Jamaica prepared for an earthquake of magnitude 7.0 or higher.

“The key in being prepared is not so much only to focus on first responders and relief, but we really need to pass the legislation supporting the building code and also ensure that it is applied to every structure, especially government infrastructure,” Mr. Jackson said.

The documentary will be aired on Television Jamaica (TVJ) on January 11, 2012, and can be viewed on the Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica as well as across the region on Caribbean Media Corporation on January 12.

It was sponsored by NEM Insurance and was produced through the collaboration of ODPEM, the JDF, Mona Geoinformatics and the Earthquake Unit at the University of the West Indies, Mona campus.

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