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MEMORANDUM

TO: Boston Association of Structural Engineers (BASE)
Attention: Cindy Chabot, President

FROM: Jeffrey W. Struble

REFERENCE: Structural Engineers Emergency Response Plan (SEER Plan)

SUBJECT: Status Report for May 17, 2006 BASE Meeting

DATE: May 8, 2006

Two new BASE members have volunteered to participate on the Joint BASE/BSCES Committee for SEER Plan Organization, John Born and Michael Fillion. David Grandpre has also volunteered, but in an advisory capacity due to his commitments to Rhode Island's Urban Search and Rescue Group.

A meeting was held on May 4, 2006 at The Engineering Center in Boston with members of BSCES. Attending for BSCES were the following:

- Darcy DeGeorge (engineer & past chair of Structural Group)
- Malek A. Al-Khatib (bridge engineer, current assistant treasurer of BSCES and past president of Infrastructure Group)
- Mehrdad Sasani (faculty member – Northeastern University & Structural Group)

The author and Messrs. Born and Fillion attended for BASE.

Discussions began with identifying the soon-to-be-created Structural Engineers Association of Massachusetts (SEAMass) as the logical sponsoring organization for a standing SEER Committee. Further, the substance of a telephone conversation with Gus Domel, chair of NCSEA's National SEER Committee, was related by the author,

indicating that national organization's willingness to assist in the formation and maintenance of a MA SEER Committee. Mr. Domel had offered to provide a seminar for ATC-20 training in our area for a flat fee of \$1,200, which prompted discussion of training for SEER Committee volunteers. It was recognized that training of structural engineers in rapid assessment of building and transportation infrastructure damage along the guidelines presented in ATC-20 was crucial to the effectiveness of the Committee to the State's emergency management agency (MEMA). The offer of a seminar for such training prompted the idea that a worthwhile objective of a newly-formed SEAMass would be to organize and sponsor the ATC-20 seminar offered by Mr. Domel and his colleagues and use this seminar as a recruiting session for continuing SEER Committee volunteers. Sources of outside funding for such seminars should also be investigated to avoid saddling the new organization with too much of a financial burden. This idea is to be investigated with the organizers of SEAMass.

The next topic of discussion was the risk of liability while serving as a volunteer in a catastrophic event. Previous discussions with Chris Poole of Poole Professional, Ltd. (liability insurance brokers) had indicated that volunteers should participate as employees of their firms in order to be covered by those firms' liability coverage (as well as medical and Workman's Comp insurance). This raised concern to some of the Committee members that some firms might balk at participating if by so doing they might experience an adverse effect in their insurance premiums. It was agreed that this subject should be investigated thoroughly by the group before advising SEAMass on the establishment of a SEER Committee and the author volunteered to research the subject. Discussions with legal counsel (David Hatem of Donovan/Hatem, LLP), Mr. Poole, other state organizations with SEER Committees and State legislators (Good Samaritan legislation) were seen as likely sources of information. Mr. Sasani also offered to contact firms that had responded as firms to the 9/11 emergency to see what their thoughts were on continuing such a practice.

The creation of a continuing database with the contact and organizational information for a standing SEER Committee was then discussed. SEAMass would need to establish dedicated file storage for this crucial information and it was noted that having several locations around the State would be advisable to ensure survival of this database should

one area of the State experience catastrophic destruction (including the local database). Keeping this database current and up-to-date would be a primary function of the SEER Committee. Darcy DeGeorge offered to research this topic further.

The substance of the assessment guidelines contained in ATC-20 and similar materials was discussed next, with Mehrdad Sasani presenting examples of his current research into the collapse of structures that may point to a future re-evaluation of these guidelines. The focus of his investigations are the apparent contradictions between theoretical predictions of structural behavior and observed behavior in damaged or demolished buildings. He passed out case studies of buildings with multiple columns being destroyed or demolished and the resultant building deflections being far less than what would be expected under normal assessments. This work may have bearing on building assessments after catastrophic damage. Mr Sasani offered to contact ATC officials to see if any revisions are being contemplated to their recommended assessment procedures that might reflect the results of this research.

It was agreed by all to review the organizational structure suggested in the NCSEA SEERPlan manual for applicability to a Massachusetts SEER Committee and to discuss our findings at the next joint committee meeting, tentatively scheduled for July 13, 2006 at 10:00 AM at The Engineering Center.