



Hospital earthquake safety campaign kicks off in India

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Mumbai, 18 March 2010 - As part of its long-term commitment to corporate responsibility in India, Swiss Re has partnered with an international nonprofit organisation, GeoHazards International (GHI), and a New Delhi-based nonprofit organisation, GeoHazards Society (GHS), to launch a multi-year campaign to improve hospital earthquake safety in India.

“The recent tragic earthquakes in Chile and Haiti are adding urgent alarm calls for pre-disaster risk mitigation,” said Mr Dhananjay Date, Managing Director of Swiss Re Services India Private Limited. “Recognising their crucial role in post-disaster relief work, India’s hospital sector needs to get better prepared to cope with major earthquake disasters.”

To support this, Swiss Re, GHI and GHS are helping Indian hospitals mitigate their earthquake risks through a multi-year corporate responsibility programme, extending the reach of programmes that began in 2007 with a detailed but easy-to-use manual, “Reducing Earthquake Risk in Hospitals from Equipment, Contents, Architectural Elements and Building Utility Systems”, to help hospitals take steps to keep functioning and saving lives after an earthquake.

Hospital earthquake safety manual launched

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), India’s highest authority on disaster management, was involved in the development of the manual, which was released nationally by Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, at an event at NDMA in Delhi.

The manual provides guidelines on how to reduce earthquake-related damage and losses to hospitals’ medical equipment and supplies, contents, architectural elements and building utility systems. Damage to these items can mean stoppage of essential medical services or even cause deaths and injuries even when the building structure remains essentially undamaged.

The manual also contains such information as how to determine a hospital’s earthquake risk; identify items that could fall, slide or topple

and injure people; anchor and brace those items to reduce risk; and prioritise actions to reduce risk according to the hospital's needs and budget.

General NC Vij, Vice Chairman, NDMA said: "This manual is a comprehensive tool with numerous practical and graphic details to enable all hospital administrators and departmental in-charges to initiate safety measures within their area of influence."

Dr Brian Tucker, GHI President, said: "This manual provides a valuable resource to Indian hospitals, as they improve their ability to withstand an earthquake and to serve their community, without interruption. We look forward to working with Swiss Re to help hospitals in India's most earthquake-prone regions apply the manual's guidance to protect their staff and patients."

Awareness campaign started, followed by training and implementation activities in hospitals

To raise awareness about this manual, a direct mailing campaign has started to reach all major hospitals in 23 earthquake-prone states in India. Hospitals can request free hard copies of the manual.

With Swiss Re's funding, GHI is developing a set of professional training materials to complement the manual and to facilitate "training-of-trainers" programmes for hospitals. Starting from the second half of 2010, GHI will conduct free training workshops and implementation activities in some hospitals in earthquake-prone states in India. Both Swiss Re and GHI aim to extend these activities to more locations in India in the coming years.

This multi-year project marks a continued collaboration back to 2008, when Swiss Re funded the GHI-organised workshop, "Integrating Earthquake Risk Mitigation into Hospital Facilities Planning", attracting more than 150 hospital and healthcare sector stakeholders from medical institutions in and around Delhi. This clear interest convinced both parties of the need to broaden their efforts to include all earthquake-prone areas in India.

Notes to editors

The hospital earthquake safety manual can be downloaded free of charge from the GHI website at www.geohaz.org/hospitalsafetymanual. Hospitals can also request free hard copies by contacting GHS, New Delhi.

Enclosed is a photo taken during the national release of the hospital earthquake safety manual in Delhi. In the picture each holding a copy of the manual: (left to right) 1. Mr J.R Bharadwaj, Member, NDMA; 2. Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Government of India; 3. Mr. N.C. Vij, Vice Chairman, NDMA; and 4. Mr.A.B Prasad, Secretary, NDMA (photo courtesy of Press Information Bureau, Government of India).



About Swiss Reinsurance Company Ltd

Swiss Re is a leading and highly diversified global reinsurer. The company operates through offices in more than 20 countries. Founded in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1863, Swiss Re offers financial services products that enable risk-taking essential to enterprise and progress. The company's traditional reinsurance products and related services for property and casualty, as well as the life and health business are complemented by insurance-based corporate finance solutions and supplementary services for comprehensive risk management. Swiss Re is rated "A+" by Standard & Poor's, "A1" by Moody's and "A" by A.M. Best.

Swiss Re has been associated with Asia since 1913 and now has about 1,000 staff in Asia Pacific. The company's Asian headquarter is in Hong Kong.

The company has been present in India since 1998. It established Swiss Re Shared Services (India) Private Ltd in Bangalore in 2000, and opened a Service Company in Mumbai in 2002 to provide service to Swiss Re Zurich in its reinsurance activities.

For more information on Swiss Re, please visit: www.swissre.com.

About GeoHazards International

GeoHazards International (GHI) is a Palo Alto, California-based nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing loss of life and suffering around the world in communities most vulnerable to geologic hazards. Founded in 1991, GHI has raised awareness, improved school and hospital safety, and built capacity of local governments and nongovernmental organizations in more than twenty countries. GHI has been working toward earthquake safety in India since 1999 and maintains an office in Delhi. For more information about GHI, its staff, projects and partners, please visit www.geohaz.org.

About GeoHazards Society

GeoHazards Society (GHS) is a not-for-profit organisation based in New Delhi working towards making India's most vulnerable communities safer from earthquakes and other hazards, through preparedness, mitigation and advocacy. Along with its international partner organisation, GeoHazards International, the organisation has been working in collaboration with National/sub-national Governments and Corporate Sector agencies in conducting programmes on Community Preparedness, School Safety, Hospital Safety, engineers training programmes etc. For more information on GHS, please visit www.geohaz.in.