INTRODUCTION SPEECH

FOR

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“I have a feeling we’re not in Kansas any more!!” That is possibly one of the most famous sentences ever uttered in the hallowed halls of movie history. Dorothy Gale found herself and her home, and “her little dog too” whipped and tossed and spun into a maelstrom and all she wanted to do was to get back to her aunt and uncle’s farm. Dorothy’s predicament took her to some fascinating places along that yellow brick road but that was all just a dream that was produced on a Hollywood back lot. Unfortunately the ravages of natural disaster can be unfathomably devastating.

I am Danielle Taylor and I am here to speak to you about **YOUR** part in making sure that the products you offer and the skills you invest in our industry are compliant with the newest research and standards required in the commercial construction sectors. We at the VMC Group advocate for education and implementation. In simpler terms, I like to say, “Limit your risk and liability.” We live in very interesting times. Just as information and technological advancements seem to be multiplying at geometric ratios, so it also seems that the potency of natural disasters is increasing as well. The likelihood of a force majeure occurring anywhere in the United States appears to be more inevitable every day and as responsible, dedicated, and informed members representing all aspects of the construction industry, it is our mandate to be prepared. Remember: “Limit your risk and liability.” It has been shown that in natural disasters it’s not just the buildings themselves that are at risk and must be up to code. We have demonstrable data that shows us that with strict monitoring and enforcement of non-structural materials standards, thousands of lives and potentially billions of dollars can be saved. We must be vigilant about the reliability and compliance for non-structural building components. In order to even fathom the vulnerability and consequences in using sub-compliant materials, all we have to do is recall the Northridge earthquake of 1994. 9,000 people were injured and **NINE** area hospitals had to be closed because they couldn’t function. As dire as the Northridge disaster was, it forced all of us to develop, implement and adhere to new code development and legislation.

It is now over twenty years since Northridge and improvements are being made. Pardon the pun but although the **impact** of new codes and technology has made great inroads, we have to consider that as with any process of discovery and technological advancement, the procedure itself is like peeling an onion. There are always more levels of improvement, details, and solutions to be revealed.

In an article concerning the steady increase of climate related natural disasters, a report from the New England Journal of Medicine was quoted as saying that “Although the number of geo-physical disasters has remained fairly stable since the 1970’s…. there were three times as many natural disasters between 2000-2009 as there were between 1980-1989.” The report goes on to state, “The scale of disasters has expanded, owing to increased rates of urbanization, deforestation, environmental degradation and to intensifying climate variables such as higher temperatures, extreme precipitation and more violent wind/water storms.”

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a clear call to action. We must be prepared. We must do the research. We must invest in the technology and improvements needed to manage and minimize potential damage from inevitable natural and seismic episodes. We must limit risk and liability. By being here you express your commitment to continually improving the standards of compliance and accountability in the products you offer and the services you render and we thank you for your dedication to your projects, clients and this industry. There is always more to learn and new layers to peel, so let us begin today’s discussion…