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“Storm Struck” Opening Event
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It’s great to be back here to open another exciting Epcot Experience. I was here almost four years ago to open the “Where’s The Fire” exhibit to teach kids and families about fire hazards and fire prevention. Its interactive and educational elements made it one of Epcot’s most popular attractions.

Today we build on that experience with the new “Storm Struck: The Tale of Two Homes” exhibit. (By the way, as an English Lit major, I appreciate the Dickens reference). It is another innovation – or Innovention as they call them here – that will help the American people to learn about disasters through an exciting, interactive and fun process. When you have fun learning, you are more likely to remember it. It’s important for people to understand the risks they face and learn about the tools available to them to reduce their risks.

Government, no matter how effective, is not the entire answer. All Americans must understand and take responsibility for their role in disasters. Studies show that for every dollar spent on mitigation efforts, society saves \$4 in losses avoided. We must continue to develop a culture of preparedness in America.

We can not do this alone – and this exhibit is a great example of how we accomplish more as partners than we do on our own.

I am truly “Storm Struck” by how this project has helped us to bring together some of the best and brightest in both the private sector and government to educate Americans about disaster prevention and mitigation.

Today we are joined by many of our partners – and even a large Mouse. That Mouse represents an unusual, but especially important partner in disaster mitigation efforts – the family entertainment industry.

We know the value of bringing together diverse groups of people and organizations to empower all people with knowledge and information. I want to thank all of you for your commitment and assistance.

In particular, I want to thank Leslie Chapman-Henderson, the executive director of The Federal Alliance for Safe Homes – called FLASH. FEMA has partnered with FLASH for years as we work together to educate Americans about the ways they can lessen the impacts of hurricanes and floods and fires and earthquakes and other natural hazards. FLASH has been instrumental in building this coalition of more than 100 organizations committed to reducing the damage from natural hazards.

I’d also like to thank Ben May, the creative driver here at Walt Disney World, and his team who helped make this dream a reality.

And I’d like to thank the FEMA staff who worked provide data on disasters and to provide large volumes of technical advice on safer building practices that the Imagineers here were able to incorporate into the final product.

This is only the beginning – and there is much more you can do at home to prepare your employees and your organizations. Make preparations today to reduce the impact of a disaster on your organization and help speed your recovery. Become involved in community efforts. Deliver emergency-related information to employees, customers and members during and after a disaster.

We all must continue to develop and foster a culture of preparedness in America, in which every American takes personal responsibility for his or her own emergency preparedness. FEMA will be a partner with you as we move forward together.

Thank you. God Bless You. And God Bless the United States of America.