



DISASTER NEWS

Loans for Homeowners, Renters and Businesses of All Sizes

Release Date: April 26, 2010
Release Number: Phoenix 2010 - 3

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SBA Honors Fargo Mayor Dennis Walaker For Outstanding Disaster Recovery Efforts

SACRAMENTO — Following record snowfalls in December 2008, and again in March 2009, weather forecasters were predicting major flooding for Fargo, North Dakota – a city whose residents have come to view the slow and agonizing rise of the Red River as an annual Spring challenge.

By March 28, the Red River had risen above the record of 40.1 feet to 40.3 feet. As the river inched toward its crest, Fargo Mayor Dennis Walaker maintained a realistic analysis of the situation. While some 2,000 nursing home residents and 185 hospital patients were transferred by air, ambulance and bus to Minneapolis, Sioux Falls and Bismarck, the mayor decided against evacuating the city. He said it would be like walking away from a fight.

As the waters rose, Dennis became a non-stop, yet reassuring bundle of energy. He managed thousands of volunteers who built more than 40 miles of dikes and earthen walls to surround the city. At one point there were more than 3,600 Fargo residents – from elementary school kids to senior citizens – filling sandbags. They filled three million sandbags in five days. Fargo residents appreciated the mayor's authenticity. "He's one of us," said one small business owner. "He got his hands dirty."

Dennis's vision, diligence and experience as a veteran flood fighter made it possible for Fargo to withstand what could have been severe flooding, and prevented, according to estimates, more than a billion dollars in damages.

His exceptional efforts have earned him the ***2010 Phoenix Award for Outstanding Contributions to Disaster Recovery by a Public Official.***

"The Phoenix Award is an acknowledgment of an individual's heroic work and a recognition of the contributions they make to the recovery of their communities," said SBA Administrator Karen G. Mills. "Mayor Walaker displayed tremendous courage and resourcefulness in the aftermath of the flood, and he exemplifies the spirit one must have to rebuild after a disaster like this."

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The Phoenix Award will be presented on May 24, 2010, during the U.S. Small Business Administration's National Small Business Week celebration, May 23-25 at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Washington, D.C. Events can be viewed virtually through SBA's free, live webcasting, which will be accessible at <http://www.nationalsmallbusinessweek.com/>.

Additional information on National Small Business Week, including a detailed schedule and registration information, is available online at www.NationalSmallBusinessWeek.com.

Since 1998, the SBA has given the Phoenix Award to business owners, public officials and volunteers who displayed courage, ingenuity and tenacity in the aftermath of a disaster, while contributing to the rebuilding of their communities.

The SBA makes low-interest, taxpayer-backed disaster loans to homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes and non-profit organizations of sizes. Additional information about the disaster assistance program is available at www.sba.gov/disasterassistance.

For more information about National Small Business Week, visit www.sba.gov/sbw.

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