



NEWS

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ALL HE HAD TO DO WAS...ACT NATURALLY
MTA COMPUTER SECURITY HEAD TAKES MATTERS INTO OWN HANDS
AFTER LEARNING LONG BEACH SCHOOLS NOT PREPARED FOR DISASTER

Frank Spencer likes the world around him safe. Period.

However, the MTA information security manager's head must have been spinning when he found out his son Kevin's Long Beach junior high school did not have anything resembling an adequate emergency disaster plan back in 1992.

The area is, of course, no stranger to major calamities. On May 11, 1933 a magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck the region killing 115 people. It even toppled several reinforced school buildings. Fortunately, school was not in session, averting a far greater tragedy .

Fearing such a cataclysmic event would threaten his own son's life as well as thousands of other children, Frank decided to volunteer his services (*Spencer was not for hire* since no pay was involved). It was a second nature response on his part since he had worked on similar projects at the MTA since 1988 - including regular duties safeguarding the integrity of the agency's computerized information systems.

Five years later, students at Marshall Middle School and many others in Long Beach are benefiting from Frank's hard work and dedication. In addition to spending countless hours developing detailed disaster plans, Frank has made sure each school has a plentiful supply of new and refurbished emergency supplies including student, teacher and parent made backboards to carry the injured plus the hand rescue trucks he invented. He

MORE...

Page 2 Spencer for Hire

has also personally trained the schools' rescue teams.

Frank recently characterized his relationship with Long Beach schools as a galvanizing force, an experience which has provided him a great sense of satisfaction.

"I like the fact that the kids, staff and parent volunteers got involved," says Frank. "That gives everyone ownership in the disaster preparedness program."

The man, who some describe as all business on the job, says the emergency cupboard wasn't totally bare when he first came upon the scene.

"Many of the schools had raised funds but lacked direction in disaster planning," says Frank, twice honored by the Long Beach PTA. "The new plan concentrates on developing first-class emergency response at each school."

Former Marshall principal Karen DeVries, now superintendent of Long Beach Area B Schools, says Frank made her life much easier when she came aboard.

"I was astounded at the level of emergency preparedness when I became principal," says DeVries. "This was one responsibility I never had to worry about because the organization, training and supplies were all there."

Though his son left Marshall long ago, Frank can now sleep a lot easier knowing the children in Long Beach will be safer in case of a disaster.

"I hope none of these provisions are ever needed," he says in retrospect. "But in the event of a disaster I know the school rescue teams will not be empty-handed and that more lives will be saved."