Business and community cooperative planning is key to disaster recovery

With 38,000 Iowans displaced by the 2008 floods and an estimated $1.45 billion in property damage, ISU Extension’s Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS) saw a need to identify how businesses and communities affected by disaster — natural or economic — can best respond and plan for future response.

Through a grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), the team members from CIRAS and ISU Extension Community and Economic Development looked at four communities in Iowa — Carroll, Newton, Waterloo and Fort Dodge-Webster City — all with different levels of experience in disaster recovery and continuity planning for communities and businesses. The team used interviews and focus groups to gather insights and experience from community members, and also examined other documents and sources about the level of protocols for business responding to disaster.

To examine potential applications of geographic information system (GIS) technology for disaster recovery, the team constructed GIS models to investigate identification of critical infrastructure, transportation routes and key business locations as part of pre- and post-disaster scenarios.

With this information, the research team was able to provide the EDA recommendations on how to improve the linkages between businesses and communities for an accelerated recovery.

For more information, please contact Mike O’Donnell at 515-294-1588; modonnll@iastate.edu