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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

# Be prepared

For many, a “disaster” might be a fender bender on the way to or from the office. For others it might be a tree falling on a neighbor’s house, or possibly a patient who slips and falls in your office.

While these situations can be disastrous, there are other “real” disasters that we must prepare for. Most of us agree that all “disasters” leave a major hassle in their aftermath. They are one of the primary reasons we write the check to our insurance agents – the mere word evokes fear and risk.

Unfortunately, two close friends’ “real” disasters in their professional lives and the uncertainties that followed their disasters give my partner and I pause to rethink our own ability to restore our practices quickly in the event of a disaster. So far we’ve been blessed to avoid what our friends have encountered, but we need to be better prepared.

Imagine getting a phone call informing you that your entire office is engulfed in flames and there is real concern that not only will your office be a total loss, but the entire city block is in jeopardy. That is the phone call my friend and one of our AOA colleagues received on a Friday night a few years ago in Danville, Ill.

While watching his recently completed office go up in flames, good luck would begin by way of a former ophthalmology colleague who offered his vacant office

only a few blocks away. The doctors and staff were up and running and seeing patients in less than a week, and patient information was restored from an off-site backup. My friend’s stars were aligned and he will tell you now how fortunate he was during a true disaster.

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 reminded our country to plan for a disaster. The AOA completed a very extensive Disaster Preparation and Planning Guide for our members’ use, and Optometry’s Fund for Disaster Relief quickly stepped in and helped several hundred optometrists with financial assistance in

with insurance companies (one for the building they own and another for the office they run inside that building), large and small tasks, including the search for contractors who are available to bring the main office back to life as quickly as possible with a city who suffers from the same disaster.

Our colleagues’ true disasters serve as a reminder of how fortunate we’ve been in our office. We’ve used electronic medical records for several years. Our friend’s fire caused us to immediately find an off-site backup service for our servers to ensure that we would have nearly

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2005 and years since.

As you’ll read in this issue, Hurricane Ike struck another AOA friend, ripping the roof from their main office and dumping several inches of rain throughout the office in the path of Ike’s path. Fortunately for my Houston friends, they had a second office a few miles away that was spared serious damage. After moving their computer server, they are back up and running. Yet, the challenge in sorting out and restoring begins: negotiating

immediate access to all of our practice and patient information.

Hurricane Ike serves as a reminder that our entire eye care team will schedule time to review the AOA’s Disaster Preparation and Planning Guide to be sure everything is current and up to date.

Rather than waiting for your true disaster, my challenge to you is twofold:

❖ First, please consider making a financial contribution to Optometry’s Charity™ and Optometry’s Fund for



**Dr. Kehoe**

Disaster Relief so when the next disaster strikes our colleagues, the funds are available to quickly help as many of our colleagues who request assistance.

We’ve had several doctors thank us for helping them get through that critical period shortly after their disaster hit and it reminds us that we can make a difference.

❖ And for challenge No. 2, visit [www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org) and look through the operations and business management section to download and complete the AOA’s Disaster Preparation and Planning guide (free to members at [www.aoa.org/x7449.xml](http://www.aoa.org/x7449.xml)), and schedule time to prepare for the unexpected.

Be sure that if a true disaster strikes you, your friends will be comforted in knowing that you were prepared.

God Bless,

PS: Please be sure to visit my new blog:

[www.PetesAOABlog.com](http://www.PetesAOABlog.com) to share your thoughts on this, or any other topic you feel important.

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