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Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:39:10 GMT

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Jim had just made it back to the shack when the ground began to tremble. The vibration was subtle at first, enough to rattle the half-filled pot in the coffee maker. Then it picked up force, until it became a shaking that rattled Jim's teeth and sent him flying across the width of the trailer. The trailer itself, set on simple concrete blocks, shimmied back and forth and suddenly fell from the supports onto one side. By this time, Jim didn't know up from down, and when the table and chair slid into him, he didn't know anything at all for a good long while.

At the building site, Terry noticed the subtle vibrations and knew, to his horror, exactly what they meant. Grabbing his walkie-talkie, he broadcast an emergency signal, shouting, "Everyone out of the building! Second floor - head for the stairwells! Head for the shafts!" His workers didn't need to be told twice. They abandoned their equipment and ran for the already completed safety stairwells or the empty elevator shafts. Some didn't make it; the pilings, not set deep enough, shifted as the old landfill below them liquefied, sending the prefab concrete panels raining down to crush. A few dove beneath the equipment on the first floor, praying that the sturdy Caterpillar lifters and haulers would prove sturdy enough. Others made it into the utility tunnels below the lower floor, staring up in fear that their new ceiling would itself come down on them and bury them alive. But a good number, including Terry, made it to the stairwells, or to the elevator shafts. Legs were broken as some workers fell the two stories to the bottom; arms were broken as people tumbled down the steps to the basement. But they gathered and cowered, terrified, waiting for the earthquake to subside, and hoping they'd be spared. Terry gripped the handrail for dear life as he watched one man fall down the steps below him.

Finally, the shaking ended, and Terry breathed out a deep sigh of relief. He turned to one of his underlings. "Sam? I need you to get a head count of whoever's here, and a list of injuries. Take Patty with you; she's got a good memory. Find out if anyone has any first aid training and see what they can do for the injured." He glanced around at his men and women, some moaning, some shivering, some even crying. "Okay, y'all! Pull yourselves together! I need anyone who's got a cell phone to start calling out and tell people what's going on here!" He grabbed an electrician, and handed him the walkie-talkie. "Blake, you check around, see who else made it to safety. I'm going up to see how bad the damage is."

Blake nodded, and started to check the various frequencies that the crew used to keep in touch. Terry climbed the stairs, pulling himself up by the railings, letting his workers settle down against the wall. When he got to the main floor, just below where most of his people had been working, he pushed against the heavy metal door.

It didn't move. In fact, it looked like the bottom had been pushed into the solid concrete, leaving inches of warped open space around the door itself. Terry tried to peer out through those spaces, but found himself confronted by piles of rubble... and a set of bloodied fingers. He backpedaled, drawing in a hissing breath, reaching behind him for the wall to steady himself. He stood there for a few long moments, breathing heavily, then his pounding heart slowed and he was able to right himself. Running a hand through what was left of his short-cropped hair, he breathed out slowly, and headed up to the second floor.

Here, he could open the door, but what met him was a stunning sight. The second floor around the stairwell was gone. There were some slabs left farther out, too far away for him to jump to. The metal support beams were twisted, and the arm of the heavy crane lay across them. He shook his head, turned away, and headed back down the stairs.

One landing down, Blake met him. "Okay, here's what we have. Barb's crew made it to the elevator shafts on the north side; she's got five with her. Jaime and six more made it to the south elevator shafts. I got a faint message from Kim; she's holed up with another eight in the utility tunnels. She said they went in through the east stairwell. We're over here in the west stairwell. I haven't heard from anyone else, but there were quite a few people on the outside, and there are other safe spots where small groups could be holed up."

"What about getting some help out here?" Terry asked. He didn't want to mention the fingers he'd seen.

Blake shook his head. "We're trying, but all we're getting is busy signals. I'm sure the emergency services are swamped. Not to mention there are probably transmitter towers down."

"Well," Terry said with a sigh, "the governor will have to bring out the National Guard as soon as he can get them mobilized. And there shouldn't be too much damage in Memphis itself; from what I understand it's almost one hundred percent earthquake-compliant." He shook his head. "And I was just talking to Jim D'Ang... has anyone heard from Jim D'Angelo?"

Blake shook his head again. "No, I don't think so."

Terry rubbed his chin. "He was headed out to the shack; let's hope he was outside when this hit." He glanced around at the walls. "We can't get out; the door's blocked. Tell everyone to sit tight for a bit. They're safe where they are for now, and we have to expect some aftershocks."

"What about the injured?" Patty asked as she and Sam came up behind Blake. "We've got twenty people here. The injuries include three broken arms, a number of broken fingers, ribs, and a possible foot. Sprains, bruises, and at least one concussion. Don't know how the others are doing, but if they've got injuries..."

"We can't sit around, Terry," Sam told him bluntly "Aftershocks or no, we have to get these people out of here. They need medical attention."

"How do you suggest we do that?" Terry scowled and hooked a thumb over his shoulder. "The door's totally blocked from what I can see. We have few tools. I don't see any way we can get out."

Just as he uttered those words, the vibrations began again. "Aftershock!" he shouted, as the world began to shake and shudder once more.

Posted by Tikatu on December 10, 2007

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