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Middle East events show the need for a flexible energy emergency plan

Washington D.C. - The recent conflict in the Middle East and its affect on oil prices has forced Western nations to, once again, take a hard look at their national energy policies. But, what they may find lacking is the presence of an effective national energy emergency preparedness plan.

According to Ed Badolato, a former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Energy Emergencies, world oil supplies have been interrupted 15 times in the last 40 years by political events in the Middle East. And, what makes these interruptions so hard on the U.S. is that our energy infrastructure isn't flexible enough to absorb severe price and supply dislocations, natural disasters and accidents

To increase that flexibility Badolato recommends that the DOE continue to develop a national energy contingency while local government and industry better coordinate and integrate their efforts on a grassroots level.

"When I was at DOE, we crafted an energy policy that would respond to a 1979 type of oil crisis. Much has changed since then," Badolato states. "We now have to strike a balance between energy production and environmental concerns. An effective energy emergency preparedness strategy would be a flexible one."

Badolato, who is now CEO of his own consulting firm, published a prophetic report called New Perspectives on Energy Emergency Preparedness in July. In the report, Badolato states, "...crisis management teams are not adequately prepared to deal with the technical, legal and regulatory aspects of an energy emergency. Yet, the severe energy impacts of various emergencies have been the central theme and common denominator of most of our recent national disasters."

He points to specific natural disasters, acts of terrorism and sabotage, energy industry related accidents and international threats to illustrate the importance of developing an energy preparedness plan.

Badolato writes in his report, "The energy infrastructure has little flexibility...(it) demands that contingency planning, a national energy strategy..., and the responses for energy emergencies among federal, state and industry organizations, need to be coordinated...This should involve government-industry cooperation, stringent readiness tests and exercises, and the application of adequate resources."