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For Immediate Release

Chief Chudwin Joins Panel Discussion on Disaster Response

University Park, November 11, 2005 – Hurricanes. Tornadoes. Earthquakes. Floods. If disaster strikes, would we be ready?

To help answer the questions raised by the preparation and response to recent natural disasters, Jeff Chudwin, Chief of Police of the Olympia Fields Police Department, will join the panel of presenters at the public forum at Governors State University on Wednesday, November 16 from 3:30 to 5 p.m.

The event, "New Orleans – The City, The Event, The Lessons, The Future," is sponsored by the College of Business and Public Administration at GSU and Midwest Publishing. In addition to discussing the Hurricane Katrina natural disaster, panelist will discuss local preparedness, emergency response and public safety issues.

The forum will be held in Sherman Hall, at the University's main campus, located at 1 University Parkway, University Park. The event is free and open to the public.

Chudwin brings special expertise to the forum as a member of the Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee of the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association and co-chair of the Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System, Region 4. He was also a member of the Illinois emergency response team deployed to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

Joining Chudwin on the panel are specialists by both training and experience who will discuss various aspects of civic and public action and reaction to potential disasters, both natural and man-made, that may threaten Illinois residents. Frank Shuftan, executive editor of the Star and The Daily Southtown, will moderate the discussion.

Participants include Sandra Gunner, President of the New Orleans Chamber of Commerce. Gunner, a visiting professor at GSU's College of Business and Public Administration, provides first-hand knowledge of the effects of a major natural disaster on a densely populated community.

Discussing current training and preparedness in Illinois will be Kevin Phillips, Director, Emergency Management Agency, Cook County Sheriff's Department; Ronald Carlson, Regional Director of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency; and Harold Damron, Jr., Chief Deputy Director of the Will County Emergency Management Agency.

According to Chudwin, "At the local level, we are constantly trying to look at what we can handle up front to reduce the likelihood of a disaster or its severity if it happens. In case of a disaster, either natural or man-made, we have plans in effect to marshal our resources, through communication and prioritizing, to focus on the issues.

"Our preparation is like a playbook at a football game. Depending on what occurs, all our first responders know their positions, their roles and their jobs," adds Chudwin.

Chudwin hopes the forum will increase public awareness of the complex issues facing by both emergency personnel and area residents in case of a disaster. There is also, according to Chudwin, a need for the public to be aware and take some responsibility if there is prior knowledge of a potential disaster.

"Our first response in an emergency is to save lives and give protection. Depending on the severity of what we face, it may be from 24 to 72 hours before assistance reaches some people. We are all obliged to have a supply of basic necessities on hand. We must overcome denial and be prepared to respond."

After the presentations, forum attendees will have the opportunity to join the discussion and ask questions.

For more information, call (708) 534-4044 or email publicaffairs@govst.edu.