



New Firestorm franchisee taps Mexican market

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ROSWELL, Ga. – As the owner of six daycare centers in Mexico, Aldo Salinas understands the critical importance of preparedness.

In one of the biggest tragedies in the country's history, 44 children were killed last year when a fire swept through a Sonora state daycare facility leased by the government. The facility was housed in a converted warehouse in an industrial area, surrounded by mechanic shops and a gas station. No fire alarm or sprinkler system went off, according to witnesses, and there was only one open exit.

As the latest Firestorm franchisee -- the company's seventh awarded since launching franchising in April 2009 – one of Salinas' main objectives is to help bring about "a culture of preparedness that currently doesn't exist in Mexico."

Firestorm (www.firestorm.com) is a national leader in business continuity, communicable illness/pandemic planning, vulnerability analysis and crisis management. Franchisees utilize all capabilities of Firestorm -- which provided the on-site crisis management support at Virginia Tech -- including its name and trademark; operational methodology including plans, policies, procedures and training; and access to its staff, Expert Council and Online Resource Center.

Salinas' franchise will operate out of McAllen, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley region, site of the bulk of U.S.-Mexico cross-border economic activity. With dual U.S. and Mexican citizenship – Salinas has also lived and worked in Puerto Rico and Spain – he brings multinational vision and experience to Firestorm clients.

His first project will be with the state government of Tamaulipas, Mexico, to set a standard of preparedness to be used across all types of organizations, similar to the new Public Law 110-53 (Title IX- Private Sector Preparedness) in the United States.

"While you cannot compare human losses with financial losses, the people of Mexico understand it is better *and* cheaper to be prepared when disaster strikes," Salinas said.

In addition to Public Law 110-53, which mandates the Department of Homeland Security initiate certification of business continuity planning in the private sector, other significant business drivers for the BCP industry include the emergence of new communicable illnesses such as the H1N1 influenza; the worldwide economic crisis; the increase in natural disasters related to climate change; and elevated exposure to mass violence threats nationally and internationally.

"Aldo's experience doing business on both sides of the border brings a new dynamic to Firestorm," Executive Vice President for Franchising Hutch Hodgson said. "Preparedness is no less vital in the Hispanic market."

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