Communication age

Technology news

1. **Read paragraph A. What information do you expect to find in the rest of the article?**

A. Information on the early story of Rio the Janeiro.
B. How difficult it is for people to get to work in Rio.
C. Problems in Rio because of its size and large number of people.
D. Information about the beaches, mountains, and ocean around Rio.
E. Ways the Rio government works with police, ambulances, and the fire department.

2. **Read the newspaper article quickly. Check your answers to exercise 1.**

Rio de Janeiro is well known for its picturesque setting. Flanked by mountains and the ocean, the city is famous for its scenic beaches and lively carnival. However, Rio's immense size and sprawling population present many challenges to city authorities, transportation networks, urban planners, and emergency service providers. (A)

In the aftermath of the devastating floods and mudslides of April 2010 that claimed many lives, the mayor of Rio teamed up with the American company IBM in order to improve communications in this megacity. An IBM unit called "Smarter Cities" created an operations center in the heart of the city to collect and oversee up-to-date information from weather monitors, transportation providers, and emergency services. Rio, like many other major cities, had long had video cameras, sensors, and GPS devices gathering information related to everything from weather events to criminal activity. Until now, however, the information hadn't been coordinated or disseminated very efficiently. With the new software in the operations hub, authorities will now be able to respond to disasters more swiftly and keep the infrastructure running more smoothly. (B)

In January 2012, the process proved its value when a 20-story office building collapsed in downtown Rio, bringing down two other buildings with it. Workers at the operations center were able to quickly notify the fire and civil defense departments. They then alerted the gas and electric companies so that services could be switched off around the area. Employees also shut down the subway in that area, blocked off the street, and set up diversions for the traffic affected by the closures. They also sent for ambulances and earth - moving equipment, and then warned hospitals to be ready for a large number of emergency cases. The public was able to get advice and information about the incident from the center's Twitter feed or through an app. Although there were seventeen casualties, many lives were saved because of the coordination of resources from the operation center. (C)

Following its succes in Rio, IBM is now planning to take its operations center software to other large cities in the US and China. It is predicted that by 2050 around the 75 percent of the world's population will be living in urban areas. Dense urban populations present challenges to local authorities and residents alike, including gridlocked traffic, higher crime rates, and power outages. Rio's partnership with IBM, however, will have given the city a head start in taking on these issues, while other rapidly-growing cities are only beginning to address them. (D)

LIVEWORKSHEETS

SKIMMING

Match summaries 1 – 4 with paragraphs A – D in the article.

1. IBM and the government of Rio created a center to collect and distribute important information throughout the city. _____

2. Rio de Janeiro is a beautiful but crowded city where it is difficult to manage traffic and emergency services. _____

3. Due to the growth of the worldwide urban population, IBM is going to use the Rio operations center model in other countries. _____

4. The Rio operations center worked well when a building collapsed. _____

CONTEXT CLUES:

Match the words with the definitions. Write the number in the space.

1. the side of anything, as of a building.	_____ oversee
2. to be spread out or distributed irregularly or awkwardly	_____ hub
3. something that follows from an event	_____ flank
4. a group of people assembled for an action or activity	_____ sprawling
5. To supervise, to manage	_____ aftermath
6. a focus of activity or authority; core	_____ team up
7. Moving or able to move with great speed	_____ advice
8. people who are injured or killed	_____ diversions
9. changes of direction or alternate routes	_____ casualties
10. warning	_____ swiftly

UNDERSTANDING DETAILS:

According to the article, which two statements are true? Select the ones you think are correct.

1. A The operations center has prevented mudslides and improved traffic.
2. Lives have been saved as a result of the operations center.
3. Rio was one of the first cities to create an operations center.
4. Urban areas are easier for emergency services to deal with because everything is close together.
5. The local government center worked well when a building collapsed.

LIVEWORKSHEETS