

Planning for an Emergency on your College Campus and within your Community

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In today's world of consolidations and cut backs, we are all forced to wear more than one hat within our organization, as well as plan for more threats and emergencies than we have in the past. If we Pre-Plan incidents using an All- Hazards approach, we can better prepare our campuses and our communities for the unexpected and the expected. Some may think that the plan should only cover hazards identified on campus, but an emergency off campus may greatly affect your campus and students. Are there railroad tracks near your campus or have you seen a tanker truck on the streets near your campus? Better yet, have you seen a tanker truck deliver hazardous materials to your campus? With all the different possible scenarios, our plans need to expect the worst and plan for the best. In my 6 years as an Emergency Management Coordinator for Bexar County, Texas, I worked six Presidential Declarations of Disasters and always remember the following words from one of my mentors **Jack Colley, we must respond "quicker, faster, smarter".

Believe it or not the best plans have started off with a cup of coffee; no smart phones, laptops, PowerPoint presentations handouts, or previous plans were needed.

The best plan starts with getting to know your partners, exchanging cell phone, work, and home numbers. Notice I didn't say responders, because in a disaster we are all partners. We need to know each other's capabilities, strengths, and weakness. In most realms, the circle of responders includes the traditional Fire, Medical and Law Enforcement agencies, but we should be expanding our circle to include Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) such as the Red Cross and Salvation Army, just to name a couple. We also need to include our local business partners and

Faith Based organizations. Our Local Business partners can bring a great deal of skills to the table. The next time you have to communicate with someone who has a hearing impairment are you going to use American Sign Language, Rochester Method or Signed Exact English? There are many NGO that can provide interrupters. I have found through my experience that the Red Cross can assist with shelter management and the Salvation Army can assist with the second biggest disaster, Donation Management. Your local faith based organizations may be able to assist with grief counseling, these are just a few examples of how your partners can assist during a disaster.

In August of 2005, I received a 6:00am telephone call at home from Nim Kidd, EMC for San Antonio, Texas. He asked me “do you want to have fun today?” I said sure, thinking maybe a day off and a round of golf. He said, meet me at the office in one hour, we are expecting 26,000 people from New Orleans that need our help. We met and began to contact all of our partners and began to survey the City of San Antonio to find facilities that could handle 26,000 people. We were able to locate different buildings around the city that we could use as shelters, but we had to make these facilities habitable. First, the facility was inspected by the health department, building inspector and the Fire Marshal’s Office. One location that was identified was a large warehouse, and since we were in the middle of summer we had to locate portable air conditioning for a 385,000 sq ft warehouse. Various departments and organization began to assist with preparations for our guest. Over the next few days and weeks a temporary Post Office, and mobile Pharmacy were established, and bus routes were re-routed to give our guests public transportation. Meals were prepared in one location

and delivered to the various shelters around the city. Just when you think that you have thought of every thing, life throws you a curveball. One unexpected resource that arrived in San Antonio was the Mexican Army. The President of Mexico wanted to assist and sent the Mexican Army to San Antonio with water purifications trucks and food. The Mexican Army began to prepare meals for our guests and for the responders.

How do you begin to manage a situation that seems to be getting bigger and bigger by the day? We used the Incident Management System (NFPA 1620 4.1.5). We established an Incident Action Plan which set out our goals and objectives and briefed personnel twice a day during our shift change. Prior to Hurricane Katrina our organizations had participated in Hurricane evacuation drills for residents along the Texas Coastline. Those drills included table-top exercises, where all partners would meet and discuss the plan while controllers and observers submitted injects to test the plan. We also conducted functional and full scale exercises to test the personnel, equipment, and their understanding of the plan (NFPA 1620, Chapter 4.8). After each exercise and event that tested our plan, we conducted After Action Reviews (AAR) to determine if any adjustments needed to be made and established quick fixes, sustainments and short and long term improvements (NFPA 1620, Chapter 4.10). Remember one thing, no one organization can handle a major disaster alone, and a good question to ask yourself is “Why would you want to handle a major disaster by yourself?”

**National Fire Protection Association 1620 Standard for Pre- Incident Planning, 2010.

** Jack Colley head of the Department of Public Safety, Texas Division of Emergency Management, 1998 -2010



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