



The Importance of Investing in a Sound Emergency Management Program

By Karen S. Thompson, IAEM Bulletin Editor, International Association of Emergency Managers

During the year following the events of Sept. 11, the role of emergency management has taken the spotlight, as communities have turned to their local emergency managers to address planning issues that have expanded to include the threat of terrorism. There is a renewed interest in the importance of investing in a sound emergency management program, although many professional emergency managers – already involved in all-hazard, all-risk planning – would question whether the actual role of the emergency manager has changed post-Sept. 11.

“Local emergency management directors are responsible for the development of comprehensive, all-hazards emergency management programs in their jurisdictions,” IAEM Executive Director Elizabeth B. Armstrong, CAE, told the Homeland Security Task Force convened by the National Association of Counties (NACo). “This involves the development of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery programs for every community.”

Armstrong is quick to point out that emergency management programs at the local level have traditionally operated with a minimum of resources to accomplish a critical mission. “Emergency management represents the linkage between ‘first responders’ such as fire, police and emergency medical services,” she notes. “Local emergency managers also coordinate the supplemental resources that are allocated by the state or federal government, taking a lead role in the integrated emergency management system.” (See the related article, *Just What Is It That Emergency Management Does, Anyway?* for an overview of an emergency manager’s responsibilities.)

Have Emergency Management Priorities Changed Post Sept. 11?

There is still a public perception that emergency managers primarily deal with weather-related events and other natural disasters, although this is only one component of emergency management today. “We have been involved in all-risk, all-hazard planning for decades,” states Michael J. Fagel, Ph.D., CEM, an emergency manager who helped to create an emergency plan for the World Trade Center (WTC) site at Ground Zero. Dr. Fagel is one of many emergency managers, who assisted in recovery efforts at the WTC. He believes that “emergency management has come of age in this series of horrific events. We have always been involved in natural disasters and crisis management. Now we have added the WMD (weapons of mass destruction) scenario to our planning.”

Many emergency managers would agree with the view that what has changed is not the role of the emergency manager, but rather the visibility. “Terrorism is only one type of hazard that our jurisdictions face,” notes Daryl Lee Spiewak, CEM, CFM. Spiewak is Emergency Action Coordinator for the Brazos River Authority in Waco, Texas, Past President of the American Society of Professional Emergency Planners (ASPEP), and IAEM President Elect. He stresses that “what has changed is the awareness and visibility of the consequences of a terrorist act. In many ways this is good, because with visibility comes funding and high-level interest.”

This position is affirmed by Phyllis A. Mann, CEM, who is Director of Kitsap County Emergency Management in Bremerton, WA. “Long before Sept. 11, communities started planning for terrorist events, says Mann, a Past President of IAEM. “Sept. 11 was simply the single event in our history that demonstrated to everyone that it can happen here in the U.S....priorities as an emergency manager have not changed; however, my workload has increased tremendously.”

Importance of Investing at the State and Local Level

A recent initiative of the International Association of Emergency Managers focused on communicating the importance of the emergency management coordination process to decisions makers at all levels. According to Past IAEM President Bob Andrews, CEM, “As we watch and applaud the progress of homeland defense support from Washington, including the proposed funds to advance this program, we can’t help but notice the high emphasis on single disciplines without reference to the coordination process that brings it all together.” Andrews notes that support for the key response disciplines – fire, police and emergency medical services – is both important and badly needed. He is concerned, however, by the lack of reference in federal initiatives to the coordination process of emergency management. “We do not operate as single disciplines when preparing or responding to natural disasters, and we certainly could not do so within the arena of terrorism.”

IAEM supported the President’s request for \$3.5 billion in the Federal FY 2003 budget to increase emergency management capacity building at the local level for personnel, planning, training, equipment, coordination and exercising. The association took the position that there is a demonstrated need for a national strategy identifying goals and objectives, and that FEMA is in the best position to adminis-

ter the program to ensure some level of equitability as well as flexibility at the state and local level.

Spiewak lists five reasons why it is important to invest in a sound emergency management program at the state and local level:

■ *A sound emergency management program complies with legal mandates.* The National Emergency Security Preparedness Policy states that “effective national security emergency preparedness planning requires: identification of functions that would have to be performed during an emergency; development of plans for performing these functions; and development of the capability to execute those plans.” The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires emergency response plans for facilities using and storing certain hazardous chemicals. Many state laws delegate emergency management responsibilities to local officials, while local ordinances further define and specify these responsibilities.

■ *A sound emergency management program pays for itself in meeting the moral responsibilities that government entities have.* Governments are formed to do those collective tasks that the people cannot do for themselves. Responding to and recovering from emergencies and disasters are some of those moral responsibilities.

■ *A sound emergency management program is the means for these officials to effectively carry out their legal responsibilities.* Elected officials don’t have the time or the expertise to handle a major emergency or disaster on their own. They need help before, during and after emergencies occur.

■ *A sound emergency management program allows the jurisdiction to more effectively respond to and recover faster from the effects of a major emergency or disaster.* In times of difficulty, it clearly and visibly demonstrates the effective leadership of the elected officials. It also provides good press for those elected officials and the jurisdiction.

■ *A sound emergency management program makes it easier to obtain federal funds to make further improvements in readiness and response capabilities at a reduced cost to the local taxpayers.* Federal grants require plans, other documentation and effective management of the monies

granted. There are also short time limits associated with many grant programs. A sound emergency management program consists of trained and experienced people who are capable of obtaining and employing federal grant monies to the benefit of the local jurisdiction.

Communicating With Local Elected Officials

Andrews believes that communication with elected officials is key as the foundation for homeland defense policy is established. “Many decision makers are not considering emergency management’s role simply due to lack of information,” he stresses. “IAEM encourages its members to communicate regularly with their elected officials, emphasizing that it is imperative for agencies and resources to work together to meet a challenge as complex as terrorism.”

Local elected officials must be educated on the importance of emergency management programs, especially when first responders are getting so much attention and funding for terrorism response. “Without emergency management, there is no effective overall planning and coordination of the consequence management effort,” says Spiewak. “Emergency management is the elected official’s mechanism that coordinates all of a jurisdiction’s resources. It is the point of contact for mutual aid from other jurisdictions, and it is the instrument for obtaining state and federal resources.”

In Conclusion

IAEM continues to work on behalf of emergency managers to educate decision makers at all levels about the importance of investing in a sound emergency management program. “The all-hazards approach to emergency management is the most promising way to effectively deal with the ever-changing landscape with which we need to contend,” says Andrews. “In this era of homeland security and high profile anti-terrorism activity, it important to remember that much of the basic planning work has already been addressed via the all-hazards concept. The people of this country deserve an emergency management system that performs to the highest standards.”

Certified Emergency Manager Program®

The ultimate credential in emergency management, the Certified Emergency Manager® designation, was developed and is administered by IAEM. Internationally recognized, the CEM® Program was created to raise and maintain professional standards. The program’s development was supported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) and a host of allied organizations. Certification is a peer review process administered through IAEM, and you need not be an IAEM member to be certified. For details on CEM® Program requirements, visit the IAEM Web site at www.iaem.com, or contact IAEM Headquarters for a CEM® Program brochure.

IAEM Scholarship Program

In 1999, IAEM established a scholarship program to nurture, promote and develop disaster preparedness and resistance by furthering the education of students studying the field of emergency management. The ultimate mission of the IAEM Scholarship Program is to assist the profession by identifying and developing students from around the world with the intellect and technical skills that can advance and enhance emergency management. Through donations from individuals, companies and organizations, IAEM’s goal is to raise \$100,000 to fund scholarship awards to undergraduate or graduate students enrolled in an accredited college/university program, pursuing a degree that includes courses in emergency management and/or community planning.

Just What Is It That Emergency Management Does, Anyway?

By Maureen Long, AEM, Emergency Management Senior Planner, Seminole County, Florida

It occurred to me this past week – when one of our recently hired firefighters asked me the question, “What do you do when there are no hurricanes?” – that some of you don’t really know what emergency managers do when we don’t have a hurricane. I didn’t have to think twice to answer his questions as I rattled off as much as I could without overwhelming him or boring him to death by the multitude of tasks that the division performs “when not monitoring storms.”

It wasn’t easy to try to sum up the various duties and jobs we perform on a daily, weekly or yearly basis. However, during my short conversation with this curious young man, it occurred to me that maybe others – yes, even in our own department – may not know what it is emergency managers do, other than respond to acts of Mother Nature. So I thought I would take a few minutes from my work to explain “just what it is that emergency management does.”

Sure, we all gear up and get excited over the prospect of Mother Nature sending the “Big Bertha” at us. We do this year round by creating and practicing in the form of exercises. Checklists are abundant in the division, so we won’t forget and leave out any important procedure or make that call for the resources needed prior to and post storm events. These checklists are constantly updated as we learn by each and every event that affects this county. We do this in order to assure that our responses and resources are always the very best and that we serve the citizens to the very best of our ability. The fact that we have a “state of the art” Emergency Operations Center (EOC) assists us in our response to any significant event in the county. Our EOC is equipped with video conferencing equipment, teleconferencing, lighted wall and table maps, an EM2000 messaging system and seating for 80 personnel. In case many of you don’t know, we are proud of the fact that we are the alternate EOC for the State of Florida Division of Emergency Management.

Tending to Special Needs Citizens

Tending to our special needs citizens, who number approximately 500 in this county, also is a continuous assignment. Registries are updated weekly, and new and improved ways to retrieve information about these special citizens are always on our minds. Providing them with the best possible care when they need it during any emergency is a number one priority for the division. We work hand in hand with the health department and school board to this end.

Mitigation Issues

Mitigation issues include assuring that the planning process is ongoing and the projects listed are in progress or completed, such as buyouts of properties that have had

recurring or continuous flooding problems, drainage problems, and retrofitting our shelters. It is important to encourage the development of disaster resistant communities in order to reduce the effect of disasters on lives and property.

Coordination of Resources

Emergency managers coordinate the efforts of all community resources, including first responders (police, fire, EMS), public works, volunteer agencies (American Red Cross, Salvation Army), public health, private industry, the mayor’s office and more. Efforts are not duplicated, but rather big management practices are in place to cope with a disaster.

Monitoring Health Care Facilities

Monitoring health care facilities’ emergency plans is another time-consuming chore. Some of the smaller facilities seem to feel they do not need to plan for emergencies. We, in the division, however, know better – and all facilities are required to have a plan regardless of size. We make sure that anyone who takes in citizens to care for will at least have a workable emergency plan that will protect these people who are counting on this facility for their help and trust during such emergencies. Without our review and approval of their emergency plans, they do not become licensed.

All critical facilities throughout the county are kept in a database, as required by the State Division of Emergency Management, and updated on a yearly basis. Since the events of Sept. 11, assuring this data is current has been a priority of the division.

Division Teaches Citizens Through CERT

Teaching citizens how to take care of themselves and their neighbors during emergency situations through the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program is another time-consuming initiative for which the division is responsible. Providing informational brochures on preparedness to citizens is ongoing through requests for such information or by presentations to Seminole homeowners associations and civic groups. The President’s Citizen Corps will expand this area of activity.

Coordinating With Private Industry Counterparts

The emergency manager ensures that manufacturing facilities, plants and other business operations are familiar with emergency procedures in the event of an incident. There must be regular communications with these contacts to ensure that they are aware of hazardous materials, potential disaster resources (such as heavy equipment), and available response personnel.

Something New: Terrorist Events

Something new to most of us are the terrorist events that have taken place in this country. Emergency management has been busy sharing information with all the departments in the county as well as the various agencies who assist during times of emergencies. We have, to date, conducted three briefings on protective measures being taken and future terrorist concerns. We have set up rumor control lines during the past several months to deal with citizens concerned about anthrax and mail handling. We have distributed procedures on mail handling to all county employees and assisted in conducting mail-handling classes. A Terrorism Annex has been developed as part of our Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP), along with levels of activation pertaining to terrorist events.

Emergency management offices are pivotal in the application of resources such as the \$3.5 billion First Responder fund in the Federal FY 2003 budget. Emergency managers must ensure interoperability of equipment; facilitate communications and training; and coordinate mutual aid (both interstate and intrastate) to ensure the best investment of federal funds.

What We Do When Not Doing the Above

When we emergency managers have time in between "just what it is we do," we are attempting to attend as many classes, conferences, meetings and instructional seminars as we possibly can so that we may continue to be the most responsive and knowledgeable emergency management division this county has ever had. Now, if you don't know what emergency managers do...shame on you!



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About the International Association of Emergency Managers

The International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) has taken the lead to coordinate a communication mechanism for FEMA among first responder organizations. FEMA has recognized IAEM's critical consensus building and coordination role by turning to IAEM with this cooperative agreement.

Following Sept. 11, IAEM launched an initiative to collect the best resources for anti-terrorism planning and preparation, and this online tool will be shared with local emergency managers worldwide to help initiate and strengthen preparedness efforts.

IAEM is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the goals of saving lives and property during emergencies and disasters. With more than 2,000 members, IAEM brings together emergency management professionals from local government, the military, private industry, state and federal governments, and others interested in emergency management, both in the U.S. and worldwide. IAEM celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2002, and will hold its 51st Annual Conference & Exhibit Nov. 1-5 in Orlando, Florida.

IAEM members have access to the largest network of top emergency management experts who can offer solutions, guidance and assistance. They have an opportunity to advance their careers through IAEM's professional opportunities service, which is a primary advertising tool utilized by hiring managers for recruiting new emergency managers. IAEM offers the only internationally recognized certification for emergency managers, the Certified Emergency Manager® Program, which can help enhance careers and salaries.

IAEM members receive the latest information on disaster issues, industry innovations and resources through the monthly *IAEM Bulletin* and legislative updates, and they have access to discussion groups and free e-mail. IAEM provides a unified voice at the federal, state and local levels to educate decision-makers about the impact of policies and legislation on emergency management services. IAEM administers the IAEM Scholarship Program to support the future of emergency management through providing financial assistance to students enrolled in emergency management courses of study.