

ORFALEA FOUNDATION REPORT: PUBLIC VERSION

The initial needs assessment for Santa Barbara County's Aware & Prepare Initiative, conducted by James Lee Witt Associates.



Orfalea Foundations

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Strengthening Emergency Preparedness in Santa Barbara County: Development of Priorities and Recommendations for a Granting Strategy

Final Report

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Executive Summary

It is more critical than ever before that both private and public sector entities work together and take action to prepare and plan for responding to human-caused and natural disasters. The Orfalea Fund has had and continues to have a very significant impact on assisting underserved populations in the communities within Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Luis Obispo Counties. Consequently, the Orfalea Fund took the initiative to host a panel with non-profit organizations to discuss opportunities for enhancing disaster preparedness and response capabilities as a result of the Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury investigation that highlighted the need for considerable efforts in this area. The panel was specifically focused on assessing the significant funding needs of local government and non-profit service providers in consideration of the development of a coordinated funding plan to strengthen emergency preparedness in Santa Barbara County.

As a result of this panel discussion and their own internal research, the Orfalea Fund determined the need to obtain an objective third-party source from outside of Santa Barbara County to meet with the local government and non-profit service provider groups to determine the feasibility of funding disaster preparedness and response projects. After a request for proposals and interview process, James Lee Witt Associates (JLWA) was subsequently retained to conduct an emergency preparedness funding needs assessment in Santa Barbara County.

James Lee Witt Associates part of GlobalOptions Group, Inc. is a national, leading crisis and emergency management support and consulting firm founded in March 2001 and based in Washington, D.C. with offices in Atlanta, Georgia; Chicago, Illinois; Little Rock, Arkansas; and Sacramento, California. JLWA builds upon James Lee Witt's more than 30 years of leadership and experience in the field of disaster management, including eight years as the Director of the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under President Clinton. In September 2004, former Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater and former Commander of NATO General Wesley Clark (ret.) joined JLWA as Vice Chairmen and Senior Advisors.

To conduct the assessment, JLWA immediately engaged the Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Services to solicit their support and direct engagement throughout the entire process. Their input was critical to ensuring that the project was as inclusive and complete as possible. JLWA then interviewed several key stakeholders in Santa Barbara County, collecting information regarding that status of current best practices in emergency preparedness, as well as discovering their perceptions of gaps in disaster response and coordination. The firm also conducted additional phone interviews in the weeks following the work in the county, and the Orfalea Fund President Lois Mitchell and Paul Orfalea met with each Santa Barbara County Board Supervisor to discuss this project to gain their support in our efforts.

During the interviews, JLWA asked detailed questions regarding best practices in emergency management with specific emphasis on the thematic areas established by the 2005 Santa Barbara Civil Grand Jury Report as the key areas for improvement including: Emergency

Operations Centers, Emergency Public Information, Emergency Sheltering, and Emergency Medical Response. Through the process of interviewing key stakeholder groups, it was revealed that many of the Grand Jury recommendations have been implemented or are currently being completed. Therefore, the interviews naturally extended beyond these four categories and other thematic areas emerged that the stakeholder groups perceived as needing the greatest attention.

The approach to conducting the funding needs assessment involved using two distinct methods for organizing and prioritizing information, key observations, and themes discussed by the stakeholder groups. The first method involved simply asking each stakeholder, at the conclusion of the interview, to synthesize the issues that should receive the highest priority for funding. The one caveat being that they could not fund their own programs with the intent of removing any bias from their answers.

The second method was to ask focused questions regarding the status of nationally-recognized emergency management best practices within the Santa Barbara County Operational Area. To this end, JLWA created matrices that included a list of best practices for each of the four established themes identified by the Grand Jury. During the interview process, the best practices were subsequently measured against their urgency (practical, regulatory, economic and social implications), complexity, and completeness. The areas that emerged with the highest priority were the issues that were considered the most urgent, most complex to resolve, and least complete; whereas, those issues with the least priority were considered less urgent, least complex, and closer to being completed. Utilizing the interviewee responses and the personal knowledge and expertise of JLWA, the items were scored to determine the priority themes and issues.

Based on the interviews and subsequent analysis, JLWA captured seven priority themes for emergency preparedness improvement. In this report, James Lee Witt Associates outlines these themes and provides general best practices and key recommendations, as well as funding options that would support completion of the recommendations.

The priority themes are as follows:

- 1. Public Education and Awareness.** Form a Public Education Committee and develop a long-term on-going comprehensive public education and awareness campaign for emergency preparedness and response.
- 2. Coordination and Communication.** Expand the Emergency Services Coordination Group, and support local conferences and joint training opportunities.
- 3. Preparedness.** Complete essential plans, provide key training opportunities, and implement an on-going exercise and evaluation program within the Santa Barbara County Operational Area.

- 4. Emergency Public Information.** Develop a long-term emergency public information strategy and support the investigation into new opportunities and technologies, as well as the purchase of new equipment, software, and tools.
- 5. Resources and Personnel.** Develop a resource management database program that will allow resource coordination among all the stakeholder agencies in the operational area, and support the purchase and stockpiling of essential emergency equipment.
- 6. Authority and Management.** Provide state-of-the-art equipment for the Santa Barbara County Operational Area Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and conduct regular EOC exercises.
- 7. Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD).** Support the organization and strengthening of the VOAD.

Providing and coordinating grant funding for these seven themes would ensure an effective application of resources to enhance the capability of the Santa Barbara County Operational Area to prepare for, respond to, and recover from all-hazards events.

Introduction

Natural and human-caused disasters are a reality that confronts many communities throughout the world. While catastrophic events on the scale of Hurricane Katrina may not be commonplace, they nevertheless provide many urgent lessons on the importance of remaining prepared to deal with the real threats that affect our communities. In Southern California, the history of, and ongoing threat of, emergencies involving floods, storms, fires, landslides and other events, have prompted government entities and concerned citizens to a heightened awareness of the need to remain prepared to face emergencies in their own communities. Many communities have focused attention to and budgeted for improving early warning systems, communications and coordination efforts, command and control, medical relief, and other response systems at all levels. Perhaps most importantly, citizens' own understanding of, and efforts toward, their need to remain personally prepared has also increased.

With this focus on strengthening emergency preparedness, the Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury convened in early August of 2005 to examine disaster response and coordination efforts in Santa Barbara County. Santa Barbara County and its citizens have a history of, and on-going threat of major earthquakes, as well as landslides, fires, floods, and other life-property-, and environment- threatening disasters.

The Grand Jury launched an inquiry into emergency preparedness and response capabilities, looking at four specific areas:

- Santa Barbara County Emergency Operations Center
- Emergency Public Information
- Emergency Sheltering
- Emergency Medical Response

The Grand Jury examined each of these areas of preparation and response and developed recommendations to improve the county's level of preparedness and its ability to deliver essential emergency services in an effective manner. Since that time, a substantial effort has been undertaken by the respective agencies to work to implement these recommendations. However, there is still progress to be made.

Purpose

With the support of non-profit organizations and continued encouragement of collaboration and development of strategic partnerships, the Orfalea Fund has had and continues to have a very significant impact on assisting underserved populations in the communities within the Counties of Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Luis Obispo. Consequently, the Orfalea Fund was especially motivated to help Santa Barbara County in response to the Grand Jury reports, specifically through the development of a coordinated funding plan for the sole purpose of strengthening disaster preparedness and coordination in the County. The Orfalea Fund initiated this process by conducting their own research and hosting a panel of public agencies

and non-profit organizations to discuss opportunities for enhancing disaster related capabilities within the Santa Barbara County Operational Area. As a result of this workshop, the Orfalea Fund identified the need for a third-party assessment of the emergency preparedness funding needs of the local government and non-profit service providers in the county.

James Lee Witt Associates (JLWA) was retained by the Orfalea Fund to conduct this assessment and to act as an objective and knowledgeable observer from outside of Santa Barbara County. JLWA initially met with representatives of the Orfalea Fund to develop the specific goals and objectives of the assessment and identify the areas for prioritization to assist in the development of a granting strategy. The overall goal was to meet with selected local government and non-profit service provider groups to determine the feasibility and priority of funding disaster preparedness and response efforts.

Methodology

JLWA conducted a comprehensive, third-party analysis of the disaster preparedness capabilities and priorities of the local government and non-profit service providers in Santa Barbara County in order to determine the feasibility and priorities for the Orfalea Fund in committing funding to emergency management projects. JLWA began by interviewing a cross-section of first responders, government officials, and representatives from the private sector and non-profit organizations to gain a better perspective of the overall emergency preparedness capabilities of the Santa Barbara County Operational Area.

The first meeting was with Michael Harris, the newly appointed Emergency Operations Chief for the Santa Barbara County (SBC) Office of Emergency Services (OES). SBC OES has specific responsibilities for county-wide coordination of disaster preparedness and response efforts. Due to the importance of this office and its leadership in ensuring the community's success in preparing for a disaster, both JLWA and the Orfalea Fund believe that it was vital to maintain close communication and coordination with OES throughout the course of this project. This strategic partnership allows the efforts of the Orfalea Fund to be integrated with the developing and on-going community emergency management programs.

James Lee Witt Associates continued the interview process by scheduling meetings or conference calls with the public agencies and non-profit organizations recommended by the Orfalea Fund including the following:

- Santa Barbara County Office of Emergency Services (OES)
- Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Department
- Direct Relief International
- American Red Cross, Santa Barbara County Chapter
- Santa Barbara County Public Health Department
- Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital
- Santa Barbara Food Bank
- Family Service Agency (2-1-1 Helpline)
- Emergency Public Information Communicators (E.P.I.C.)
- UC Santa Barbara Department of Environmental Health and Safety

- Santa Barbara Department of Social Services
- Santa Barbara County Education Office
- Community Environmental Council
- The Glendon Association
- National Institute of Urban Search and Rescue
- Marian Medical Center, Santa Maria
- Lompoc Hospital, Lompoc
- Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics

It is important to note that a gubernatorial-declared disaster was occurring during the time the interview process and assessment was being conducted by JLWA. The Zaca Fire began on July 4, 2007 and burned more than 240,207 acres in Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties. Although this incident allowed the stakeholders to give us even more specific and valuable feedback in terms of their experiences and lessons learned in regards to this incident, it was also a significant factor in being unable to interview designated key stakeholders including the Santa Barbara County Fire Department. (JLWA is still working on securing additional stakeholder interviews in hopes of including their feedback into this report.)

Prioritization

James Lee Witt Associates combined two approaches in identifying areas to prioritize emergency management improvements in the Santa Barbara County Operational Area. These approaches involved eliciting the insights of area stakeholders, and also making focused inquiries as to the status of nationally-recognized emergency management best practices within specific response and operational groups.

Stakeholder Interviews. The first approach involved asking interviewees to identify areas of concern, gaps in preparedness, follow-up issues pertaining to the Grand Jury's findings, and general county-wide strengths and weaknesses. Interviewees were open, honest, and very candid about their thoughts and ideas. JLWA also invited feedback on the specific needs and priorities of each agency or organization. Each interview was subsequently concluded by requesting that stakeholders identify specific county-wide priorities that they would recommend be funded in support of strengthening the entire community's disaster preparedness and response capabilities (with the restriction that they could not recommend that their own program or area of interest be funded to exclude any perceived bias).

Best Practices Matrices. The second approach to the identification of gaps and areas for improvement and prioritization involved asking stakeholders the completion status of specific nationally-recognized emergency management best practices. A suggested list of emergency management best practice items were collected into matrices that were organized according to the four categories of disaster response that were identified in the 2005 Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury Reports: *Emergency Operations Centers, Emergency Public Information, Emergency Sheltering, and Emergency Medical Response*. These matrices were distributed to the stakeholder groups in advance of the personal interviews for their specific consideration. Once the completion status of the various issues was weighed against their urgency, complexity and level of completion, a final score was assigned to each item.

Priority Themes and Issues

James Lee Witt Associates synthesized the stakeholders' comments and priority improvement issues into specific themes. Consequently, there were a number of consistent themes that emerged. These themes, and the number of times they were identified as priorities by the stakeholder groups, are identified in *Table A* (page 12).

JLWA discovered the priority issues that scored highest in these matrices of emergency management best practices were the same themes that arose from the more general, open-ended interviews with the stakeholders.

As a result of combining the information gained from the interviews and the scoring of emergency management best practices from the matrices, JLWA has identified seven key themes for strengthening emergency preparedness and response within the Santa Barbara County Operational Area. While the issues highlighted in the Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury Reports do correlate with these themes, the themes also include issues that were not discussed and/or identified by the Grand Jury.

The themes are listed below in order of priority for the Santa Barbara County Operational Area.

- 1. Public Education and Awareness**
Strategies and programs to help the general public become better prepared for a disaster, including programs that specifically target vulnerable populations (including the disabled, elderly, and non-English speaking populations) and focus on all-hazards emergencies.
- 2. Coordination and Communication**
Strategies and capabilities to develop strong relationships within the community, and specifically between the local government and non-governmental and non-profit organizations.
- 3. Preparedness: Planning, Training, and Exercises**
Strategies and capabilities to develop an active and inclusive planning process as well as a training and exercise program in the community, including quality control, continuous improvement, and feedback mechanisms.
- 4. Emergency Public Information**
Strategies and capabilities (including information technology and equipment) to warn the public of an impending disaster and to provide emergency instructions on suggested actions.

5. Resources and Personnel

Strategies and capabilities to develop caches of disaster supplies, lists of capabilities and skills of organizations and responders, as well as knowing who has what and the capability to move resources (people and supplies) to where they are needed.

6. Authority and Management

Facilities (including the Emergency Operations Center) and capabilities for community leadership to provide command, control, and coordination of disaster response activities.

7. Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters

Continued development of an active VOAD organization made up of non-governmental agencies in partnership with local government to improve coordination and capabilities in disaster preparedness and response, including other neighborhood preparedness efforts like a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Neighborhood Watch Group.

James Lee Witt Associates believes these prioritized themes provide essential information to develop a granting strategy for disaster preparation and response programs on behalf of the Orfalea Fund and the additional Santa Barbara-based grant making Foundations that have expressed interest in contributing to local disaster preparedness efforts in Santa Barbara County.*

**Table A: Prioritization of Themes
Community-Wide Stakeholder Consensus**

Themes							
Stakeholder	Public Education	Coordination and Communication	Preparedness: Plan, train, exercise	Emergency Public Information	Resources and Personnel	Authority And Management	VOAD
UCSB	X			X		X	
FSA	X	X		X		X	
SB Food Bank	X	X		X	X		
SB Education	X		X	X	X		
DRI			X			X	X
Red Cross	X	X			X		X
SB Soc Services			X			X	X
SB Sheriff			X		X		
SB SME- Health		X	X				
Cottage Health	X				X		
EPIC	X	X		X		X	
Marion Medical	X	X					
Lompoc Hospital	X	X					X
SB Public Health	X	X	X			X	X
CEC	X		X		X		
National Inst. USAR		X		X			X
SB Clinics		X	X		X		
OES	X	X	X	X			
TOTAL	12	11	9	7	7	6	6

Findings and Recommendations

The findings and recommendations are based on in-depth interviews with key stakeholders and subject matter experts in Santa Barbara County regarding Operational Area issues and areas for improvement in disaster response and coordination. The findings and recommendations also take into consideration the geographic and political differences of the areas often referred to in the Santa Barbara County Operational Area as “North County” and “South County.” The northern area is much more rural and remote which creates a number of challenges regarding critical factors such as assisting vulnerable communities, interoperability of communications, distributing resources, and disseminating emergency public information. Special considerations should be given to these differences to ensure community needs and priorities are met. As has been done in the past, the Orfalea Fund should continue to work with respective local stakeholders to ensure their differing needs and situations are addressed.

James Lee Witt Associates also reviewed the extent of application of nationally-recognized emergency management best practices in certain key areas. The findings and recommendations are specific to the priority improvement themes that became evident during this process. Furthermore, along with the recommendations that specifically address funding options, it will be important for the Orfalea Fund to consider establishing measurable outcomes and benchmarks for each priority theme that will need to be achieved by the designated stakeholder group(s) in order to receive continued support.

Priority Theme I: Public Education and Awareness

Well-developed public information and education strategies help to ensure that lifesaving measures, evacuation routes, threat and alert systems, and other public safety information are coordinated and communicated to the public in a timely and consistent manner.

The key to effective community emergency preparedness is an on-going education program at the individual level based on relevant hazards and specific needs of the community. It must be consistent, ongoing, and emphasized equally to individuals, schools, government, businesses, and non-profit organizations. The information must apply to every citizen, regardless of their location, occupation, or interests. The goal is for the general public to have an understanding of the potential hazards, what their government will realistically be able to do to help them, and most importantly, their responsibility to help themselves and their neighbors.

A successful community program should target four general audiences: individuals, schools, government, and business/industry/non-governmental organizations.

- *Individuals* need to be given meaningful information that makes sense to them and applies to their lives. They should be aware that disasters and emergencies can occur with little or no notice. Outreach can take place through the news media, advertising, churches or faith-based groups, civic organizations, and special interest groups.
- The *schools, colleges and universities* are one of the best arenas for the dissemination of emergency public education. Many people are involved with the school system in one way or another and could benefit from such programs. Emergency preparedness education should begin at the elementary level and continue throughout the pupil's education, even through high school and beyond. The students will also carry the message home for extra educational benefit.
- The *private sector*, including non-governmental organizations, must be involved. Business and industry should be concerned about more than just on-the-job safety. Disasters have an impact on both employee safety and business productivity. The community's ability to respond and recover appropriately can be greatly improved by business and industry taking part in emergency preparedness education for not only their employees, but also their families. This category is critical for both for-profit and non-profit entities.
- *Government*, especially at the local level, should not only be involved in emergency public education, but must take a leadership role if a community-wide program is to succeed. The elected leaders set the tone in a community. If the perception is that it is not a priority, then the citizens will not consider it a priority. In addition, government leaders often do not fully understand their roles and responsibilities in an emergency or disaster. Local government must initiate planning and execute training for personnel with emergency responsibilities.

An effective public education campaign must have the realistic goal of changing the expectation that government workers and/or emergency response agencies will meet citizens' immediate needs for shelter, water, food, and medical care, to a more realistic preparedness stance that requires each person or family to be self-sustaining for at least seventy-two (72) hours, with no expectation that local and/or regional support will be available sooner.

Recommendations

- I. **Develop a Public Education Committee.** This committee would consist of local stakeholders that will be responsible for soliciting ideas for public education projects from the stakeholders in the community. The committee would then rank and recommend which public education projects and materials should be funded, as

A coordinated effort between all local stakeholders is critical and the establishment of this Public Education Committee would support such coordination. As a coordinating entity, the committee could assist with ensuring that information and efforts are dispersed in the most effective manner. Both county and city agencies, such as OES and the Department of Public Health, make up a key membership component of the core committee. The Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) would also be a critical component of this effort.

All volunteer organizations wishing to support the public education campaign would coordinate through the VOAD to make certain that their message is consistent with the Public Education Committee's campaign message and goals. Likewise, VOAD member organizations, as well as the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Neighborhood Watch, could be asked to lead or support certain education campaigns, and be a proponent for public education to their own constituencies. Private industry, organizations, and or industry councils should also be represented on the Public Education Committee and be involved with the campaign. All agencies, organizations, or councils involved should be partly responsible for the funding of the campaign.

Orfalea Funding Options: Provide funding for meeting room rental, refreshments, printed materials, logo creation, research materials, consultant services, and logistics support.

2. **Develop a Public Education Campaign.** Best practices in public education focus on the personal and practical needs of the local community. While the overall campaign should be consistent with national emergency preparedness public education campaigns, the particular products for the Santa Barbara County Operational Area (OA) should focus on realistic local risks, and not national or general risks. Risks vary throughout the Operational Area, and the campaign must acknowledge such distinctions. Messages should be on-going and consistent and should target individual groups, such as school children, elderly, non-English speaking, disabled, etc. Messages should be provided in multi-media formats such as brochures, public service announcements, and during events such as Disaster Preparedness Month (April) and National Preparedness Month (September). The campaign must also be flexible such that educational opportunities can readily follow after exercises, events, and actual emergencies.

The Santa Barbara County Operational Area would not necessarily need to hire consultants to create the campaign, as best practices in social marketing and public education campaign development are already readily available. The campaign will be most successful with buy-in and participation from the community.

In a disaster situation, people look to local leadership for information, guidance, and instructions. It is recommended that the names of local officials are placed on the educational material, as they will be the spokespersons that the citizenry will need to follow in an emergency. The program should also help establish visibility and credibility of the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors, City Councils, and the local Office of Emergency Services for the same reason.

Orfalea Funding Options: Provide funding for graphic design, production, and distribution of materials designated as needed by the Public Education Committee. Materials would include such things as brochures, DVDs and videos, public services announcements, and public area notices. Funding may also be needed to pay for radio and television time.

3. **Establish a long-term program and funding.** The campaign would require an initial outlay of costs to develop materials, create program planning, and conduct research. However, for the campaign to be truly successful it will need to have consistent long-term funding and commitments. The messages will often need to be heard consistently and over a long-period of time before many citizens commit to understanding the purpose of the messages and their personal role in disaster readiness. Citizen preparedness and readiness will surely falter without a campaign dedicated to long-term messaging.

Orfalea Funding Options: Provide funding to support a long-term and consistent public education campaign (the Public Education Committee should be responsible for producing a long-term strategy with benchmarks and identifying the funding needs). Adding the concept of matching funds from stakeholders can also increase community participation and allow for longer term efforts. A simple method could also be established to help identify measurable objectives for the program's success.

Priority Theme II: Coordination and Communication

Case studies have repeatedly shown that disasters tend to be multi-organizational, and most of the time these organizations (and people) do not know each other, resulting in a lack of overall response efficiency. With all of the potential players, entities will have to give up some of their autonomy for things to work together, and the operations they are used to on a daily basis will most likely need to be adjusted. Furthermore, disasters tend to require a unique level of coordination, as well as operations, tools, and skills that are not usually required during day-to-day emergencies.

It has been repeatedly demonstrated that a team approach, using a Multi-Agency Coordination System (MACS) works best in disaster response, yet local governments and other entities rarely spend enough time incorporating multi-agency training and decision making into their preparedness process. The question is not “who is in charge here?” but rather, “how do we work together to solve this problem?” Investing time in building relationships improves preparedness capability.

Partnering with local and state leaders, local governments, federal agencies, academia, private sector entities, community service agencies, the public, and the media is also central to emergency management. These partnerships will bolster preparedness by facilitating training, establishing credibility and enabling collaboration, creating a reliable communication mechanism, and leveraging new knowledge to assess risks and manage response. The community can then rely on these partnerships when coordinating response to disaster events.

Recommendations

1. Expand the utilization of the Emergency Services Coordination Group.

While this group exists to provide emergency preparedness support to the Operational Area, some stakeholders felt they needed to have more opportunities to meet with colleagues and coordinate preparedness efforts. This coordination group is currently made up of a number of working groups. It is recommended that appropriate stakeholders have more access to the respective working groups and the Coordination Group to provide more opportunity for coordinated discussion and more feedback to the County Office of Emergency Services.

Orfalea Funding Options: Provide funding that would support programs and initiatives of the Emergency Service Coordination Group, which may include the production of documents, rental space for meetings, and distribution of relevant information among the stakeholders to improve coordination and information flow.

2. Support local conferences and joint training and exercise opportunities to bring people together.

Not only do the key member organizations need to coordinate and communicate on an on-going basis, but the larger stakeholder groups also need opportunities to work cooperatively. Training opportunities, exercises, drills, workshops, and conferences should be designed to not only impart information, but to also encourage cooperation and relationship-building among the numerous disaster response organizations in the community.

Orfalea Funding Options: Provide funding that would support event organization and catering. All events (meetings, trainings, drills, and exercises) will be designed to encourage coordination of key responders and response agencies before an emergency situation occurs.

3. Provide on-going community workshops for citizens.

This is also an element of public education, but with the focus on improving communications within community and neighborhood groups including faith-based organizations. The imparting of disaster preparedness information is important, and the ability to coordinate is equally important.

Orfalea Funding Options: Provide funding to support community workshops that will encourage disaster readiness. While this could occur simultaneously with public education efforts, the larger focus is to have community groups such as the

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and Neighborhood Watch Groups adopt a disaster preparedness posture as well as a crime prevention posture.

Priority Theme III: Preparedness

Planning, Training, and Exercises

Preparedness is the foundation of any community emergency management program, with its key elements of planning, training, and exercises. It is the common thread that relates to most every other element of a community program.

Planning. An Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) can be defined as a set of promises agencies/organizations make on how they intend to behave during an emergency. It is more than just a document; it is a process designed to evoke appropriate actions by anticipating problems and possible solutions. The plan dictates the appropriateness of response actions and focuses on management solutions, including communication, coordination, organization, and leadership. Experience has shown that most disaster problems are management problems, not skills problems.

Disasters happen at the local level and it is the responsibility of the local government to be prepared to respond. Local government priorities should be focused on planning which gets local departments and agencies organized to respond, and addresses the management issues of command, not the skills of the responders.

Planning and coordination ensures that the community has the plans necessary to conduct mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery activities. This function includes: developing, maintaining, and updating mitigation, emergency operations, recovery plans, and standard operating procedures; supplying planning guidance to other local governments, volunteer organizations, the private sector, and organizations having special needs; reviewing and approving plans prepared by other government and non-government organizations; and coordinating the integration of plans between jurisdictions, counties, and the state.

Training. Communities must decide upon the level of developing highly-skilled and well-equipped responders to handle the unusual, and often dangerous, missions we now call “special operations.” It must not be forgotten that disasters are community problems, not individual problems. The case studies are clear - friends, family, coworkers, and people who just happened to be there when the disaster occurs - rescue most disaster victims. The highly-trained special rescue squads rescue only a small percentage of victims. Therefore, a key perspective is that it is better to have some training for a lot of people, rather than a lot of training for a small number of people.

Considering the problems and difficulties that arise when a disaster occurs, it is apparent that most problems are management-related, as opposed to resulting from people not knowing how to do their jobs. Traditionally, however, disaster training has been primarily focused on improving the skills of responders. This paradox is a major contributor to the repetition of many common emergency management problems.

Consequently, community preparation for disaster response should include the broad spectrum of training and safety education opportunities for citizens, public employees, and initial response personnel. This should be in conjunction with preparing for special operations at appropriate levels dictated by risk and funding. The safety of rescuers is also critical. Many fatalities in disaster and special rescue situations have been well-meaning citizens and responders who were not properly trained or equipped to do the rescue.

Training involves: determining training requirements; identifying courses that meet training requirements; developing training material as required; making arrangements to conduct training; maintaining records on training; and assisting in the development of materials to support public awareness and community outreach activities.

Exercises. Exercises and evaluations assess disaster response and recovery capabilities and identify corrective actions to improve such capabilities. This function involves: ensuring participation in exercises and evaluating performance; designing, conducting, and evaluating local exercises; and consolidating lessons learned from exercises as well as actual responses to disasters and disseminating them to the appropriate personnel with milestones for action. The implementation of recommendations will improve the plans, training, exercises, and if needed, actual response capabilities.

Recommendations

- I. Review and/or complete essential plans for Santa Barbara County.** These plans include the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), which will need some revisions to include operations of the new coordination and communications systems, public information systems, EOC management, and technology use resulting from the completions of the recommendations as described above.

As a part of an on-going and comprehensive planning process the county should outline the library of plans needed to support emergency response within the Operational Area, and should prioritize the completion and/or updating of any key plans. These could include key EOP all-hazard annexes, such as the Continuity of Operations (COOP)/Continuity of Government (COG) plan and the Pandemic Influenza Plan. Key planning elements should also include for example: alternate transportation into and out of the area in case of long-term major road closures; transportation and evacuation of special/vulnerable and elderly populations; and surge capacity due to an evacuation of contiguous counties and metropolitan areas. In addition, the Santa Barbara County Operational Area should develop a plan to provide emergency childcare services for first responders and other key personnel that include pre-event agreements with child care providers to be designated as 24-hour emergency child care centers when necessary.

Key non-profit stakeholder groups also need to have their response plans complete in order to effectively support the citizens of Santa Barbara County Operational

Area. The EOPs for these stakeholders, such as the American Red Cross and the Santa Barbara Food Bank, should likewise be updated and maintained so that they work in coordination with the county plans.

Orfalea Funding Options: Provide funding to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to complete or update their essential Emergency Operations Plans. These plans must work in coordination with the response plans for the county and local government as well as with other NGOs. The funding could specifically be used for staff time dedicated to develop/update the plan and actual plan production.

2. **Organize, schedule, and provide training to staff.** The personnel responsible for any response or recovery function listed in the EOP and its annexes, or listed as disaster service workers and key persons within VOAD plans, need to be trained on their emergency roles and responsibilities. Such training must be designed using adult learning techniques due to the fact that adults learn and retain information differently than children and adolescents. (For instance, adults are more self-directed in their learning and have a greater need to know why they should learn something.) Training must be focused on both management protocols and technical content, as well as on opportunities for coordination between personnel involved in emergency operations (see Coordination and Communication section above).

These training programs need to be developed and facilitated through a formalized schedule. The schedule will include the training topics, the positions that need to receive the training, and the competencies needed. It is preferable if the training events were led in full or in part by local stakeholders, and that all case studies and scenarios are based on local risks and capacities.

Orfalea Funding Options: Provide funding for the disaster service workers affiliated with VOAD, in order to increase the level of preparedness during a disaster. Training events should be coordinated with county government, especially OES and the Department of Public Health. Funding could cover training materials, professional trainer's costs, and rental/equipment fees.

3. **Conduct a series of exercises within the county.** A formalized schedule for a series of exercises should be established. Exercises should be progressive in that tabletop exercises should precede functional and full-scale field exercises. A tabletop exercise involves key personnel discussing simulated scenarios in an informal setting and can be utilized to assess plans, policies, and procedures. The benefit of workshops and tabletop exercises are that they are less expensive, less time consuming, and emergency managers can work through more and varied issues in a reasonable period of time. A full-scale exercise is a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional, multi-discipline exercise involving a functional response. Full-scale exercises may not be held as often but offer a unique opportunity to understand response capability in a kinesthetic way for the responders and for the utilization of tools, equipment, and other resources. Larger, complex exercises will most often

focus on management, communication, and coordination issues, and thus should be scheduled as often as practically possible.

Exercises should also involve a large contingent of local stakeholders, as well as be designed such that State and Federal colleagues can also take part. If there are no specific roles for certain stakeholders given that the scenario and objectives may not include certain groups, these stakeholders can participate as exercise controllers or evaluators so that they can still participate, learn, and coordinate with colleagues.

Orfalea Funding Options: Provide funding for VOAD member participation in exercises, especially for staff time and any equipment rental or other direct costs.

Priority Theme IV: Emergency Public Information

Both elected leaders and emergency management staff have a responsibility to inform the general public in time of emergency. Communities must decide on the best methods to communicate with a population which may be threatened by or directly impacted by a disaster. Such methods include phone and text messaging, emails, television and radio, as well as a variety of other mediums.

Emergency public information is intended to ensure that the local emergency management agency provides appropriate information to the general public, special populations, media, and other emergency organizations during and after emergencies. This involves: developing, producing, and pre-positioning specific emergency instructions for use in an actual emergency; cultivating media relationships; developing, producing, and distributing materials to inform the public when a disaster occurs; and performing emergency outreach activities.

While the mechanics of delivering a message is crucial, the content of the message is equally important. In order to provide consistent and clear information to the public, the emergency community relies on a Joint Information Center (JIC) that includes public information officer representatives of each jurisdiction, agency, private-sector, and non-governmental organization involved in incident management activities. Within the JIC, federal, state and local agencies develop, coordinate, and disseminate unified news releases. News releases are cleared through the Incident Commander (IC) and federal officials through the Joint Field Office (JFO) in the case of national incidents, to ensure consistent messages, avoid release of conflicting information, and prevent negative impact on operations. Agencies may issue their own news releases related to their policies, procedures, programs, and capabilities; however, these should be coordinated with the community JIC. In the Santa Barbara County Operational Area, the Emergency Public Information Communicators (E.P.I.C.) group provides a coordination point for professionals that would be involved in a JIC to meet and coordinate on a periodic basis and discuss best practices.

Recommendations

1. **Inventory the existing methods and tools for public information.** The Santa Barbara County Civil Grand Jury investigation pointed out that there are many successful public information systems in the county including radio and Reverse 911. Furthermore, in response to the recent Zaca Fire, the county television station and various local websites have also proved invaluable in providing public information during a response. These and other systems and tools that currently exist need to be fully accounted for when preparing the long-term strategy.

Orfalea Funding Options: Provide funding through local resources or contract services to inventory all existing methods and tools for emergency public information. This includes the: systems already in place; geographic areas that are currently covered; populations that are being served; and systems that reach vulnerable populations. The existing gaps in emergency communication should also be highlighted.

2. **Develop a comprehensive long-term emergency public information strategy.** The strategy should include: methods to alert the public to an emergency situation; provide information to the public via multiple communications modes, such as phone, cell-phone, radio, and internet; and provide consistent and on-going information centers to support citizen decision making, such as websites or information phone banks. The strategy must take into consideration the various geographic, language, and technology variances that exist throughout the Operational Area. No technology should be purchased until this strategy is developed. All components of the system should work together, and this cannot be as effectively accomplished if components of the overall system are purchased piece meal by the various jurisdictions.

Orfalea Funding Options: If needed, provide funding to support a series of meetings to develop this comprehensive strategy. This must be a coordinated effort between the stakeholders in the Operational Area supported by OES.

3. **Investigate new opportunities and technologies.** Many of the public information solutions require the use of information and communications technology, both evolving and established. Before any one system or combination of technologies is chosen, research would need to be conducted and vendors consulted.

Orfalea Funding Options: Once the inventory of current methods and tools is completed, the Orfalea Fund could provide funding for the investigation and research into technologies that would satisfy the needs of the entire Operational Area, including county and city governments, as well as the non-governmental stakeholders. The final strategy would likely weave a number of technologies and processes into a coherent county-wide public information system.

4. **Purchase new equipment, software, and tools.** The purchase and installation of technology infrastructure is at a crucial juncture in the Santa Barbara County Operational Area. It is important that the county move together in a more focused and coordinated manner to develop a common system instead of individual agencies, jurisdictions, and groups purchasing their own systems. The investigation and purchase of new technologies may also be a designated task for the Emergency Services Coordination Group (discussed in the Coordination and Communication section above).

Orfalea Funding Options: Provide funding to purchase equipment and software, and support the time and training necessary for people to become proficient in its use. This may include, but not be limited to: software, servers, and equipment; installation of equipment; equipment storage; and vendor service contracts.

Priority Theme V: Resources and Personnel

Managing resources during a disaster has often been noted as a major difficulty. When communities are overwhelmed by a disaster, problems often occur with having too many resources or in managing all of the resources. There are several reasons why there is so often an excess of resources. First, the available resources in an impacted community are often much more than expected, and people provide materials out of their generosity even though they have not been requested. Furthermore, emergency managers often neglect to assess specific needs and request the appropriate resources, then the lack of resources is often over-estimated which leads to requests for “everything you’ve got!”

Communities need to have a resource management system. Such a system should include an inventory of what personnel, supplies, and facilities are available, and a mechanism for keeping this inventory up-to-date and usable by all those who need access to it. The same system may also include methods to track cost accounting and expenditures as well as to keep up with required maintenance and necessary field support. A feedback mechanism could also be available from the field to track where the resources are and their status at any given time.

Resources can be organized in a variety of ways. They could be divided into human resources (people with skills or knowledge), physical resources (special equipment or facilities), and information resources (such as the National Weather Service). They also could be organized by their mission, such as emergency resources (fire trucks, ambulances, etc) and non-emergency resources (schools, construction equipment, etc.), or they could be categorized as to where they are located in the community, such as government sector, private sector, or volunteer sector resources.

Recommendations

- I. **Purchase or build an Operational Area resource management software program.** Since no county-wide decision has been made on a common vendor for

a resource management software application and no such application has been purchased by any major stakeholder, there is a great opportunity to research and then choose a system or technology to manage county-wide resources. Such a system could include off-the-shelf software (e.g., Web EOC, E-Team, etc.) or the creation of a county-specific system for asset and resource management. The County OES, with the support of Subject Matter Experts from the Emergency Services Coordination Group, will need to designate who has access to the system and whether it is as an end-user or with viewing access only. Interoperability is established when all key agencies and entities can work together using the same communications and resource systems.

Orfalea Funding Options: Provide funding for software purchases, training, and the initial population of the emergency management software once the decision has been made on which system will be utilized. Funding will also be needed for the periodic update of the software system, as well as for paying for vendor support and general maintenance. This long-term funding strategy is best decided upon before initial purchasing is complete.

2. **Consider partnering with University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) for data entry and maintenance.** The County OES should investigate a partnership with the computer science faculty at UCSB in a win-win situation where students learn and apply skills to the creation of, upgrades to, and maintenance of a practical web-based resource allocation program.

Orfalea Funding Options: Provide funding for software purchases and training to support the role of UCSB in this partnership.

3. **Purchase and stockpile essential emergency equipment, and identify a responsible party to maintain such equipment.** Cots, blankets, medical supplies, and water are just a few of the essential emergency supplies. Key stakeholders (local hospitals, Public Health Department, American Red Cross, Direct Relief International and other NGOs) can readily provide lists of the key emergency items that would be needed, and their understanding of the current inventory. The initial population of the resource database will serve as the first inventory.

Orfalea Funding Options: Once the VOAD and Operational Area provide a complete prioritized list of resources and equipment that is needed to meet disaster-related response, funding could be provided for both the purchase and storage of such equipment and supplies.

Priority Theme VI: Authority and Management

Disaster response requires improvisational problem solving by its leaders. The greater community (i.e., businesses, citizens, schools, et. al.) needs a way to receive the proper information on what happened, what is being done to respond, the resources that are

available, and what is needed in the way of assistance. The county leaders should not view their command and control operations as if they were omnipotent chess-masters moving pieces on a board. Rather, they should view themselves as coaches who can direct the team they have already trained, and then allow them to play on their own. This is the advantage of having a prepared and informed citizenry. Command can come from the leader/coach, but control and direction result from player/citizen feedback. It is a two-way street.

Another key element in disaster response is the development of an Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Immediate and correct assessments of a situation are a decision maker's first need in an emergency. The EOC is a facility for gathering information, disaster analysis, damage assessment, warning, resource coordination, policy development, and public information. Take into consideration any business operation: there are decisions which belong in the boardroom and decisions which belong on the production floor. The EOC is the community boardroom designed to support and coordinate (more than direct) field operations.

Boardroom or "management" decisions can be accomplished in conjunction with supporting field operations with resource coordination and adequate disaster analysis. Coordinated disaster response and effective EOC operations do not happen automatically. All involved must work together to identify their emergency roles and responsibilities. This information needs to be shared and coordinated which is the responsibility of the emergency management (emergency planning) function.

Recommendations

- 1. Provide state-of-the-art equipment for the Operational Area Emergency Operations Center.** The EOC provides the pivotal hub for coordination and information during an emergency. Effective communications capabilities greatly enhance its function and allow it to enhance coordination and emergency public information.

Orfalea Funding Options: Plans for the construction of a new Emergency Operations Center are underway. An appropriate location has been identified and is currently pending approval. It is likely that some potential upgrades or state-of-the-art add-on equipment will be identified throughout the construction process that may need significant funding support. Equipment and technology suggested by the Emergency Services Coordination Group following their technology investigation (See Public Information section above) may also need additional financial support.

- 2. Host EOC Exercises.** Exercises would provide a depth of personnel capable of filling critical positions within the EOC. The exercises would be based on the Santa Barbara County Operational Area Emergency Operations Plan, and the roles and responsibilities designated in the EOP and its annexes.

Orfalea Funding Options: Provide funds to support the development and execution of EOC exercises, especially once the new facility is constructed. Specific funding could also be designated to retain outside contractors who would support the design, facilitation, and evaluation of the exercise. Consideration may also be given to tie funding to incentives for the purpose of encouraging the participation of all stakeholders in the community.

Priority Theme VII: Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters

Non-governmental organizations have been supporting communities in disaster preparedness and response long before the creation of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other governmental programs. These organizations work with first responders, governments at all levels, and other community agencies and organizations providing relief services to sustain life, reduce physical and emotional distress, and promote recovery of disaster victims even when assistance is not available from other sources. For example, the American Red Cross is an NGO that provides relief at the local level and also coordinates with the federal government in the Mass Care functions outlined in both national and state level disaster plans.

On the national level, the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (NVOAD) has been working for years to improve the coordination among NGOs and other community-based organizations. NVOAD is a consortium of more than thirty recognized national organizations active in disaster relief. These organizations provide capabilities to incident management and response efforts at all levels. During major incidents, NVOAD typically sends representatives to FEMA's National Response Coordination Center to represent the voluntary organizations and assist in response coordination. VOADs have also been formed at the state and local level to further the coordination and preparedness mission of NVOAD. They have been very successful in combining resources for added value in serving victims and eliminating duplication and gaps in disaster response operations.

Their primary missions include, but are not limited to: assistance in providing information on available volunteer resources and donations management operations of member agencies; assistance in providing information on unaffiliated volunteer and unsolicited donations management involving national, state, and local VOAD collaboration; and providing technical assistance, as needed, to member organizations and state and local VOADs regarding their unaffiliated volunteer and unsolicited donations management activities.

Under most state and local emergency response plans, state, local, and tribal governments, in coordination with VOAD, have primary responsibility for the management of unaffiliated volunteer services and unsolicited donated goods.

Recommendations

I. Support the organization and strengthening of the VOAD.

Orfalea Funding Options: There are several ways to support VOAD with funding including, but not limited to: providing funding through the VOAD to encourage participation, and to fund specific projects such as VOAD meetings, public education program development, and involvement in exercises; hosting conferences for VOAD members to improve awareness and knowledge of local emergency management plans and supporting programs to improve professional development of members; and hosting VOAD participation in the Emergency Services Coordination Group (See Coordination and Communication Section above).

Emergency Management Best Practices

The overall goal of emergency preparedness in a community is to save lives and protect property and the environment by developing programs and emergency operational capabilities to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from any emergency or disaster – whether in peacetime or a situation of national security. The State of California utilizes the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS). In addition, the National Incident Management System (NIMS) provides a national framework in which all agencies and entities can respond to disaster using a consistent terminology and with a common management and operational understanding. The responsibility for implementing SEMS and NIMS rests primarily with elected officials. In the State of California the responsibility for coordinating the community preparedness efforts at the county-level resides in the local Office of Emergency Services (OES).

Social science research funded through the National Science Foundation has shown that citizens have certain expectations of government in the community's preparedness for and response to a disaster. They have key expectations that government, among other things, will: alert citizens in advance, if possible, of a disaster; properly keep citizens informed of the situation; safely evacuate people from dangerous areas; provide safe shelter for those who need it; quickly restore services and economic stability; help citizens with recovery programs; and help in restoring life to "normal" in the community. As a result, it is more critical than ever that both private and public sector entities work together and take action to prepare and plan for responding to human-caused and natural disasters.

Disaster experience and documented case studies also point to several "best practices" in emergency management for successful implementation of local emergency management programs. Programs that seem to have the most success are those where there are strong positive relationships among senior management in the jurisdiction and with other local organizations and agencies. These programs are also noted for providing the opportunity for continuous professional development training to their staff, partners, stakeholders and community. There are also professional networks established with the local media, business and industry leaders, and with representatives of state and federal agencies in their area. Additionally, there is involvement with community committees and activities as well as community support of planning and development.

Disasters cause very complex situations and challenges for any community. The ability to communicate and improvise is extremely important. The emergency manager, who is responsible for coordinating the community preparedness efforts, works full time in emergency management. The challenge is getting elected officials, other local agencies

and local organizations, all of whom are busy in their own right with their own priorities and issues, involved in the community emergency management program.

There are a significant number of local, state and federal laws which require government to be responsible for a wide variety of preparedness activities, such as conducting a hazard analysis, developing disaster plans, providing training, establishing Emergency Operations Centers, and developing warning systems. It is usually a local policy decision as to how much to do, but it can often be a challenge to prioritize these activities.

One way to approach the issue and to better understand the threats to a community is to think of the events and consequences that may occur in the general categories of accidents, emergencies, and disasters. It is sometimes difficult to say where an accident stops and an emergency begins, but these are the events when it is necessary to move quickly to protect life, property, and the environment.

We could consider a disaster, on the other hand, as an event that does not occur as often and goes beyond the capabilities of a community to respond. Experience has shown that when a community is overwhelmed, certain situations happen that are different from what occurs during a day-to-day emergency. By understanding these differences, one can gain a better understanding of what the priorities should be for community preparedness.

Common experiences from disasters that have occurred around the country have shown that there are five major operational problems that always seem to occur. They are as follows:

- Difficulty with communications (both with hardware interoperability and actual relationships)
- Ambiguity of authority
- Convergence of citizens and volunteer groups
- Poor use of the special resources needed in a disaster
- Unplanned media relationships and uncertain expectations

All of the major operations problems noted above were identified as areas needing improvement by the Santa Barbara County Operational Area stakeholder groups.

Lessons learned and practical experience have shown that there are four core areas where a community should focus its emergency management efforts considering the limited time and funding available for communities to strengthen emergency preparedness. The first area is in educating the public so they are better prepared to take care of themselves and their neighbors in the event of a disaster. The second is to provide training and the proper equipment to the response community to be prepared for anticipated problems and challenges if a disaster occurs. The third is to have a plan that outlines the promises and commitments of how the local jurisdiction intends to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a disaster. The fourth, and often the most important, is to build relationships throughout the community so people are acquainted.

The best interest of citizens in the Operational Area must be at the core of every decision made with respect to the emergency management program. Each stage of policy formation, resource allocation and management decisions must focus on the needs of the citizens. Soliciting feedback from residents about the community's efforts – and improving service based on satisfaction levels – is essential.

* Additional information and empirical justification for the prioritization of themes, as well as the findings and recommendations presented in this report is available upon request.

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