



THE RESPONSIBILITY IS YOURS!

Every Governmental Unit Must Develop an Emergency Response Plan

By Gene King, MML Loss Control Consultant

Volume 9, Issue 1

March 2002

Law Enforcement Action Forum NEWSLETTER



INTRODUCTION

There is a common lesson in the Oklahoma City, Columbine, September 11, and other man-made or natural disasters. Government had better be prepared to respond to emergency incidents. It really doesn't matter what the emergency may be. Governmental units must have a planned response designed to manage the emergency or at least mitigate it until the emergency is over.

The public believes and expects that their local government is ready to address emergency incidents. Therefore, it is very difficult to use the excuse that another level of government is responsible without creating a public relations crisis. Is your unit of government prepared? Can it manage an emergency and still maintain essential core services?

The bottom-line is that it is your responsibility to be prepared with an emergency response plan no matter how small your resources or capabilities!

No unit of government can handle a significant emergency by themselves. Most cannot handle common emergency incidents alone. That is why fire and police departments have mutual aid agreements. That is why it is essential to work cooperatively with other units of government on a regional basis.

MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

Probably the most important element in developing an Emergency Response Plan is top management's commitment. Management must demonstrate its

commitment through clear directives that require subordinates to prepare an emergency response plan by specified deadlines. Management must commit funds, training, equipment and management oversight to the process. Management must empower employees to participate in planning and provide the training necessary to prepare them for their duties in an incident. Without consistent and sustained management commitment, the process will stall out before planning is complete.

To be effective in emergency situations, governmental units must support one another in managing the incident. That is why regional planning and mutual aid agreements are necessary to effectively respond to emergency incidents. All governmental operations must agree to embrace the Incident Command System.

Incident Command requires pre-planning that allows agencies to work together efficiently and effectively toward a common goal. The planning process results in documented procedures for controlling personnel, facilities, equipment and communications. These procedures, effectively communicated in thorough training sessions, can prevent confusion and reduce decision-making during a crisis. Employees at all levels and in all departments need training in using the system even in their normal workday. Committing to Incident Command brings a recognized and efficient structure when there is a need for a multidiscipline response to resolve any problem. Fire Departments have effectively used the system for many years. Law Enforcement has just begun to embrace the system.

**MICHIGAN MUNICIPAL LEAGUE LIABILITY & PROPERTY POOL
MICHIGAN MUNICIPAL LEAGUE WORKERS' COMPENSATION FUND
SPONSORED BY THE MICHIGAN MUNICIPAL LEAGUE**



HAVE A PLAN

The process of emergency response begins with planning. In the planning stage, the unit of government must identify and document potential hazards in their environment that have a probability of becoming a source of an emergency incident. The hazard might be as simple as likely weather events, the chlorine supply at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, or the municipality's fuel storage supply. On the other hand, it could be as complex as an airport, a chemical manufacturing plant, an underground pipeline, or a nuclear power plant. The list of hazards might even include the hazardous materials transported through our communities each day by truck or train.

Governmental units should identify as many sources of potential risk within their jurisdictional boundaries as possible. Next they should determine the probability of an identified hazard becoming an emergency incident. It may take a team of varied disciplines to identify the natural, industrial, agricultural, transportation, service and governmental risk sources that exist and determine the probability of their risk.

Once governmental units have identified the hazards and established a list of probabilities, they should write plans that outline their emergency response. MIOSHA Part 74, Fire Fighting, Rule 408.17451 requires fire departments to develop site plans for responding to certain high hazard locations. Fire departments should encourage owners of sites determined to be probable risks to increase security measures or management and engineering controls designed to make the location an unattractive target for criminal activity or reduce the potential for an accident. Fire departments should also require owners of high hazard to provide the municipality with a plan for responding to an emergency on their property.

These site and emergency plans can be a valuable source of information and guidance as departments within the governmental unit begin to develop their own emergency response. When planning for an emergency or during an event, members of the business community can be a valuable resource in managing exposures that are common to a specific industry. Governmental units should encourage community business owners to become partners in the planning process. They should also look to community groups as a source of volunteers during an emergency event. Municipalities should contact these groups in the planning stage to if they are willing to help and what services they can provide.

Once governmental units have identified the exposures, the next level of planning focuses on how the they are going to

respond to an event if one occurs. This is where it is very important to honestly assess the municipality's ability to respond to an event with the resources that are already available. The municipality should develop a list of assets that outlines what materials are immediately available to respond to, contain, and eventually, eliminate the emergency. Each department head should establish a logical system to manage department resources. The municipality should require them to identify what services they can provide during an emergency event. Once the internal resource list is in place, the department and/or municipality must determine where it can obtain any necessary additional resources and fully document this information, including contact names and telephone numbers. Audit the lists of resources every six months to ensure that equipment is accounted for and that names and numbers are current.

A business recovery plan is one of the most frequently neglected and most badly needed components of the overall Emergency Response Plan. During the planning stage, a municipality must determine an alternate location from which it can operate should the main facility become uninhabitable. The operation must be replicated in some form at this alternate site. This means planning for telephones, computers reloaded with programs and back ups of current data, office equipment and resources necessary to continue operations. It is also necessary to inform people of the location and when it is open for business. The business of government must go on.

THE ISSUE OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

A word of caution. The governmental unit's emergency response plan and the plans that businesses provide may be exempt from disclosure under MCL 15.243, (1), (b)(v,vi), (d),(f)(I,ii,iii), (g),(n),(s) (v,vi) ,(u). Before providing any information in this area, the agency should consult its legal counsel for an opinion. Senate Bill 0933 (2001) is currently been introduced to specifically exempt this information. For more information on this Bill contact your Michigan Legislators.

TESTING AND TRAINING

In an emergency, employees will respond the way they have been trained. That is why it is extremely important to emphasize training. Employees must know and understand the Incident Command System. They must receive training in recognizing the hazardous situations that the municipality identified in the risk planning stage. They must know how avoid becoming a victim.

Governmental units must plan and execute table top training and role play scenarios so employees are confident, know what to expect from one another, and are familiar with the equipment available to them.



Coordinated intergovernmental and full-scale mock drills should take place to prepare for a multi-agency response to larger emergencies. Municipalities should include area medical facilities and aid service providers in the drill.

Once completed, the governmental unit or an outside observer, if possible, should analyze the efficacy of the plan and the level of the municipality's preparedness. This is a good time to identify and address weaknesses in the plan and to assure adequacy of training and of equipment. All participants should agree to a reasonable deadline for submitting their plan corrections. Some equipment purchasing may take a coordinated budgeting effort and cooperative purchasing. Resources may not be available so it may be determined that the scope of response must be broadened to include a wider range of resources. If necessary, the plan should undergo revision and another test should take place. Once the plan is in place, it should undergo review and testing at least annually.

Municipalities must train their employees in what actions are expected of them during an emergency incident. They must receive any specialized training that the planning process has identified. Cross training all employees on equipment and software is important to ensure adequate staff coverage. Remember, in an emergency, municipal employees may be among those injured. Other training may include first aid, CPR and health and safety needs. Employees should know the locations of electrical, water and gas shutoffs. Evacuation routes from municipal buildings should be posted. Rally points for accounting after an evacuation must be established and employees educated. Methods of communication should be identified and equipment provided and maintained. If an emergency occurs after hours, employees need to know emergency routes to travel to the command center or location of municipal services. If alternative transportation is planned or if employees are required to stay available, shelter and food resources must be identified.

MONITORING PARTICIPANTS OF AN EMERGENCY

Employers must be prepared to provide recovery services during and once the emergency has ended. This is a critical time. The operation may be operating at an alternate location and on minimal services. Employees may be injured physically or emotionally. Management must be ready with

direct communications to service providers to ensure prompt treatment of their employees. Physically injured employees should be taken to the nearest available treatment facility and management should ensure that a system is in place to funnel all billing, all requests for information, and all required reports to a central point for processing. An employee should be assigned to handle all requests. It is important that the employee receives training in handling medical information and maintaining its confidentiality.



Rescuers and survivors may go through several predictable phases of psychological and physiological response after an emergency. The governmental units must provide training to managers and supervisors on how to identify the stages and when to intervene and require debriefing or treatment. The monitoring of employees should be continuous during and after the incident. Having professionals experienced in recognizing the psychological and physiological effects of this type of trauma on the Emergency Response Team can be very beneficial and can save much longer disability times for employees.

CONCLUSIONS

Units of government must plan for emergency events at two levels. They must be prepared to respond to emergency incidents that occur in their jurisdiction with the resources necessary to manage and eventually eliminate the emergency. They must also have a plan to respond to emergency incidents that occur in their own operations. They must have in place emergency plans that meet MIOSHA Part 6, Fire Exit, Rule 408.10623, Emergency Plan. Included should be a plan to move the operation off site to an alternate location. It takes management commitment to assess the municipality, create a plan, train to the plan, test the plan and then review the plan at least annually to ensure it is current. Governmental units must remember that they may need to call upon more police, fire, and EMS during an emergency. The entire operation must be ready to respond. During and after the incident, management must monitor the employees for signs of psychological and physiological reaction to the incident. Employees who appear to need counseling or debriefing should be offered the opportunity.



LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTION FORUM

The Michigan Municipal League's Property and Liability Pool and Workers' Compensation Fund encourages governmental units to contact their local Emergency Management Director and ask that they assist you in reviewing or creating a Emergency Response Plan. Federal and State assistance is also available. The 2002 Edition of the LEAF, Law Enforcement Risk Reduction Manual in Chapter 26, contains a Sample Policy for Incident Management by Law Enforcement.

The LEAF Committee of the Michigan Municipal League Liability and Property Pool and Workers' Compensation Fund continues to develop policies and resource documents designed to help Law Enforcement Executives manage their risk exposure. Do not hesitate to contact the Michigan Municipal League's Risk Management Services at 734-669-6344 or MML Loss Control Services at 800-482-2726, for your risk reduction needs and suggestions.

While compliance with the loss prevention techniques suggested herein might reduce the likelihood of a claim, it will not eliminate all exposure to such claims. Further, as always, our readers are encouraged to consult with their attorneys for specific legal advice.

Inside This Issue: **THE RESPONSIBILITY IS YOURS!**
Every Governmental Unit Must Develop an Emergency Response Plan



MICHIGAN MUNICIPAL LEAGUE LIABILITY & PROPERTY POOL
MICHIGAN MUNICIPAL LEAGUE WORKERS' COMPENSATION FUND

Sponsored by the Michigan Municipal League

Presorted Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Detroit, MI
Permit No. 2217

PO Box 2054
Southfield, MI 48037

Phone:
Risk Management Services – (800) 653-2483
Loss Control Services – (800) 482-0626, ext. 8036

Email:
Risk Management Services – jorr@mml.org
Loss Control Services – mcascone@meadowbrook.com

Knowledgeable and professional staff serving your needs consistently and with integrity.

We're on the Web!
www.mmlpool.org and www.mmlfund.org

Law Enforcement Action Forum NEWSLETTER

SAMPLE RESOURCE DIRECTORY

The following is a list of possible entries for your Resource Directory. There may be other businesses or organizations that you need to add. To be useful, your directory must be current. Therefore, you should review it at least every six months.

Airports	Funeral Homes
Air Services	Heavy Equipment Dealers
Ambulances	Helicopter Services
Auxiliary Lighting	Media- print/broadcast
Rail Road Companies	Pharmacies
Boats	Police
Bus Services	Public Works
Caterers	Radio Operators
Chemicals	Red Cross
Computer Recovery Company	Salvation Army
Emergency Medical Services	School Boards
Emergency Social Services	Weather service
Churches, mosques, synagogues	Taxis
Coroner	Telephone Company
Cellular Phones	Towing Companies
Divers	Utilities
Doctors	Veterinarians
Elected Officials	Volunteer Agencies
Health Services	Welders
Hospitals/Clinics	
Fire Departments	
Food Suppliers	
Fuel Dealers	

SAMPLE PLANNING CHECKLIST

ELECTED OFFICIALS OF GOVERNMENTAL ENTITY

- Direct staff to develop an emergency response plan.
- Provide funding.
- Direct formation of Planning Committee.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

- Identify hazards and probabilities.
- Coordinate with County or Regional Emergency Management Director.
- Plan emergency response to the identified hazards.

- List internal resources and equipment available.
- List external resources that are available.
- Develop a Business Recovery Plan and identify providers.

- Arrange for education and training of employees and volunteers.
- Exercise the plan.

Drill:

A simple test of a single emergency response function designed to evaluate the departments overall response in order to make improvements.

Tabletop Exercise:

Practice of a problem solving through on-going group discussion and critique concerning the actions and decisions of the participants based on a described emergency. This Exercise is designed to condition the participants to the pressure of responding to a series of messages in a short time while maintaining a coordinated response with other specialty areas.

Full Scale Exercise:

This type of exercise utilizes the full response of the Emergency Response Plan. It is designed to utilize all departments and specialty areas in a real time role-play emergency scenario. This will test both the field units and the Incident Command functions along with support functions in their attempt to manage and mitigate the emergency. This is the place where equipment problems and logistic problems will arise.

- Have the Governing Board or Council adopt the plan.
 - Review the Plan every six months and revise as necessary to keep it current.
 - Practice the plan at least annually.
-