

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Homeland Security Commission

Muriel Bowser
Mayor



Dr. Christopher Rodriguez
Director

HOMELAND SECURITY COMMISSION
QUARTERLY MEETING

Thursday, August 6, 2020
3:00 pm to 5:00 pm
Virtual Webex Meeting

Commission Member Attendees: Brad Belzak (Chair), Phil McNamara, Brian Baker

HSEMA Attendee(s): Dion Black, Jason Rubinstein, Ronit D. (HSEMA Intern), Caitlin A. (HSEMA Intern), Natalie R. (HSEMA Intern).

Invited Attendees: Holly Porter, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for the County of San Diego and Julie Jeakle, Senior Emergency Services Coordinator at County of San Diego Office of Emergency Services; Lisa Jones, Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management for the city of Phoenix, Arizona.

Brad: (Opens the meeting, addresses the Homeland Security Commission, and thanks the invited guests for joining and participating).

Note, no members of the public are present.

Brad: Could you please talk about the strengths and challenges of your ESF-6 plan?

Julie: It covers sheltering, feeding, and bulk resource distribution. We are very heavy on the feeding side. We anticipate disasters that occur every year so we have a lot of practice in implementing ESF-6.

The types of disasters often impact cross-jurisdictions. It's more than just a county initiative, so we aim to address that reality in our mass care plan. This highlights the joint role our cities play. American Red Cross (ARC) is also a very strong partner. We have adopted protocols and procedures with respect to this. We have all adopted ARC protocols, procedures, guidelines and standards when it comes to our mass care programs. We interact and engage to provide strong service to our residents who are impacted by disasters. For example, we had a largescale fire in 2007, it was catastrophic, people were evacuated, and there were 45 emergency shelters open simultaneously with 20,000 people. This is what we use as our baseline planning at the end of the day. We plan to be able to shelter 20,000 people. Fortunately, we haven't had a large incident of that scope and scale since then, but we had a lot of smaller incidents that have really tested our systems. We know we're on the right path. We take access and functional needs planning very seriously as all jurisdictions reasonably should to make sure the level of care or support is in

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place. We have a county shelter program, and disaster rapid assessment teams with specialties in health service areas.

Phil: When you send the disaster assessment team out to a county run facility are you essentially sending one part of County staff to look at how another part of County staff operate? Can you speak more about this?

Julie: We have community members arriving to the shelters before they are even open. Our team is trying to get the doors open in an emergent event. The disaster rapid assessment team is not designed to look at the work of our employees, it's designed to look at the unique needs of the people who are in that shelter and the population coming in.

Phil: Thank you, I appreciate that context. Brian, does HSEMA do something similar?

Brian: Our threats in DC are often not whole communities, though HSEMA and DHS partner with their teams to service populations (draws on Arthur Capper as example).

Have you made changes to your program to meet the challenges of moving towards a non-congregate shelter environment?

Julie: We are in the middle of those planning efforts and I will say that the more we dig in, the more we realized how complex of an issue this is. We meet with Red Cross weekly and the protocols are constantly changing. In the last two weeks we have tried to wrap our heads around what non-congregate sheltering would look like if we had a very fast-moving wildfire. The ARC in Southern California has responded to two significant wildfires in the last two weeks where they kind of tested some of their new protocols related to non-congregate sheltering. We have concerns about their ability to get people out in a timely way.

Brad: Can you hit the high points on the ways you are preparing and the challenges you face?

Holly: Our hotels are likely a part of the solution. We do know that most ARC volunteers may not be available immediately, which is a challenge. ARC gave a presentation and said they would be able to assist us and have the capacity with their volunteer force to shelter 20,000 individuals. We consider this capacity in our preparation.

Julie: Regarding ARC local capabilities, I think they're starting to realize that while they look very good on paper, in practice there are very significant gaps. ARC national protocols say they will not house more than 350 people in a facility. To get to 350 people you must have 50,000 square feet, which is a substantial facility, and they have one disaster health service member who is available to assist, in person.

Brad: Can you speak about ESF-6 from the lens of innovative technology?

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Holly: The County Fire Department is using a software program to assist locating vehicles. We also store the regional wildland fire safety plans, as well as critical infrastructure mapping products. This allows the ability to share information from the field with the emergency operations center (EOC). The technology allows us to map out a large geographic area. We use cameras to zoom in to an area when there is a fire, and we can get a bird's eye view on what's happening throughout our rural areas.

Julie: We are working with our public health partners to use the data they are mapping, related to individuals who are Covid positive, to consider for evacuation planning. We do have assessment forms that these teams utilized that we designed, in-house. They look at very specific areas and send that information to the EOC so they can get flagged, right away, and either get resources or equipment.

Phil: Do elected officials ever have an opportunity to exercise?

Holly: Every other year we have an original full-scale exercise and we invite the chair of our Board of Supervisors into our EOC.

Julie: *(Speaks about the functional exercise).*

Phil: Thank you, both.

Holly: I think we have a couple minutes left. Can we talk a little bit about the feeding task force?

Julie: Feeding is a major issue anywhere, especially when you're dealing with thousands of people potentially who need assistance. In addition to community churches and ARC, we also worked closely with our private industry partners, like Cisco. If there is a large incident, we can activate a special task force that can immediately get on conference calls and start rolling out into the structure of a program that serves up to 5000 meals. We funnel through the ARC as an NGO so we don't get caught up in all the government red tape that that may cause undue delays in service. We have a feeding coordinator position in the EOC that coordinates directly with ARC.

Brad: This is exactly what we're looking for and this is very exciting to hear.

Julie: I'd be happy to send you the list of participating agencies. Again, it's the Cisco US Foods as our private partner. We work very closely with our food banks. We have Meals on Wheels and we also work with senior transportation providers who might not necessarily be in the food delivery business, but they certainly could be, and they have connections with other entities that that may have refrigerator trucks. Temperature is always a key consideration.

Holly signs off.

Phil: I'm so intrigued by the draft disaster rapid assessment team. You said you were creating apps that use forms to assess feeding needs?

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Julie: There's four different forms. Each form is looking at something different. We have one that's looking at just the facility, one looks at ADA compliance, one looks at behavioral health as it relates to sheltering needs, and the last one has to do with communications and messaging.

Brad; Thank you. We would love to see the draft disaster rapid assessment team resources and any others from the feeding task force. Anything you have on that that is open source is much appreciated.

Julie: No problem.

Julie signs off.

Lisa Jones joins the conversation. Please note her presentation includes a slide show shared prior to the meeting.

Lisa: (Provides introduction and background on Phoenix).

Brad: With climate change we are having more severe weather frequency. How we can account for this from a planning side?

Lisa: I don't believe a plan can cover everything. I think we must be able to look at what our current plan is in a scaled down version, and then consider what it would like to implement if a huge disaster was also happening. (References slides).

Brad: You mentioned Disability Rights Advocates (DRA) and BCFS Health and Human Services. Can you speak more to their support roles?

Lisa: DRA is supporting a person with a disability and makes sure their needs are covered, and that the government is compliant with those requirements. (*Speaks to extreme heat incidents and examples of accommodating high rises with X number of wheelchair ramps and lifts*).

I believe more than just during operational periods; people need to be at the table for us to have a successful response. (*Draws on lessons learned from Hurricane Harvey and Irma*). We need coordination between the operators and the political actors in the planning, otherwise it promulgates a “let's get it done and ask for ask for permission later” mentality.

(*Addresses slide that describes ESF-6 management structure and exercises*). Sports arenas are used for mass care sheltering, as well the Convention Center. GIS is used for mass care shelter planning and exercises. We also work closely with Red Cross is establish an ADA complaint evaluation.

In my last activation we had a power failure downtown with two older adult facilities. It was 150 degrees. Many refused to leave and so we had to get portable coolers, food, and medical

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assistance and two ambulances to that location. For the other location, we had to offer emergency assistance, bring in supplies and provide temporary shelter. This is highlighted in the after-action report I shared. The last national level exercise we did in 2018 highlighted, among other things, the importance of staff training on access and functional needs and supporting people with disabilities.

Ronit: How do you fit tribal relations in to your planning?

Lisa: We always include tribal relations as an important aspect of our planning. We have this integrated as a part of our Emergency Management subcommittee.

Brad: Thank you for putting this presentation together.

Note, no members of the public are present.

Meeting adjourned