



Emergency Management and Crisis Communication

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November 21, 2007



Overview

- Emergency Management: Theory and Concept of Operations in Manitoba
- Crisis Communication
- Case study – November 2006 Waterhen Flooding

Emergency Management: Theory and Concept of Operations

Emergency Management

- A set of management practices meant to manage public safety, resulting in protection of life, property, and the environment.
- Involves a comprehensive and coordination approach to:

Mitigation
Preparedness
Response
Recovery

- Evolved from Cold War ‘Civil Defence’ concept

Integration

- Effective emergency management requires that all elements be looked at both individually, while also informing other areas.
 - The lessons learned in evacuating a community should be used to improve planning
 - The nature of damages should be used to inform mitigation
 - The mitigation of risks should influence the focus of the plan

Mitigation

- Mitigation – investments in infrastructure that manage, but do not eliminate, the possibility of a disasters
- Elimination – investments that eliminate the possibility of a disaster

Preparedness

- Activities that eliminate or reduce exposure to a hazard
- Most common is the development of emergency plans
- Training, education, exercises, public information, keeping 72 hours of supplies, marshalling and pre-position resources for response

Response

- Activities to coordinate and manage an emergency after it has happened
- Emergency Management is not first response. It involves:
 - Evaluation of an emergency on a wide scale
 - Movement of resources and direction of activities to support broad scope of an emergency
 - Providing support to the site of an emergency
 - Coordination of multiple agencies
 - Management of activities away from the site – in ICS terms, everything outside the Cold Zone

Recovery

- Coordination of activities to rebuild and restore normal conditions
- Roles are identical those in Response – only difference is that the focus has shifted. Once the immediate threat to life has ended, clean-up requires the same elements of coordination
- Should not be treated as sequential. Recovery should begin during the Response period.

Emergency Management in Canada and Manitoba

Concept of Operations for Emergency Management in Canada

- Responsibility begins with the individual – they are expected to take measures to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies
- When they are overwhelmed, they should escalate to their local authority (i.e. municipality). Over 90 per cent of emergencies are contained using local authority resources

Concept of Operations for Emergency Management in Canada

- When the local authority is overwhelmed, they can request provincial assistance.
- When the provincial government is overwhelmed, they can request federal assistance.

Emergency Powers

- Federal authority established in the *Emergencies Act*. Provides authority for federal actions during war emergencies, severe natural disasters, major calamities
- Provincial authority established in *The Emergency Measures Act*. Establishes provincial roles and municipal roles, mandate and authority of Manitoba EMO, provisions for DFA
- Other provincial Acts provide power for specific emergencies – *Fires Prevention and Emergency Response Act, Public Health Act*

Special authority during an emergency

Emergency Prevention Orders

- Can be declared by a local authority when an emergency is possible, but not probable. Intended to enable mitigation.
- Allows access to private property, limit travel and close roads, order evacuations
- Requires a vote by Council, valid for up to 30 days, extensions require Ministerial approval.
- Not a prerequisite for a state of emergency.

Special authority during an emergency

State of Emergency

- Meant for use when there is a present or imminent emergency.
- Can be declared by local authority or province
- Allows wide range of emergency powers
- May be declared by the head of government if time or conditions do not allow a Council meeting. Up to 14 days, extensions provided by Minister.
- Should be used only when powers are needed by province or local authorities.



Partners in Emergency Management

- Federal – Public Safety Canada, INAC, DND
- Provincial – Manitoba EMO, Office of the Fire Commissioner, Health, Conservation, Justice, Communications Services, Family Services and Housing
- Municipal – Emergency Management, First Responders, Public Works
- Non-governmental – Salvation Army, Red Cross, Mennonite Disaster Services

Crisis Communications

Communications in Emergency Management

- Critical to the effective management of an emergency – consistently, where emergencies have not been effectively managed, the failure to communicate is cited.
- Not just a public relations exercise.
- Provides the basis for inter-agency cooperation and operational decisions.
- Requires leadership, needs to be seen as integral and central to effective management.



Unique aspects of Crisis Communications

- High consequence of failure
- Short deadlines
- Multiple and unclear sources of information
- Conflicting demands on your sources
- Rapidly changing facts
- Widely spread need for information, internal and external audiences
- The likelihood that some information will be reported to you incorrectly



Situation Reports

- Primary method for internal briefings
- Is a type of Briefing Note
- Replaces individual department Briefing Notes once more than one department has become involved
- Usually initiated by emergency management agencies

Objectives

- The objective in Crisis Communications is to accurately capture and synthesize to information necessary to inform management of the emergency.
- Needs to provide a detailed picture of the emergency under very short timelines
- Challenging because there are multiple audiences: operational, executive, media, public

Lesson #1: Use all of your time





Lesson #2:

Acknowledge and then fix a mistake as soon as you find it

Lesson #3:

Never take a guess.

It's a report, not an editorial

- It is not spin, even though some audiences may use the information for spin. It is the factual account of what is happening, why, and where it is going.
- Needs to be viewed strictly as an emergency management exercise – provide the information, let people do their job

Questions when preparing a Situation Report

- Who is lead?
- Who else is involved?
- How much time do I have to get a report out?
- Who has to approve it? How much time do they need to approve it?
- Who needs to get the Report?

Questions when preparing a Situation Report

- What is happening?
- Why did it happen?
- Who is involved?
- Are there casualties or damages
- What are the immediate challenges
- What is coming next?
- What should we be saying? Not saying?

The Situation Report needs to provide:

- A summary along with more detailed information
- Information that is organized, logical, clear
- Focus on facts and operational matters
- Outline the primary concerns and set the tone for how people should communicate information about the event

Pitfalls

- Circulating reports with no new information
- Separating new information from old information
- Emphasizing changing conditions, especially after a period of few changes
- Strike the right tone
- Focusing on response rather than the event
- Incorrect dates and times

Relationships matter

- Requires pulling the information together, and that requires knowing who to go to, and having a relationship of trust so they will give you what you need, and when you need it
- Crisis Communication is completely dependent on the input of others

Discipline as a writer

- Remember key messages, but also tell the story.
- Strive for simple language, important events, issues and milestones.
- Keep it as short as possible, but length is unavoidable if you want to keep some historical and detailed information as part of the Report.

When done right:

- Sets the tone
- Provides leadership
- Is not concerned with spin – reports the operational facts, no editorializing
- Is integral to the emergency operation – it's an emergency management activity that happens to be based in communication

Case study: November 2006 Waterhen Flooding

November 15, 2006

- Aboriginal and Northern Affairs gets information from Waterhen Community Council about flooding. Emergency Prevention Order followed by State of Emergency
- ANA produces Briefing Note
- Media inquiries starting
- EMO checks, finds other Departments involved – get on the phone and start getting information

Questions

- What is happening? What is the outlook?
- Who is lead?
- Who else is involved?
- When is information coming out?
- Who needs to know?
- Who do I need for approval?
- Are there resource needs?
- How serious is this?

November 17, 2006

- Amphibex being used, not everyone thinks it makes sense
- Community meeting upcoming
- Media reports continue
- Outlook could be dire – don't underplay the possibility of something bad

Questions

- Who is involved?
- How many homes are involved?
- Any evacuations?
- Volunteers?
- Impacts on the community?
- What is changing?
- What's the outlook?

November 18, 2006

- More sandbagging
- Three evacuations
- Unpredictable conditions
- Volunteers arrive

Questions

- What do people think of the Amphibex? Is there conflict?
- Are there volunteer or other resource needs?
- Who is in charge? Who needs to approve reports?
- How are the evacuees? Are more evacuations expected?

November 19, 2006

- Transfer of command from Community Council to Office of the Fire Commissioner
- No new homes being sandbagged
- More volunteers coming
- Ministerial visits being planned

Questions

- Why the transfer of command? Who is in charge? Is there a problem? Who do I need to contact for approvals?
- Has the situation stabilized?
- What information is needed for the Ministerial visit?

November 20, 2006

- Ice jam causes a sudden rise
- Two more homes sandbagged
- Further diking to protect the school
- Unpredictable conditions

Questions

- What is the outlook?
- What will happen if it gets cold?
- What is happening to the evacuees?

November 21, 2006

- No new information – no new report

November 22, 2006

- Two more homes sandbagged
- Classes resume
- Amphibex back in operation

Questions

- What is the outlook? How serious is it?
- Are any more evacuations expected?
- Are any buildings likely to be lost?
- Has there been an impact assessment? Is property damage expected?
- Why is school resuming?

November 23, 2006

- Cold weather, river starts to freeze
- Amphibex in operation
- Afternoon – sandbaggers sent home, river levels dropping

Questions

- What will happen when the river freezes?
- Is this emergency starting to end?
- What are the recovery needs?

November 24, 2006

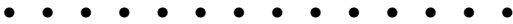
- Water dropping, ice forming, conditions stabilizing
- Much less urgency
- Sandbagging done
- DFA to be provided
- Possible flood risk further east at Dauphin River FN

Questions

- What will happen to the evacuees?
- What are the recovery needs?
- How will the operation decommission?
- How severe is the threat at Dauphin River?
Who is dealing with it?
- Is the response portion of this emergency over?

Questions?

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Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization – Emergency
Management and Crisis Communication