

Dynamics of Incidents. Lessons taken from the FEMA Incident Management Handbook.
By KD5BJ

A solid understanding of incident-level structures, processes, and responsibilities is essential for all stakeholders in emergency, governmental agencies and volunteers, to carry out their emergency management missions.

FEMA has created its own Incident Management Book (or IMH) and Incident Management Manual (IMM) to assist FEMA employees to better understand the dynamic of incidents. This manual is also a tool for any other group, including ARES, to better deliver support to served agencies.

The Incident life cycle, or how incidents are managed, includes prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. FEMA responsibilities include, but are not limited to, direct control and employment of resources, readiness of operations, ensuring delivery of emergency communications.

As general guidelines, all federal incidents begin and end with the pertinent regional office.

This is the dynamic of an incident. After it occurs, there is local Damage Assessment where a local agency, or trained volunteer group, assesses the damages and compiles the information. These are verified to make sure they are accurate and complete.

The impact is then evaluated and the local government can either not request a declaration, in which case FEMA will be notified to stand down, or it will request a declaration, in which case the governor makes the request; the FEMA Regional Office reviews the request, validates the information, and makes recommendations, which are sent the FEMA Headquarters for their review and their own recommendations to the President of the United States who would then declare a Disaster Declaration decision.

The Regional Administrator can authorize the use of the Disaster Relief Fund to facilitate the declaration process, by deploying the Liaison Officer and the Preliminary damage Assessment team to validate the damage to the disaster area. The regional Administrator has also the power to pre-position commodity in anticipation of an incident, such as a hurricane.

FEMA calls "Notice" Incidents, all those whose impact can be anticipated and resources are pre-positioned., and "No Notice" all those that occur unexpectedly or with minimal warning.

All major phases of an Incident are as follows:

1. Phase 1: they are all pre-incident actions that shape operations, such prepositioning of resources before a hurricane.
2. Phase 2: *Activation, employment, and sustained response operations*. During notice and no-notice incidents, this phase is associated with life-saving and life-sustaining actions

3. Phase 3: Consists in all long-term, sustained operations, involving the working with a variety of federal agencies to develop permanent and affordable housing, rebuild infrastructure, implement economic revitalization strategies for the whole community, facilitate funding for businesses to rebuild, re-establish disrupted health care facilities, and implement mitigation strategies.

The Five mission areas (Prevention; Protection: Mitigation; Response; and Recovery) have each Core Capabilities defined by the National Preparedness Goals. These are:

For prevention: Planning, Public Information and warning. Operational Coordination, Intelligence and Information Sharing, Interdiction and Disruption, Screening, search, and detention, and Forensic and Attribution,

For Protection: Planning, Public Information and warning. Operational Coordination, Intelligent and information sharing, Interdiction, Disruption, and Screening and detention, plus Cybersecurity, Physical protective measure, Risk Management for protection programs and activities to Support Chain Integrity and Security.

For Mitigation: Planning, Public Information and warning. Operational Coordination; and then community resilience, reduction of long-term vulnerability, assessment of Risk and Disaster resilience, and threat and hazard mitigation.

Response: Planning, Public Information and warning. Operational Coordination, Infrastructure Systems, Environmental response/health and safety, management of fatalities, Fire management and suppression, logistic, and Mass care services, search and rescue, Law Enforcement services, healthcare and EMS, Operational Communications, Situational assessment.

Recovery: Planning, Public Information and warning. Operational Coordination, Infrastructure Systems, economic recovery, housing, and natural and cultural resources.

Two things are very important to note for us ARES:

All mission areas have for priority planning, public information and warning, and operational coordination. We could be a crucial part in these areas in all phases of an incident. These are core values that we adopt as well. We also adopt risk disaster and resilience assessment of our equipment and we work to identify threats and hazards that might impact our job. We can expect a crucial role in operational communications.

As we can see we ARES have a potential to be part of each of the Mission areas because we provide core capabilities in each.

FEMA is very supportive of volunteers trained in emergency and of the private sectors for integrated operations in preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation areas.

They encourage state and local emergency authorities to include groups such as ARES and CERT and other non-profit and faith-based groups in their exercises at the local, state, tribal and territorial levels with the goal to foster strong relationships throughout communities that enhance community resilience to respond to and recover from potential incidents.

The benefit of a whole community approach include a more informed, shared understanding of community risks, needs, and capabilities; an increase in resources through the empowerment of community members, and therefore, more resilient communities.

FEMA reports as an example the devastating tornadoes in Alabama in 2011, in which various agencies, organizations, and voluntary agencies united to locate resources and to communicate information about these resources to the public.

Two days after the tornadoes, the agencies, organizations, and volunteers formed the Alabama Interagency Emergency Response Coordinating Committee and created a database of disaster recovery resources, providing information to disaster survivors for accessing recovery resources, greatly enhancing the delivery of services to disabled and elderly residents.

And yes, FEMA compiled a handbook for that capturing the 2011 coordination in a kind of After Action report called "A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action" downloadable from the Internet.

This was training for tonight, this is KD5BJ back to net.