



Guideline for “Lessons Learned from Emergency Response” Submittals

Contact Information:

(The individual(s) most knowledgeable about the Building Department’s experience and lessons learned from emergency response activities, e.g. flood, tornado, hurricane, etc. Name, Title, Department / Jurisdiction, Contact address, email, and phone.)

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Emergency Event Description:

(Please provide a brief description of the emergency event, e.g. Name, Type of Event, Dates, Geographical Area Affected, Statistics, etc.)

Speaking from local experience, even though Charlotte, NC is 200 miles from the coast, and hasn't really been thumped by a hurricane since Hugo in 1989, we still periodically are tested by nature, as follow:

On August 5, 2011, a stationary weather front unleashed torrential rainfall (nearly 7" falling in 2 hours), resulting in widespread flooding not just restricted to areas that typically flood but random areas all over the City. So it wasn't just localized to rivers and creeks.

Building Department’s Role:

(Briefly describe the Building Department’s role and responsibility during the emergency response, i.e. Damage Assessment, Unsafe Building Identification, Occupancy Recertification, Emergency Permitting, etc.)

Provide general damage assessment of structures and buildings affected by flooding event.

Challenges:

(Summarize those items that prevented or limited the Building Department's ability to fulfill its responsibilities regarding the emergency response, e.g. Inaccessible Terrain, Communications Failure, Lack of Trained Personnel, etc.)

Response faced many challenges, in addition to juggling the normal workload:

- *Enforcement involved both building code officials and local ordinance enforcement officials, many of whom had never worked together.*
- *Site location lists were a challenge because lists were compiled by 3 different first responder agencies (Fire, Red Cross, Stormwater).*

Lessons Learned and Recommendations:

(List those suggestions that in the event you had to do it over again, you would want to make sure these recommendations were being addressed before, during and after the emergency event, e.g. Utilize High-Wheel Based Vehicles, Provide Alternative Forms of Communication, etc.)

Creative strategies we used in attacking the problem.

- *We created 15 two person teams, structured so that veterans worked with new staff, so training became an integral part of the work. The 15 teams were able to assess damage on 162 structures in 5 hours.*
- *An especially creative strategy added an IT person to the team to assist with data collection, sorting and creating a spreadsheet covering all FEMA (and other agency) related information including an estimated full repair cost per structure.*
- *A formal debriefing was held at the conclusion of the event.*

Lessons learned; things we would do differently next time.

- *Three initially involved agencies made it a challenge to get an accurate consolidated list of street names and project addresses. Without consolidation, sometimes two teams responded to the same site.*
- *Understanding the nomenclature of some 1st responder agencies was a challenge. Sometimes color codes were used (which made perfect sense to one group) but the absence of a legend made the nature of different problems a mystery, until you got to the site (car rescue vs. structure damage, etc), which resulted in some lost time.*
- *IT member involvement became very important. They modified the FEMA spreadsheet so that information could also be used by the State and SBA. The sheet was sent to the teams electronically, to record their information on computers in their car. On completion, results were e-mailed back and consolidated onto a master spreadsheet, with duplicates removed.*
- *IT members also created a form to tally the overall cost (162 properties with \$1.5mil damage). Creating this form during the last event will help greatly in the next response.*

Attached Documents:

(Please provide any reports, photos, presentations or documents supporting the foregoing discussion)

None.

**Submit this form with any attachments, additional comments, or questions to mjc@iccsafe.org