

Steps to Develop and Implement a Local Government/Community Emergency Response Plan

Responding to emergencies comes in two separate plans and actions: (1) Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP); and (2) Emergency Response Plan (ERP). An Emergency Action Plan (EAP) is a critical component of the Emergency Response Plan; and should be developed to respond to the current emergency.

This document provides information and guidance in what you should include in preparing your Emergency Response Plans. It is by no means, a complete guide as every situation is different. Remember an important part of the Emergency Response Plan is an **Emergency Declaration**.

Emergency Declaration. An Emergency Declaration should be the critical first step. It will provide immediate guidance to community members on the severity and nature of the emergency; what community members should do to be safe; what your community will do to keep community members safe; and how it will provide for their needs. Distribute this declaration locally and widely through the internet, Facebook and other social media. Develop flyers and distribute them to each household.

Note: Create a core team that will help you think and work through this emergency.

Emergency Preparedness Plan. Every community should develop its Emergency Preparedness Plan to respond to all potential emergencies and disasters like flooding, fires; health epidemics/pandemics, etc.

An Emergency Preparedness Plan is a plan that identifies resources that should become available when an emergency or disaster occurs. Once developed, it should be posted in conspicuous places throughout the community, including community websites. It should also be fluid and be revised and updated periodically to address the current situation.

Note: At this point of the COVID-19 pandemic, this step is not as important as the next step. This will be a long-term plan.

Emergency Response Plan. The Emergency Response Plan puts the Emergency Preparedness Plan into action. A critical part of the Emergency Response Plan is the Emergency Action Plan. This paper provides guidance in developing a Community Emergency Response Plan. There are critical components of any preparedness plan, including:

1. Identifying Emergency Resources
2. Identifying Roles and Responsibilities
3. Identifying Funding Resources
4. Collaboration with Local/Regional Entities
5. Coordination Among Entities

6. Communications Strategies
7. Training Programs
8. Recovery/Rehabilitation Plans

1. Identifying Emergency Resources. It is important to identify and develop relationships with local and regional emergency service providers and responders, including:
 - a. Healthcare providers
 - b. Law enforcement agencies
 - c. Social work organizations
 - d. Local governments
 - e. Other communities

Research available service providers and contact them and share your work and intent; and bring them on board to be part of your plan. Include names of key individuals, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses. Share the completed plan with them; and keep them posted.

Along with identifying emergency resources, arrange for and secure personal protective equipment for the people that will be implementing your Emergency Response Plan and for community members.

If necessary, identify and provide for a safe temporary shelter that will be equipped with bedding, showers, meals, and other incidentals. Identify admission criteria and how you will staff this facility.

2. Identify Needs of Households. Take an inventory of all the households within the community jurisdiction and adjacent households if applicable. Start with a map and identify the households by numbers, color coding, etc. Note: *Google Maps* has good satellite images if a map is not readily available. This information will contribute toward developing a database for future emergency response plans for emergencies (fires, medical, law enforcement, etc.).

Identify occupied homes and vacant homes. Obtain the following information through a survey, a door-to-door in-person interview is best, but members can self-report. As a matter of community record, it is recommended this information be updated annually.:

- a. Number of people living in each home, by:
 - 1) Age
 - 2) Medical condition, including medication(s)
 - 3) Handicapping condition

- 4) Any other special needs
 - b. Condition of home whether it has:
 - 1) Electricity
 - 2) Running water
 - 3) Heat source (propane, wood, coal)
 - 4) Landline or cellular phones
 - 5) Internet access
 - c. Contact information, including
 - 1) Mailing and street address
 - 2) Telephone numbers
 - 3) Email address (if available)
 - d. Create a database with this information being careful not to violate people's privacy and confidentiality. These files will be strictly confidential with access monitored and noted.
3. Identifying Roles and Responsibilities. It is most important to identify who will be included in the emergency response plan when it is activated. Equally important is to share the plan with them; provide orientation and training; record their contact information. Coordinate, coordinate, coordinate. Identify and develop:
- a. Incident Command System (ICS). This is an organizational structure that outlines the command hierarchy within in the ICS. The ICS may be simple, or it could be broader, depending on the nature of the emergency. Create a unified command structure by breaking down potential areas of need and identify who will be responsible for addressing/providing those services.
 - 1) Food Supplies/Groceries:
 - i. How are you going to provide for and deliver food supplies, meals, groceries, water, propane, gasoline?
 - ii. Enter into partnerships or purchase agreements with local stores, and stores in outlying towns.
 - iii. Where will the money come from?
 - 2) Medical Services, Supplies and Equipment:
 - i. How will you provide for emergency transportation, home visits, getting prescriptions?
 - ii. The survey you conduct (as stated above) will provide information you will need to determine the need.

- iii. Provide for equipment, generators, freezer storage.
- iv. It is also important and your responsibility to provide for the health and safety of your ICS team. Provide proper safety clothing and equipment.

3) Transportation:

- i. Prioritize transportation needs and identify how these needs will be met.
- ii. It is important to limit drivers to those in the ICS plan.
- iii. This includes scheduling and making trips to get supplies (running into local towns) and deliver supplies.
- iv. Are you going to have to evacuate or isolate people? How will that be done?

4) Enforcement:

- i. How will you enforce your community ordinances, directives, etc. For example, how will you enforce “shelter in place” directives?
- ii. Use flyers and distribute throughout the community.

5) Safety:

- i. Identify the medical, transportation, housing and other emergency needs; and how you will provide these services.
- ii. Provide for meeting emergencies by working the local and regional service providers, including outlying towns (Hospitals, Law Enforcement).
- iii. Make sure there is good ingress and egress in and out of the community. It may be good to identify “one-way” traffic patterns (in and out) in cases of evacuation to ensure traffic moves smoothly.

6) Decision Making Process.

- i. Develop an incident decision-making tree that identifies who and how decisions are made. This is part of the ICS described above; and should be shared with everyone involved. The objective is to make this a simple process, otherwise you will impede progress.
- ii. Sometimes decisions need to be made immediately, without delay. Who will make these decisions?
- iii. Sometimes decisions are not immediate but may have broader, lasting impacts; and are made appropriately by the ICS Commander or community officials.

- b. When you mobilize your Incident Command System (ICS) will depend on the nature of the emergency. It may be that you don’t have to implement the entire

structure described above. You may only need to implement an abbreviated version of the ICS.

- c. Similarly, when you decide to dismiss the Incident Command team(s) will a depend on the nature of the emergency. Most importantly, before you dismiss your teams, make sure the situation is completely clear and that the emergency has been “controlled”.
4. Identifying Funding Resources. Funding is a critical component to responding to emergencies. The community may have some funds, but those funds are limited.
 - a. Request your fund-appropriating body (local governing Council) assist with funding for the emergency. Place a sense of urgency; and request the Council act on this request immediately.
 - b. There are other funds available from various sources, including private foundations, states, and certain federal agencies. Assign someone at the community to research funding sources and prepare applications to secure the funds. Maybe the local government could have someone assigned to secure emergency grant funds for the community.
 - c. Keep track of your expenditures by keeping an accounting of all expenses. Keep receipts. This information will be essential when you seek funding and/or reimbursement.
5. Collaborate with Local/Regional Entities. Collaboration is a key component of emergency planning. You will need to coordinate with each other during the emergency, so it is important that you develop your plans together.
 - a. Bring your strategic partners in so they can help in the development of the plans, and so they can bring in their expertise and services. Identify them in your plans.
 - b. Some of these needs are going to be beyond your community capability, and some of these entities are funded to provide these services.
6. Communication Strategies. A communications strategy is so important in any emergency. Determine how you need to get the word out, initially and periodically. Take advantage of all the communications tools available to you:

- a. Assign someone that will be your Public Information Officer (PIO). This person should have some experience; and should have a good network with local news outlets (newspapers, television, local radio stations; etc.).
 - b. Arrange for mobile radios, cell phones, etc. for your teams; and share this information with your Incident Command (IC). Assign contact numbers.
 - c. Develop newsletters and flyers that will be distributed to each household; and posted in public places; publish announcements in local newspapers.
 - d. Utilize social media such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.
 - e. Hold daily or periodic news conferences either in person, through social media, or local radio. Webinars or posting video recordings may be useful.
 - f. Communicate your Emergency Response Plan with the community.
7. Training Program. It is important that those directly involved in carrying out the Emergency Response Plan have the information they need to do their work. Training need not be extensive and may be in the form of daily briefings/meetings.
- a. If the situation will present safety and health concerns for the ICS team, bring in a professional or someone knowledgeable of the hazards to provide training.
 - b. Hold periodic safety meetings.
8. Rehabilitation Plans. Part of every emergency management plan and Incident Command comes with a recovery or rehabilitation plan.
- a. What was the extent of the damage? Is there visual damage or chemical damage?
 - b. How will you fix the damage/impacts? This will depend on the nature of the emergency. This might be very expensive.
 - c. Who will do the rehabilitation and remediation work? You may need professional help, depending on the nature and severity of the damage/impact.
 - d. What plans will you put in place to prevent a repeat incident?
 - e. When will you determine the emergency is controlled; and there is no more danger; and that people will be permitted return to their homes?

f. Will you have funding to address the needs?

Conclusion

The above are recommendations and are not all-inclusive. Each Emergency Response Plan is unique because it is intended to respond to the specific emergency or incident. You may not have time to address and prepare written plans, but this paper provides ideas of what you should address and be prepared to implement. Use this as a format if you want to prepare your community Emergency Response Plans.

If you are using this as a guide in reaction to a current emergency, use it as a learning lesson and a necessary first step to be better prepared should another situation occur.

No plan is complete, and no plan is final. No plan covers every potential issue. Issues and emergencies will surface sooner or later, so be ready to respond accordingly. The goal is to protect the health, safety, welfare and the lives of your people.

Contact us if you have any questions. We can be reached at info@kivainstitute.com; toll-free 1-866-202-5482; or you may contact me directly at: ben@kivainstitute.com.