

COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO CALIFORNIA

RESPONSE TO 2005 -2006 GRAND JURY FINAL REPORT

Flood Disaster Evacuation of the Medically Infirm (pp. 29-37)

The Office of Emergency Operations is actively engaged in the preparation of the following regional plans. The following listing provides the current workload and indicates the order in which each is being completed. Anticipated timelines have been included where possible.

Evacuation Annex to the County's Multi-Hazard Plan -- This is a new component to the Multi-Hazard Plan and is in a draft form and will be distributed for County review shortly.

Flood Annex to the County's Multi-Hazard Plan -- This is nearing completion in draft stage (this can be anticipated 45 days behind the Evacuation Annex) and will go through the same steps of review and revision.

Emergency Plan (the how to and who does what) -- This plan is in its initial stages of development and is the most complex plan in our inventory. We anticipate an initial draft Spring 2007.

In addition, it is important to note that the Office of Emergency Operations has updated agreements with both Regional Transit and Paratransit. In addition, the Office has established community and subject matter experts to participate in workgroups to assist in final plan development activities.

Finding #1

The flood annex to the County's All Hazards Plan is projected for completion by September 2006.

From: Sacramento County Office of Emergency Operations

For: County Executive's Office

Response

Concur.

Recommendation #1

The county must make the completion of the Flood Annex to its All Hazards Emergency Operations Plan a matter of high priority.

Response

Concur. The flood annex is a high priority for the Emergency Operations Office, and is currently in review for a fall completion.

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Finding #2

The Sheriff's Department has not fully developed standard operating procedures for a mass evacuation due to a flood disaster.

From: Sacramento County Office of Emergency Operations **Sacramento County Sheriff's Department**

Sheriff Response

The Sacramento County Sheriff's Department concurs with this finding. However, in partnership with the Emergency Operations Office, a funding augmentation will be made to the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors for the purpose of developing an All-Hazards Mass Evacuation Plan. If approved, it is proposed that a consultant will be hired to assist in the development of this plan.

Recommendation #2

The Sheriff's Department should, by August 2006, complete the development of standard operating procedures for a mass evacuation due to a flood disaster. This should include plans for the evacuation of the medically or mentally infirm due to age or disability.

Sheriff Response

The Sacramento County Sheriff's Department concurs with this recommendation. A working group, chaired by the Director of Emergency Operations Office (Rick Martinez) is currently undertaking the task of developing the County Evacuation Plan. The working group is comprised of the American Red Cross, the Sheriff's Department, California Highway Patrol, Cal Trans, Sacramento County Public Health, Sacramento Police Department, Regional Transit, Para Transit and the Governors' Office of Emergency Services. The Sacramento County Sheriff's Department will develop internal Policies and Procedures to match recommendations proposed by the working group.

Emergency Operations Response

Concur with the exception of completion date. A draft Evacuation Annex to the County's All Hazards Emergency Operations Plan has been developed and is being coordinated with a working group to clarify roles and responsibilities among response agencies and develop response processes to address evacuation of the medically or mentally infirm due to age or disability. Emergency Operations intends to develop an advisory committee of representatives from groups representing vulnerable populations to review and provide input to the evacuation plan. With this input, the plan will be completed as soon as practically possible.

Emergency Operations received approval for an augmentation of \$150,000 to contract for a consultant to develop elements necessary to address the County's special needs preparedness/care and shelter planning. In addition the consultant will incorporate these issues into our local evacuation plan and regional mass evacuation plan.

Finding #3

While the county has established a Geographic Information System that maps the location of nursing homes, assisted living and congregate care facilities within the county, it lacks adequate

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means of identifying and locating most of the special needs populations in the event of a flood disaster.

From: Sacramento County Office of Emergency Operations

For: County Executive's Office

From: Sacramento County Sheriff's Department
Department of Health and Human Services

Emergency Operations Response

Concur.

DHHS Response

Concur. There are a large number of special needs populations in any urban area and Sacramento County's population moves frequently in and out of the county.

Recommendation #3

The county should develop and maintain a comprehensive database for the location and telephone numbers of skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, board and care facilities, home health care and hospice agencies, senior centers, veterans homes, group homes for the mentally ill, client providers for persons with identified special needs, and other congregate care facilities, including numerous state licensed small scale adult day health care centers, in order to facilitate emergency communication directly or through such agencies in the event of a flood.

For this purpose, each such provider or facility should be required to maintain a current list of client telephone numbers and addresses.

Emergency Operations Response

Concur. Currently, there is not a database in the County which contains this type of information. A portion of recently approved funding for special needs evacuation planning will be used to initiate the collection of service provider information and to contact regulatory agencies to determine whether providers are or can be required to maintain current contact lists for their clients. Methods and costs of establishing the database and long term maintenance of the database will need to be explored and appropriate funding provided for this recommendation to be successful. The project will begin this winter.

DHHS Response

Concur in principle. This recommendation is consistent with the approach that Public Health recommends for reaching special needs populations. Public Health, in the process of developing its own risk communication plan, has identified a number of such key contacts, but recognizes that a complete listing is likely to include numerous additional entities. The overall responsibility to maintain this database most appropriately rests with the Emergency Operations Office.

Public health administers an emergency alerting system (CAHAN) for notification of key government and other entities with responsibilities in emergency response. Enrollment of users is ongoing and increasingly including non-government entities, such as schools, home health

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agencies, and hospitals. This tool would enable the County to rapidly issue alerts and instructions on how to safeguard clients in disaster conditions.

Whether the County can actually require (versus request) a facility to maintain a list of clients and telephone numbers will depend on its regulatory oversight authorities. The county does not have regulatory oversight of these facilities. The regulatory oversight rests with the State.

Sheriff Response

The Sacramento County Sheriff's Department concurs in principle with this recommendation. Currently there is not a database in the County which contains this type of information. It is recommended that a funding augmentation from the County Board of Supervisors be proposed to fund and develop a team that would be responsible for creating, updating and maintaining the database with this information. No timeline has been set for the drafting of this proposal.

Finding #4

The "Privacy Rule" component of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 is deemed by many to constitute a barrier to the sharing of lists of client names, locations and telephone numbers to county or other emergency officials under any circumstances.

From: Sacramento County Office of Emergency Operations

For: Sacramento County Sheriff's Department

From: Department of Compliance

For: Department of Health and Human Services

Emergency Operations Response

Concur with Department of Compliance response.

Department of Compliance Response

Concur.

Recommendation #4

The County should secure and distribute to all pertinent public and private agencies a formal opinion of the Sacramento County Counsel and/or the Attorney General on the effect of HIPAA upon the sharing of lists of such information in the event of an imminent disaster.

Emergency Operations Response

Concur with Department of Compliance response.

Department of Compliance Response

The Department of Compliance, Office of HIPAA has requested a formal opinion from County Counsel regarding the sharing of protected health information in the event of an imminent disaster. Upon receipt of the legal opinion, a determination will be made regarding its distribution. Because County Counsel legal opinions apply only within the County of

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Sacramento's legal entity, the value of disseminating such an opinion, other than for information, must be evaluated.

Finding #5

The County has not established a full partnership of private care facilities and agencies for the evacuation of special needs clients in the event of a flood disaster.

From: Sacramento County Office of Emergency Operations
Sacramento County Sheriff's Department

Emergency Operations Response

Concur.

Sheriff Response

The Sacramento County Sheriff's Department concurs in principle with this finding. While there is no legal mandate for private care facilities to participate in this type of training, the Sacramento Regional Office of Homeland Security and the Sacramento Region Citizen Corps have partnered to develop and offer training to private care facilities and agencies, managers and staff, to increase their preparedness level in the event of a flood disaster. Training includes stressing the need to update facility emergency operations plans, as well as educating the varying levels of their clients in developing and maintaining individual disaster preparedness kits, family communications, and evacuation plans. This will be an on-going out-reach to better prepare the community in addressing critical needs to the medically fragile and special needs populations.

Recommendation #5

The county should require training for managers and staff of private care facilities and agencies, along with formalized agreements specifying the roles and responsibilities of such facilities and agencies in the event of a flood.

Emergency Operations Response

Concur with the need for required training and a better understanding by care facilities of their roles and responsibilities in the event of a flood. However, there is no legal mandate to require staff of private care facilities and agencies to comply with a training requirement. A portion of recently approved funding for special needs evacuation planning will be used to coordinate with regulatory agencies and care facilities to encourage cooperation with a training program and to develop the understanding of care facilities regarding their roles and responsibilities in the event of a flood. Clarification of the legal responsibilities of care facilities and the role of the regulatory agency in compliance is needed prior to consideration of formalized agreements between the county and care facilities.

Finding #6

The County lacks adequate access to fully staffed emergency-ready specialized transportation vehicles, wheelchair and gurney capable, and fully supplied with oxygen, insulin and other essential medicines.

From: Sacramento County Office of Emergency Operations

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For: Sacramento County Sheriff's Department
Department of Health and Human Services

Emergency Operations Response

Do not concur. While we recognize that all the available specialized transportation vehicles in northern California may not be sufficient in a catastrophic flood event to transport of persons with special needs to appropriate shelters or in-kind facilities, all that can be reasonably done to secure adequate transportation vehicles for emergency situations has been done. Sacramento County has MOU's with Paratransit and Regional Transit to augment evacuations with their fleet of vehicles. Sacramento County participates in the California Master Mutual Aid Agreement which provides access to available resources from the entire state, upon request from the County's Emergency Operations Center to the Governor's Office of Emergency Services. Ambulance strike teams and other specialized transportation vehicles could be readily available to our county through mutual aid requests if needed. All reasonable and cost effective avenues to augment local capability to transport persons with special needs have been addressed.

Recommendation #6

The County should secure or contract for immediate access to a determined number of emergency ready, fully staffed and equipped specialized transportation vehicles, for the transportation of persons with special needs to appropriate shelters or in-kind facilities within the region.

Emergency Operations Response

Concur. Agreements for immediate access to emergency ready specialized transportation vehicles are already in place.

Finding #7

The county has not fully identified the local hospital surge capacity under various circumstances of a flood disaster, which could impede access to one or more of those facilities.

From: Sacramento County Office of Emergency Operations
Department of Health and Human Services

Emergency Operations Response

Concur with DHHS response.

DHHS Response

Do not concur. The Public Health division, along with all area hospitals participated in a statewide survey of medical surge capacity in the Spring of 2006. The data was submitted to the California Department of Health Services for collation and interpretation, but results are not yet available to the local jurisdictions. The ability to determine surge capacity at a practical level has been limited by a lack of State and Federal policy to define the thresholds that would enable hospitals to implement "austere care" conditions without incurring licensing penalties or increased liability. Therefore, the actual numbers that will eventually be reported are likely to be lower than the actual beds that would be mobilized in a true major health emergency.

Recommendation #7

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The county should identify the local hospital surge capacity under various circumstances of a flood disaster, and provide for alternate care sites for special needs persons who might otherwise require hospitalization.

Emergency Operations Response

Concur with DHHS response.

DHHS Response

Do not concur.

- The responsibility for planning for alternate care sites outside of hospital has been unclear. In recent Pandemic Influenza grant guidance, Public Health has been tasked to plan in this area, at least to the extent of identification of potential sites. Actual implementation of alternate care sites requires much more than site selection and must involve entities experienced in operation of direct patient care healthcare services. This includes identification of properly credentialed and trained healthcare staff, appropriate medical direction, acquisition of equipment supplies, and more. To assign this responsibility to Public Health entities that normally are engaged in communicable disease investigations and surveillance of community-wide disease patterns through surveillance data represents a major paradigm shift and requires substantial commitment of resources. It would also require the hiring of additional staff with qualifications in this area. In addition, guidelines and standards for operating alternate care settings remain in development at the State level and are needed as a basis for local planning.
- The State of California, in its proposed 2006-7 budget, indicated its intent to purchase up to three mobile hospital facilities, each of which could provide for the care of up to 250 individuals. This resource will presumably be available to deploy to any area in the state affected by floods or other disasters.
- Public Health and the Sacramento Regional Medical Reserve Corps continue to coordinate planning in anticipation of the possible mobilization of volunteer health professionals needed to staff alternate care facilities.
- Information has been obtained regarding the US Public Health Service's Federal Medical Stations, which are pre-trained, deployable medical units able to staff medically-fragile shelters. The physical site and other support requirements necessary to support such a unit, if requested to respond to the Sacramento Area, are under review so that planning can anticipate those needs and facilitate a Federal response, if needed.
- Public Health, Sacramento area hospitals, and the Northern and Central California Hospital Council are currently in the process of selecting and contracting with a consultant to develop a coordinated regional hospital plan intended to maximize the available medical surge capacity through efficient use of local resources. The scenarios on which the planning will be based include pandemic influenza and floods. HRSA hospital preparedness funds, which are distributed locally through the Public Health Division are being utilized to fund this project.

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Finding #8

While the county has provided for mass shelters for general population evacuees, these shelters would not have the ability to provide for special needs persons who are medically or mentally infirm due to age or disability.

From: Sacramento County Office of Emergency Operations

Department of Human Assistance

Department of Health and Human Services

Emergency Operations Response

Concur.

DHA Response

Concur with DHHS response.

DHHS Response

Concur.

Recommendation #8

The county should provide, reserve, staff, and equip one or more shelters for the special needs of the medically or mentally infirm due to age or disability.

Emergency Operations Response

Concur with DHHS response.

DHA Response

The Department of Human Assistance agrees with the response provided by the Department of Health and Human Services.

DHHS Response

Under the leadership of the Emergency Operations Office, a multidisciplinary task force consisting of Emergency Operations, American Red Cross, Animal Control Services, Department of Human Assistance and Public Health are currently in the process of conducting assessment of potential sites throughout the county that could serve a variety of emergency response functions. These potential functions include general shelters, shelters able to accommodate domestic pets, special needs shelters (medically fragile, people with disabilities), alternate medical treatment sites, and mass prophylaxis clinics. Following collection of site assessment data, the next step will be to determine the suitability of each site for any of the proposed purposes. That information will be kept with Emergency Operations so that sites can be appropriately selected (through the County Emergency Operations Office or Emergency Operations Center, if open) and activated in response to a disaster. It is anticipated that MOUs will be developed between the County and each site in order to facilitate activation for any of the proposed purposes.

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Finding #9

The county has not engaged in comprehensive pre-mobilization planning, training, or exercises for the participation of county, city and other local agency employees in mitigation and relief efforts in the event of a major emergency evacuation.

From: Sacramento County Office of Emergency Operations

For: Sacramento Sheriff's Department

From: Department of Health and Human Services

Emergency Operations Response

Concur. Planning, training and exercise efforts have concentrated on county employees with a response role during emergencies either in the field or in a department operations center or the county's emergency operations center, and on coordination with other local governments' emergency response agencies within the county. There has not been a county-wide program to train county employees who are not emergency responders.

DHHS Response

Concur. There has been major effort put forward into planning, training and exercising the plan all of which contribute to the planning for a major emergency evacuation. This has occurred to

the extent that there have been funds and resources available. Massive exercises and ongoing training require dedicated staff and funding to achieve them.

Recommendation #9

County, city, and other local agency employees are designated by law as disaster services workers, and may be assigned to such efforts, including evacuation and care of the special needs populations, in the event of a major emergency evacuation. Those who are able and competent to do so should be identified, organized and trained in advance of a major emergency.

Emergency Operations Response

Concur with the need to train all county employees to a basic level of understanding of emergency response systems including NIMS and SEMS, and on personal disaster preparedness and their potential role as emergency services workers per County Ordinance. When appropriate, additional training should be provided to those employees who are designated to respond during emergencies. To establish a comprehensive training and preparedness program for all local government employees, the county, cities and special districts would need to evaluate the capabilities of personnel, needs of the emergency response organization and best use of available personnel to determine what level of training is needed and how best to deploy trained employees during emergencies. Appropriate policy direction, staffing and funding would be necessary to implement a comprehensive program county-wide.

The county recognizes, values and plans to integrate volunteer groups, community based organizations and other trained groups to provide assistance to first responders and emergency managers during emergencies. Groups such as the Medical Reserve Corps, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), and neighborhood associations can augment response capabilities.

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DHHS Response

Concur. Current planning within DHHS requires divisions and programs to identify the capabilities of staff to serve in emergency response roles. This is a fluid situation given the turnover of staff. However, a system is in place which would enable a rapid inventory of available staff at the program level in order to respond through the chain of command to personnel resource requests.

Resources for pre-training of staff are insufficient to achieve this goal for the range of possible assignments. Grant-funded programs cannot readily free staff to participate in such training without sustained significant revenue losses. Currently, the minimum requirement to arrange for NIMS training on a county-wide basis to meet a September 2006 deadline cannot be readily met within available resources, let alone additional training for specific job functions. As an alternative to advance training, Public Health developed a format and model materials to conduct "Just-in-Time training" for personnel assigned to support a mass prophylaxis clinic.

Finding #10

The County has not engaged in a comprehensive public education program for the promotion of effective personal, household, and neighborhood plans for self-help and mutual assistance, with particular regard to persons with special needs, in the event of a major emergency evacuation.

From: Sacramento County Office of Emergency Operations

For: Sacramento Sheriff's Department

From: Department of Health and Human Services

Emergency Operations Response

Concur. Public education has been a component of the Emergency Operations program since its inception in 1973. Due to limited resources, a comprehensive public education program has been beyond our capabilities. Some gains have occurred in recent years by partnering with other agencies, involving volunteer groups, and limited use of grant funding to develop public education materials and public outreach.

Sheriff Response

The Sacramento County Sheriff's Department concurs with this finding. The Sheriff's Department in partnership with the Emergency Operations Office has established an initiative to revamp the public education and awareness campaign. Due to limited resources this particular initiative has made modest progress.

DHHS Response

Concur

Recommendation #10

The County should refocus its efforts on public awareness, education, and promotion of effective personal, household, and local community plans for self-help and mutual assistance that would

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include the designation of contact monitors for each person with special needs, in the event of a major emergency evacuation.

Emergency Operations Response

Concur. Public outreach, especially to vulnerable populations, has been a high priority since Hurricane Katrina, but more needs to be done. Additional staffing and funding are needed for an effective and ongoing public education program, especially in the area of assisting vulnerable populations to prepare for evacuation.

Sheriff Response

The Sacramento County Sheriff's Department concurs with this recommendation. The Sheriff's Department and the Emergency Operations Office developed partnerships with the Sacramento County Department of Health and Human Services and UC Davis Hospital to develop educational brochures to increase the preparedness of our community. The Sacramento Region Citizen Corps Council and the Emergency Operations Office participated in the distribution of these brochures and the electronic versions of this publication are available on the Public Health and Sacramento Region Citizen Corps web sites. The Sacramento Regional Office of Homeland Security and the Sacramento Region Citizen Corps Council have trained approximately 125 citizen volunteers in a Train the Trainer course to assist in the delivery of public education materials to the communities in our region. In Partnership with the Emergency Operations Office, on-going public outreach is being coordinated by the Sacramento Region Citizen Corps Council with the goal of reaching 15% of our 1.3 population by May 2008.

DHHS Response

The County is mindful of the need for this type of awareness education and efforts have been undertaken to address this need within the available resources.

- In partnership with UC Davis, the County participated in the development of a disaster guide entitled, "Are you prepared?"
- Public Health grant funds were used to print approximately 120,000 of these guides.
- Distribution of these guides has been conducted through the cooperative efforts of Public Health, Citizen Corps volunteer groups (coordinated by the Sheriff's Dept. and Sacramento Police Dept.). The guides have been provided to multiple public counters distributed in the setting of various presentations to groups on preparedness.
- The "Are you prepared?" guides have been translated into six languages in addition to English utilizing Public Health Grant Funds.
- The EOO is in the process of re-convening stakeholders to determine the need for additional revisions to the "Are you prepared?" guide.
- The Public Health Preparedness program has contributed preparedness curriculum information (centered on pandemic influenza) to the Citizen Corps Neighborhood Emergency Training (NET).
- The Public Health Preparedness Program has met twice with the California Association of Health Services at Home (an association representing a wide range of home health and hospice agencies) and emphasized the need to work with

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clients to develop personal emergency plans for disasters. That group is actively engaged in that process.

- The Board of Supervisors approved \$200,000 a year for public information campaigns. Currently this funding is being used for education regarding West Nile Virus and Pandemic Influenza preparedness.

Providing information to the public does not necessarily move people to action. An effective public education plan able to result in an adequate level of personal preparedness is likely to be extremely expensive in that it would minimally require professional media support for the development and delivery of materials, might well involve the actual provision of preparedness kits to households, and the support of interpreters and others able to overcome cultural or other communication barriers.