

## **Disaster Preparedness Committee Maui Health Care Initiative Task Force**

### Introduction

The magnitude of the disaster would determine the response, making it difficult to gauge how responses are dealt with. There are four components that are considered when subject matter experts anticipate and plan for a variety of disasters:

- 1) Mitigation – processes planned for and deployed to mitigate damage. For instance, in the case of a pandemic flu epidemic the goal is to contain the spread of the disease throughout the population, i.e., mitigate the spread of flu. This process involves mitigating the damage. In most urban centers food will be the greatest problem in terms of looting. In the Katrina hurricane, the item most taken was diapers and guns. On Lanai there is no disaster coordinator and people would be on their own for about 3 weeks. Education is being strongly pushed. The fire department is holding drills. The Department of Health has been holding preparedness drills. The general public in general is not aware of the state and county plans.
  
- 2) Preparedness – processes thought through in an orderly manner that places the community and its citizens in a prepared position to respond to disaster. The goal is to have everyone in the community prepared, not just subject matter experts. This process involves efforts to plan and coordinate a preparedness plan for Maui County.

There is inadequate public education occurring to make the issue of disaster preparedness top of mind and the role of consumers in planning for disasters.

The fire department's plan is comprehensive and consists of 2 parts. The Police Department has several plans. Their job is to make everything safe. Their role in health care is limited, such as, having American Medical Response get

through on roads to respond to emergencies. FEMA and Homeland Security are funding an enhancement to the communication system so that all levels are on a singular frequency. The Police Department has procured a communications van to function as a mobile disaster command. A major finding is a lack of communication.

- 3) Response – processes planned to respond to the disaster once it has hit. The goal is to have subject matter experts in their positions ready to respond when and after the disaster hits. Each response needs to be tailored to the emergency. Concerns are how it impacts the community. It must be determined if it is isolated or a major community event. A plane crash is a major concern. The Maui Health District Officer functions as a coordinator at the local level to be able when asked to procure what is needed from the state and federal levels.
  
- 4) Recovery – processes planned to recover from damage caused as a result of disaster. The goal is to have damage rectified as quickly as possible. In cases of damage that threatens public safety, immediate measures must be taken to contain the spread of damage, such as, flu epidemic, deaths. Each department will conduct an assessment of how well things went and if there are any other functions to be conducted during the recovery phase. The Maui District Health Officer will monitor to determine any possible outbreaks and identify resources to assist people, such as, in addressing psychological issues.

All public safety departments and officials coordinate their efforts around this 4-part system.

### **Types of disasters: (not all inclusive)**

**Tsunami** – If a tsunami occurred there is a chance of thousands of people without a home and communities without shelters, thus, creating a homeless environment.

**Earthquake** - intensity of the earthquake would depend on the response. In a significant earthquake, roads, etc will be gone. Everyone will be in a situation of taking care of themselves.

**Hurricane** – same as earthquake above.

**Biological Disasters.** Examples of biological disasters include ebola, dengue, Bird Flu/ Avian Flu, MRSA, VRSA).

**Bio-Terrorism.** Examples include anthrax, plague, dengue, ebola.

**Terrorism** – An example is infiltration by terrorists at the airport.

Kula Hospital and Maui Memorial Medical Center have alternative plans for increasing patient space by creating "Medi-Tents" (mobile hospital) in which they would have to expand patient care. They can only equip about 30 people.

In Maui County, the committee has learned about concern that insufficient resources exist to respond systematically as described above. Additionally there is expressed concern about public complacency regarding disaster preparedness. Most people are not aware of and prepared of what will happen if things shut down when a disaster strikes. . Most people do not worry about disasters until warned or one hits.

#### Committee Investigation of Disaster Preparedness in Maui County

Committee members met with Civil Defense, fire department, police department, and Department of Health officials to learn about and increase their understanding of the disaster preparedness plans in place in Maui County. At a macro level, it appears each public safety entity has a plan with continued work occurring to update and enhance the plans.

The committee identified some key areas to investigate at a more detailed level. These include:

1) Communication System.

Civil Defense has a responsibility to bring everyone together for communication.

However, the average citizen does not know who is in charge in a disaster.

There is a need for a County of Maui Coordinator of Disaster Preparedness

There is no communications system in Maui County that is universally compatible. All involved parties need to be on the same bandwidth. (The Police Department should work with Maui Memorial Medical Center Security Department on a traffic diversion and parking in a disaster scenario).

Regarding the hardware communication system FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and Homeland Security are funding an enhancement to the communication system so that all levels are on a singular frequency.

The current plan is to use satellite phones for communication in the event of road closures. There is limited funding for the phones. Agencies are aware of the communications system issues. They are in the process of upgrading and some funding has been received. There is a plan to purchase satellite telephones in the event there are road closures. Use of commercial and public access television on a continuing basis to educate the public and make them aware of what they should be doing now in terms of what could occur in the future. There needs to be some kind of policy that provides for guaranteed support services for essential workers and their families as a way to encourage essential workers to report to duty.

Public education related to specific types of disasters is needed. The public does not have an understanding of how the processes will work. For instance, on Lanai the public does not know if a shelter exists. Significant public education in knowledge about disaster preparedness. The public needs to be educated about how the processes will work in the case of a disaster.

## **2) Workforce**

(Mayor is in charge of making decisions in case of a disaster). In conditions of long term disasters, police department has 2 weeks of kerosene to run generators. The Fire Department has approximately 1 week of kerosene to run generators. Fuel available at gasoline stations will be available first to public safety departments and officials. There

is some discussion about development of pods (points of distribution) for dispensing vaccines, medications and for health screening.

Currently the Maui Health District Officer would contact the Governor's Office for more personnel. The issue is the response time.

We need to identify the number of firemen and policemen on each island and where they live geographically.

Resources. The Maui District Health Office only has 2 FTE. There is a workforce shortage (the police department is 57 members down; the fire department has less of a need for manpower; the board of health has only 2 FTE; the hospital system tends to discuss emergency issues in terms of Maui Island and not Maui County). The Civil Defense budget is \$240,000.

### **3) Accessibility**

West Maui needs a backup road to Central Maui. For Lanai and Molokai, the most effective mode of transportation will be by air. Non-traditional alternatives should be considered for power and energy. Fund a back-up solar power energy system as a back-up system for fire stations and other essential areas.

### **4) Back System**

There is no specific backup system for disasters to our current Maui County health care system. Currently, the Maui District Health Officer would contact the Governor's Office to notify about the emergency disaster or equipment, supplies, and personnel needed under the circumstances. Any back up would depend on what the state and federal government can provide.

There needs to be arrangements or assurances to provide and secure prompt access to supplies, services and facilities required in the event of major disaster or emergency.

## **Recommendations**

Fund an enhanced public education program at the state and county levels and encourage enhanced coordination.

Fund personnel and programs to implement an effective public awareness campaign.

Clarify the chain of command.

Clearly delineate roles and responsibilities to ensure maximum coordination and communication. The federal, state, and county governments should review their plans to determine if roles and responsibilities are delineated.

There needs to be timely, relevant and accurate information to the public enabling appropriate planning, preparation, and response to different types of disasters. Public education should be provided about personal responsibility for preparation of household emergency kits.

In the event of an impending disaster the public should be aware of the information available in the phone book. We need to increase public awareness of the different type of emergency and what is available. When a disaster is imminent or has struck, the information needs to get out.

A back up energy system. The communication system should be compatible. There needs to be a back up system if the primary system fails. The County of Maui should decide on a primary system and backup system.

Establish hardware communication standards.

## **Lessons Learned from the Katrina Disaster**

There is no functional way to prepare for this significant disaster. 1) Population should have evacuated more expediently than they did. City/state should have been prepared to pick up people who were infirmed or incapable of driving away from the disaster. Animals are part of families and there needs to be a plan for saving the m.. The very young and old suffered the most in the Katrina disaster. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and state assistance was far too slow, inefficient and delayed; however, the county must rely on the federal government response system. The county needs to gauge the degree of the disaster. Depending on that gauge that will determine what needs to be requested from the federal government. State government has to request help from the federal government.

## **Committee Follow Up Discussions**

- 1) Transportation. Has the County of Maui included in the county plan the use of existing transit systems, such as MEO buses, The Maui Bus, hotel buses, etc. for use in emergency situations. Stan Zitnik is the contact. Lanai has 1 MEO bus and hotels have shuttle buses., 1 ambulance. Community trucks could be used. Molokai has 1 or 2 MEO buses. Lahaina has 1 MEO bus, hotel buses. 2) Certified Response Teams. What is going on with this in Maui County?
- 2) Community Drills. A drill has been done at the Lanai airport. If there is a plane crash there is only one runway. A helicopter could land.