

**AN EVALUATION OF THE FLORIDA FIRE CHIEFS' ASSOCIATION
STATEWIDE FIRE-RESCUE DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN
UTILIZED DURING THE FLORIDA WILD FIRES OF 1998**

**EXECUTIVE ANALYSIS OF
FIRE SERVICE OPERATIONS IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

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ABSTRACT

The problem identified for research was that since the inception of the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association (FFCA) Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan, no formal evaluation of the plan had been performed to determine its successes, failures, or areas for improvement. This lack of evaluation directly affected my own organization, the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue Emergency Management, as we are members of the FFCA and part of the statewide disaster response network for fire rescue ESF's 4 & 9 support functions.

The purpose of this applied research project was to evaluate the FFCA Statewide Fire Rescue Disaster Response Plan from the actual managers of the plan to determine if the current plan has been successful in managing large scale disasters such as the Florida Fire Storm season of 1998. The research sought answers to the following questions:

1. Was the State of Florida, Department of Emergency Management, effective with its EOC operations in coordinating the overall wildland/urban interface fire storm disaster of 1998?
2. Did the "Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan" as developed by the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association (FFCA), provide an effective overall means of providing relief efforts for ESF's 4 & 9 support functions for the state EOC?
3. Did the "Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan" provide Regional Coordinators and County Coordinators with an effective means of allocating resources and deploying resources in a timely manner?

4. Did a recognized Incident Command System (ICS), provide an effective means of coordinating relief efforts for the state EOC, Regional Coordinators, and County Coordinators?
5. Did established communications methods such as telephone, fax, cellular, paging, radios, internet, etc., provide an effective means of transfer of information?

A descriptive research methodology was selected in order to evaluate data collected from several different sources. It was determined that the best method to evaluate the FFCA Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan would be to survey the actual managers of the plan. The Director of the FFCA, State of Florida Emergency Management Director, FEMA region IV Director, FFCA Regional Coordinators, as well as FFCA County Coordinators were surveyed in an effort to provide an overall view of the disaster plan as it applied to the most recent event in the State of Florida which was the Florida Fire Storm of 1998.

The research results indicated that the survey process was an effective tool in evaluating the FFCA Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan and the participants offered constructive material for making improvements to the plan. The research results also lend support to the theory that a statewide plan is effective in assisting in large scale incidents as a process of coordinating relief efforts that might otherwise over burden any one agency. The research results indicate that coordination of relief efforts such as the Florida Fire Storm can be better performed by a coordinated statewide disaster response system.

Recommendations pursuant to this research project determined that the FFCA Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan is an effective means of coordinating fire-rescue relief efforts for

disasters that may occur in the State of Florida. Recommendations from the survey results also indicate support that the statewide plan needs amending and updating from time to time and that the plan should be considered a living document. The recommendations lend further support that coordination of fire-rescue support functions are best coordinated by an agency such as the FFCA who is capable of managing those ESF support functions on a statewide basis under an established command structure. Recommendations also indicate that communications is likely to be the area most often found deficient within the plan and this area should require further evaluation.

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INTRODUCTION

The problem chosen for research was that since the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association was tasked with the responsibility of providing ESF 4 & 9 relief efforts for the State of Florida Emergency Operations Center for coordination of statewide disasters or regional disasters, no apparent evaluation of the FFCA Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan has been conducted. The research on this topic could provide a general evaluation of the statewide response plan to determine its effectiveness at present and possibly provide a means of amending or improving the plan for future disasters. It became apparent to this researcher that now was the most suitable time to conduct such a research project as the State of Florida had just suffered a statewide fire disaster unlike anything the state has experienced in many years. It was also apparent that a survey of participating members from the FFCA who made significant contributions during the wildfire season would provide a fair synopsis of the current statewide plan as well as state and federal coordinating relief agencies.

A survey was created where the Executive Director of the FFCA, Regional and County Coordinators, State EOC Director and FEMA Regional Director were requested to submit data related to the wildfire season. It was determined that this process should produce a fairly broad evaluation of the FFCA Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan as it related to the recent wildfire season. The study utilized a descriptive research methodology as this process would provide for input from actual users of the plan in conjunction with the recent statewide fire season.

The purpose of the surveys was to determine the overall effectiveness of the FFCA Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan as it applied to the recent statewide wildfire season of 1998. During this statewide event the FFCA coordinated relief efforts throughout the state as tasked by the

State EOC for fire and rescue. The questions identified for research were:

1. Was the State of Florida, Department of Emergency Management, effective with its EOC operations in coordinating the overall wildland/urban interface fire storm disaster of 1998?
2. Did the “Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan” as developed by the Florida Fire Chiefs’ Association (FFCA), provide an effective overall means of providing relief efforts for ESF 4 & 9 support functions for the state EOC?
3. Did the “Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan” provide regional Coordinators and County Coordinators with an effective means of allocating resources and deploying resources in a timely manner?
4. Did a recognized Incident Command System (ICS), provide an effective means of coordinating relief efforts for the state EOC, Regional Coordinators, and County Coordinators?
5. Did established communications methods such as telephone, fax, cellular, paging, radios, internet, etc., provide an effective means of transfer of information?

It was determined by evaluating each of these specific areas an overall satisfaction level of the FFCA Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan could be made. The research provided a sufficient amount of data to make conclusions and recommendations that should greatly assist with future planning.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

In 1992, Florida suffered the costliest disaster of all time. Hurricane Andrew struck South Florida causing wide spread devastation. The disaster heavily taxed the local and surrounding jurisdictions beyond their means. State and federal support was initiated within days of the incident however immediate relief efforts were a direct result of the fire and EMS services from within the state. This is certainly no surprise as most often fire and EMS services are the first to respond to any given incident as indicated with other disasters such as the Oklahoma Federal building bombing, the Florida tornadoes of 1998, etc. This stands to reason as the fire and EMS services are normally best prepared to provide immediate relief efforts in such disasters.

However, in 1992 when Hurricane Andrew struck South Florida, fire rescue relief efforts proved to cause unnecessary hardships on the jurisdictions rather than provide an effective means of support. This was largely due to the fire rescue relief support being unorganized in their efforts. Fire and EMS units were dispatched independently by fire chiefs throughout Florida as well as out of state support with no coordination. As a result, an overabundance of personnel, apparatus, and equipment clogged the relief efforts already in progress by local South Florida Emergency Management officials. It became a large problem for the local officials to provide the day to day necessities for the responding fire and EMS agencies. As a result of this event, the State of Florida, Department of Emergency Management tasked the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association with the responsibility of providing ESF support functions for 4 & 9 for future disasters. The FFCA formed a Disaster Committee and developed a Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan which was implemented in 1993. The plan (Appendix B) addresses key areas such as structure, design, regions, training, activation, amendment

procedures, logistical support, communications, documentation, plan implementation, responsibilities, and other related topics.

The FFCA Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan has been implemented on a limited scale from time to time since Hurricane Andrew for various incidents within the state. The plan received its first full scale activation during the Florida Fire Storm season of 1998. During this statewide event the State EOC was in full activation and Regional Coordinators provided day to day coordination of fire and EMS support efforts. As indicated by many of the survey participants, the day to day coordination was considered to be effective in managing the overall fire rescue support functions. As with any disaster plan, the need exists for continual amendments as indicated by some of the survey participants. Overall, the FFCA Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan received favorable comments and participants indicated that the plan provided the means of coordinating the necessary support.

The City of Oviedo Fire Rescue & Emergency Management is a part of the FFCA and participates and endorses the Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Plan. The City of Oviedo signed a contract with the State of Florida Department of Community Affairs which executed the city's participation in the Statewide Catastrophic Disaster Response and Recovery Mutual Aid Agreement (Appendix C). During 1996, the City of Oviedo Fire Rescue and Emergency Management acquired a grant from the State of Florida, Department of Emergency Management which allowed us to construct a Emergency Management Disaster Response Trailer (Appendix D). This trailer is complemented with a command post, kitchen, restroom and shower, and storage for a wide variety of equipment such as power tools, tents, cots, sleeping materials, etc. The intent is for this disaster response unit to be self sustaining and travel to disaster incidents throughout the state as requested through the FFCA Statewide

Fire Rescue Disaster Response Plan. The unit is also available to local agencies who hold a mutual aid agreement with the City of Oviedo. It is through efforts such as this that coordination of relief efforts for disasters that occur within the state can be managed in a better fashion by an organization such as the FFCA. The intent of the statewide plan is to avoid mismanaged disaster response as experienced in the Hurricane Andrew disaster.

Most Emergency Management officials would agree that no one jurisdiction can be fully prepared for all disaster events that may occur. It requires a joint partnership to manage these events effectively. The sharing of resources is not an unpopular or new concept. We have been performing this task within the fire service for a great number of years. Coordination of these efforts is the key to success as indicated from the Florida Fire Storm season.

Within the Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management course, a great deal of time was spent on discussing past disaster events that have occurred across our nation. In each event it was clear that relief efforts from the fire service was provided by many mutual aid agencies or those under some type of disaster response agreement. Again it was realized that no one single agency can anticipate or handle every kind of disaster that may strike. As past disasters have indicated, relief efforts have come from many different avenues. The coordination of those relief efforts through a recognized regional disaster response system proved to facilitate the best level of support. The Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management course provided students an opportunity to manage a large scale incident in coordination with the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) students. This training exercise was a helpful component in understanding the various roles from both the fire services perspective as well as the perspective of the emergency management officials.

This training directly related to the City of Oviedo Fire-Rescue in that the city participates in the FFCA Statewide Plan and how this plan fits into the State Emergency Management system as well as our own Emergency Management Plan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Florida Wildfire Season 1998

The Florida Wildfire Season of 1998 caused damage unlike anything the Florida fire service had ever experienced before. Fire and EMS managers had participated in weather related events such as tornados and hurricanes but most had not experienced such wildfire devastation before. Karels (1998) of the Florida Division of Forestry wrote,

Eight fire complexes were established throughout Florida over a six-week period.

A total of 2,282 wildfires started and 499,477 acres burned in Florida from June 1, 1998 until July 22, 1998. A total of 126 homes and 25 businesses were destroyed and 211 homes and 8 businesses were damaged. Over 120,000 people were evacuated from their homes during this time in what was one of the largest wildland/urban interface wildfire campaigns in U.S. history. More than 10,000 firefighters from Florida and across the nation fought these fires with no loss of life to any firefighters or citizens. This safety record stands alone as one of the safest wildfire sieges in modern history.

It is apparent from the information calculated by state emergency management officials after the Florida wildfire season that this season was in fact a tremendous multi-jurisdictional campaign conducted by many various agencies. The FFCA took the lead role in coordinating the fire and EMS support functions as tasked by state officials.

Regional Response

An evaluation of the FFCA Statewide Disaster Plan appeared best accomplished by surveying those who were directly responsible for administering the plan during a disaster situation. The most recent event that led to participation throughout the state by fire and rescue agencies was the Florida Fire Storm of 1998. For this reason a survey was created to determine the level of effectiveness of the FFCA Statewide Plan as applied during this large scale event. Specific areas of the plan such as communications, incident command, and the overall plan itself were evaluated by directors of the FFCA after the event. A review of literature indicated that the areas mentioned above were critical areas of any large scale mutual aid system. Furthermore, fire service trade journal literature reviewed from the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy supported the concept that large scale events such as wildfires are best coordinated by a regional or statewide plan. Sylves and Waush (1996) wrote in regards to coordination of the relief efforts after Hurricane Andrew,

The lesson provided by Hurricane Andrew was not lost on Florida state officials.

The confusion that complicated and delayed the response, and the conflicts between federal and state officials over responsibilities during the recovery phase, were strong reasons to improve the coordination of state emergency management efforts.

This was a lesson learned for the Florida Fire Service as a result of Hurricane Andrew. After the devastating storm, Fire Chiefs in a good faith effort began sending fire and EMS apparatus and personnel to the area which simply put, overwhelmed the relief effort. The abundance of apparatus and personnel significantly overtaxed the system. As a result, and after many critiques of the Hurricane incident, the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association was tasked with the assignment of developing a plan in

order to provide ESF support functions for 4 & 9. The fire service was not the only agency that was found to require changes in relief efforts. State and federal agencies were also found to need improvement as stated by Sylves and Waush (1996),

In 1992, after south Florida's devastation from Hurricane Andrew, the need to improve and overhaul the nation's emergency management system became critically evident. Florida state emergency agencies were grossly unprepared to mobilize quickly and to gauge the extent of the damage. It was assumed that state and federal agencies failed to react quickly enough prior to and after the storm. As a result of improving the liaison between state and federal agencies, relief efforts for disasters such as the Florida Fire Season begin prior to, during and after the storm. A noticeable change in emergency management at the local, state and federal level is apparent.

Even with the changes taking place with the state and federal emergency management agencies, local coordination still plays the key role in disaster events. Local agencies must strive to develop joint response relief efforts for any number and type of disasters that are likely to occur in regional areas. These events quite often include but are not limited to storm related emergencies. Sylves and Waush (1996) went on to say that "Regardless of the many changes and reinventions taking place at the federal level, the most important changes are likely to be those taking place at the state and local levels." This concept certainly appears to be the case with the FFCA Statewide Disaster Response Plan. This well designed plan provides a method of providing resources on a statewide basis by coordinating the apparatus, manpower and equipment throughout the state. No one single agency can be completely prepared for events such as the Florida wildfire season. Agencies quickly become overtaxed and must rely on mutual aid or regional resources to combat such disasters. Bergeron (1991) wrote,

In the past, conflagrations and other large scale disasters have at times outstripped the availability of necessary firefighting personnel and equipment. Most fire departments have mutual aid plans to cover their peak usual needs; however, these plans are often limited to agreements with neighboring towns. In some cases they involve equipment from many communities or counties. Rarely do they include resources of an entire state.

Bergeron realized that local mutual aid plans often fall short during a large scale event. Statewide or regional response plans can provide the process of providing such relief support in a coordinated effort such as the FFCA Statewide Disaster Response Plan. Haase (1991) stated that, “No department is large enough or has the proper resources and financial means to handle every possible incident or problem.” The creators of the FFCA Statewide Disaster Plan understood that no one agency could handle physically or financially a large scale disaster. The concept behind the plan was to provide a statewide mutual aid system to be utilized for any type of natural or man-made disaster. The FFCA clearly met the assignment set forth by state emergency management officials by the creation of the Statewide Disaster Response Plan. This idea is further supported by Herman (1982) who wrote, “In today’s complex world, it is important that the leaders of each local government unit recognize that they do not exist alone. Each unit can receive aid from nearby governments and can render aid to them.”

Hawkins and McClees (1988) wrote, “The fire service role in emergency management appears to be expanding. For one thing, the risks threatening our communities have increased and changed.” The Florida Fire Storm season certainly was an unusual incident for the fire service. Though Florida had experienced wildfires in the past, the state had not witnessed a wildfire season so spread out across the

state with little relief in sight. Again, joint agency response from a statewide perspective was needed to effectively mitigate the wildfire season.

Communications

Yet another key component to mutual aid plans or state wide response plans is adequate communications. Far too often in fire service trade journals, we read of the failure of recognized communication systems during large scale events. Why is it so difficult in todays technology to establish a sufficient level of communications during a disaster? The lack of communication certainly can hamper the effectiveness of the overall relief efforts. Communications can expedite the relief efforts if effective or slow down the relief efforts if ineffective. Wildland Fire Agencies in the Northwest recognized the need to adopt regional communication frequencies in order to provide a means for multiple agencies to communicate during a joint response wildfire incident. As a result of this interagency coordination, they formed a communications plan that included set frequencies for multi-jurisdictional responses as stated by Sibayan (1988), the communications specialist for the Oregon State Department of Forestry, Salem, Oregon.

The Pacific Northwest Fire Interagency Coordination Group, recognizing that a sound communications system is a key element in effective fire control, addressed the need for common interagency radio frequency for initial call-up and contact and a need for a frequency available for tactical use by all agencies responding to a multi-jurisdictional wildfire.

This Northwest fire service group recognized the need to develop an effective communications model that would be utilized during a wildfire incident and how important interagency communications would become during such a large scale event. The FFCA also has recognized the need for an effective

communications system. Most respondents to the survey indicated that communications were effective, however this element also received the most respondents who indicated that the communications portion of the plan required improvement. During the development of this research project, the FFCA formed a communication sub group to evaluate short term and long term communications solutions. At the writing of this paper the author was able to only comment on the short term solution as the long term solution had yet to be decided. The FFCA communications sub group determined that communications from specific EOC locations throughout the state during the Florida Wildfire season to field personnel suffered the most problems. Communicating with field personnel was often difficult at best. As a result, the communications sub group made a recommendation to the FFCA to purchase an established caches of mobile and portable radios to be stored within each region that may be deployed for future disasters of any type. A common frequency system would be utilized by using the Florida Division of Forestry established frequencies. It should be mentioned that this author was a member of the communications sub group and participated in the development of the communications plan to the FFCA board of directors. The FFCA was expected to forward this proposal to the state for consideration for immediate funding and allocation during the writing of this research project. The recently elected Governor of Florida, Bush (1998) wrote,

One lesson we have learned from the recent wildfires is that our response capacity depends on quick, easy and comprehensive communication among emergency management services. To that end, our state fire and emergency service professionals will need better communication tools to do their job well. We should develop a statewide emergency communication system to link all relevant disaster relief agencies. Emergency workers simply

shouldn't have to deal with confused radio frequencies.

This proactive approach from key legislative leaders concerning the critical need for communications for disasters through a statewide system clearly demonstrates the support from the political arena that these officials recognize the importance of effective communications.

Communications are not just considered as a radio system any longer. During the Florida Fire Storm season, several various forms of communications became useful in mitigating the incident. The State of Florida Department of Emergency Management offered updated situation reports for incidents occurring throughout the state on a daily basis by accessing the State EOC web page (Appendix E). This information provided sufficient details of what had occurred and what was being forecast for the immediate future as well. This form of communications offered any individual an overview of the disaster at a moments notice. A true advantage was the accessability of the information. The advent of the internet has added a new communication link to disaster management which has been fully recognized as an effective means of communicating by State of Florida Emergency Management officials.

Incident Command System

Incident command certainly is not a new word to the fire service nor was it an ignored system during the Florida Wildfire season. As the respondents to the survey indicated, the Incident Command System was utilized and was effective. The ICS system provided the regional directors with an effective means of coordinating relief efforts. The command staff at the individual EOC complexes throughout the state as well as the staff at the State EOC handled numerous requests for manpower, apparatus, and equipment throughout the entire incident in an effective manner. The regional coordinators were also

considered a vital component of the organization as they would determine what types and quantities of resources were available from that specific region. This proved to be an effective method of managing the resources throughout the state. Wieder (1996) discussed the importance in adopting and following a recognized ICS system to avoid confusion,

Because of some differences in terminology and philosophy between the two systems, problems occurred when fire departments using one system tried working with departments that were using the other system. The groups that used each system almost became the equivalent of two separate political parties that find it difficult to agree on each other's party line. Many fire service leaders realized that this could become a serious problem as the fire service moved more towards regional and national response initiatives, such as FEMA's Urban Search and Rescue program.

It was apparent to Wieder that separate ICS systems could cause confusion on large scale incidents which also could have proven to be a problem during the Florida Wildfire season. The directors of the FFCA Statewide Disaster Response Plan followed an established command system for allocating and deploying resources which proved extremely effective. With the creation of the regions within the plan, the coordination of resources was handled effectively taking into consideration the span of control. By creating these regions, the coordination did not fall on any one individual or one group. Each regional director played a key role in managing the resources to be assembled and deployed as requested and followed the chain of command and established ICS system to manage the incident accordingly. The Florida Wildfire season proved that the use of ICS is not only a vital management tool in the field but for the command staff handling logistics and other vital administrative support functions

for such a large scale event.

NFPA provides a standard (NFPA 1561, Fire Department Incident Management System), recognized by fire executive leaders, that stipulates “The fire department shall develop an integrated incident management system in coordination with other agencies that are involved in emergency incidents.” The NFPA standard recognizes the need for interagency incident command coordination. This was recognized many years ago by the California Division of Forestry with the development of Firescope. This incident command version integrated structural firefighting forces as well as the California Division of Forestry in an effort to mitigate the extremely large scale wildfires that are so common within this region of the country. The Firescope system remains in service today and is recognized as a leading manuscript.

Literature Review Summary

The literature review corroborated the findings of the survey that joint response plans, incident command, and communications are key components to a statewide disaster response plan as is established by the FFCA. Each of these specific areas are critical to the overall operation of such a plan in order to effectively manage large scale disasters such as the Florida Firestorm season of 1998.

The literature review provided support to the conclusion of the survey results in that the key elements of such a large scale event as the Florida Fire Storm season requires a well defined and effective statewide response plan in order to provide proper relief efforts in a coordinated fashion. Without such a plan in place, fire and EMS relief support functions cannot be coordinated in an effective manner.

PROCEDURES

Surveys were the prime method of conducting research for this project as well as literature review and accumulation of data during the Florida Wildfire season. Internet information as shown in the Appendix (E) demonstrated the effectiveness of the communications and how today's technology has provided a new medium of information to assist in the coordination of disasters.

The surveys were distributed to the FFCA regional directors and other key players that actively participated in the Florida Wildfire season. It was anticipated that from this perspective, an overall evaluation of the effectiveness of the FFCA Statewide Disaster Response Plan could be evaluated as it had been applied during the Florida Wildfire season. The FFCA Statewide Disaster Plan had not yet been fully tested to this scale prior to this event. In addition to the survey questions, the survey participants were also provided an opportunity to provide comments for each specific question as well as general comments which proved to provide a positive assessment of the FFCA Statewide Disaster Plan and recommend areas of improvement as well. The limitations to the survey were that the state EOC office and the FEMA Region IV office, failed to respond to the survey as requested. The survey results from these two disaster coordinator functions might have offered an overall perspective from the role of emergency management officials representing the state and federal government. Further limitations to the survey were that only the regional directors were provided an opportunity to evaluate the FFCA Statewide Disaster Response Plan and not field personnel whom may have participated in the firestorm event. It was the decision of this researcher that the research project would be limited to the management of the plan itself and not field operations. The management of resources was the focus of the plan and field personnel were not solicited for input.

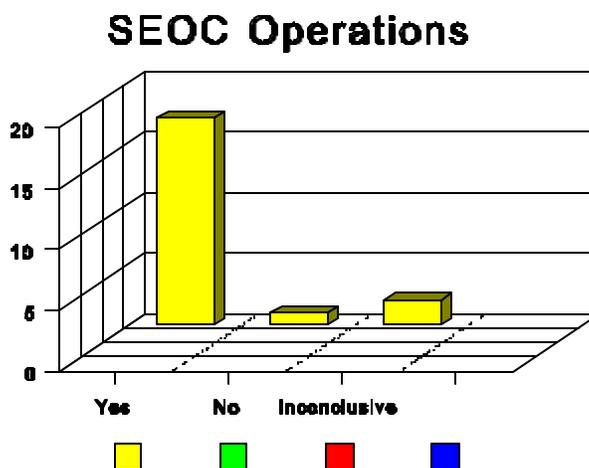
RESULTS

Select members of the FFCA were surveyed in an effort to evaluate the recent Florida Wildfire season and specifically how effective the FFCA Statewide Disaster Response Plan.

A survey was created (Appendix F) which questioned key components of the FFCA Statewide Disaster Response Plan. In addition to a scoring process, respondents were provided an opportunity to provide additional comments. The following are the results of the survey.

1) Was the State of Florida, Department of Emergency Management effective with its EOC operations in coordinating the overall wildland/urban interface fire storm disaster of 1998?

Twenty (20) responses were received on this question. Seventeen (17) or eighty five percent (85%) replied “yes”. One (1) or five percent (5%) replied “no”. Two (2) or ten percent (10%) replied “inconclusive”.



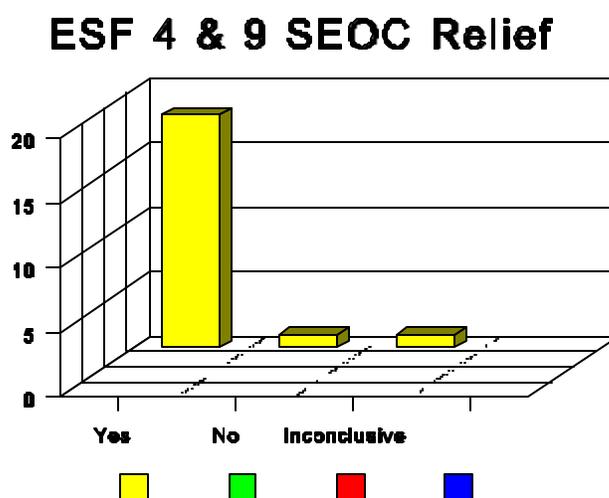
Comments

- The State Emergency Management was at the forefront. Re: The overall management/coordination of the response.
- Coordination of resources from within and outside of Florida was effectively handled.
- Believe more coordination needs to be addressed regarding emergency management assistant compnet (EMAC) utilization. Several out of state crews were not properly equipped or trained for this type of fires then not deployed to proper assignments related to equipment & training.
- A lot of non-experienced DEM personnel were making fire decisions without judgement. FFCA personnel did the best they could under the circumstances.
- While there was considerable confusion between DOF, FEMA, and others, DEM supported operations well.
- A yes but prohibitive because the SEOC had to coordinate through state and US Forest Service and Forestry personnel.
- ESF 4 & 9 worked very effective, other support functions such as transportation, military support, volunteers and information were also effective in supporting firefighting operations.
- I was the logistics chief for “Bunnell Complex” for 21 days. Good interface with SEOC. Proved to be effective & efficient in handling and filling resource request, and in maintaining critical records of resource requirements. Also minimized out of area resource “free-lance” activity.
- The FFCA program for the state allowed the coordination of resources very effectively.
- From a FFCA Regional Coordinators view, it appeared that the DEM and DOF were slow at

times approving requests for resources. This created the situation where the fire storm got ahead of the forces at times. There were lessons learned.

2) **Did the “Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan” as developed by the (FFCA) Florida Fire Chiefs’ Association, provide an effective overall means of providing relief for ESF 4 & 9 support functions for the state EOC?**

Twenty (20) responses were received on this question. Eighteen (18) or ninety percent (90%) replied “yes”. One (1) or five percent (5%) replied “no”. One (1) or five percent (5%) replied “inconclusive”.



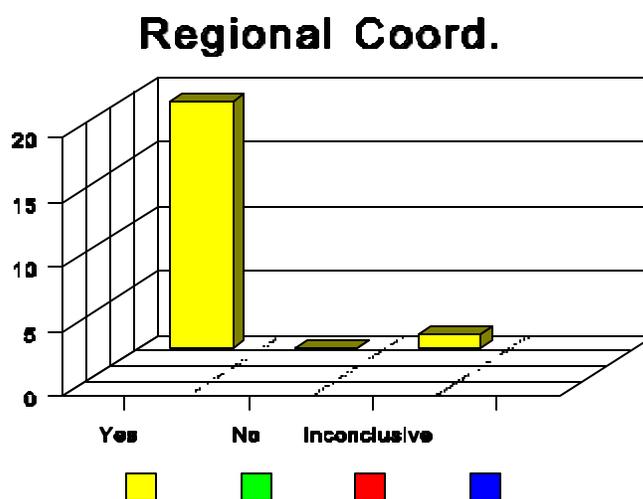
Comments

- The plan for the most part worked very well!
- The plan provides a coordinated response to requests for assistance from local jurisdictions.
- At times ESF 4& 9 were unmanned.
- Experienced staff were not always available to manage resource identification and follow up.

- Considering there were over 130 missions, it performed very well.
- Over 130 missions were filled sending 1500+ FF's and 500+ pieces of apparatus from throughout FL to the various affected counties.
- Some lessons learned included using an IAP for the desk each day, prioritizing the sequence of events on conference calls and staffing the desk with no less than two people at all times.
- As a department that sent resources into Northern Florida, the plan worked very well. Missions were well defined, clear directions were provided and the documentation was very well done.
- The proper resources made it to the right place on time.
- 95% of the plan was effective, and we are working on ironing out that 5%.
- FFCA resources augmented ESF 4 & 9 staffing in the SEOC throughout the entire event.
- The plan worked. However, a number of people in the field were not familiar with it and did not follow the plan.
- This was a learning experience for all involved with the FFCA plan, but we did work through any problems and staff accordingly.
- Purpose of plan is to provide resources to requesting agencies.

3) Did the “Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan” provide Regional Coordinators and County Coordinators with an effective means of allocating resources and deploying resources in a timely manner?

Twenty (20) responses were received on this question. Nineteen (19) or ninety five percent (95%) replied “yes”. Zero (0) or zero percent (0%) replied “no”. One (1) or one percent (1%) replied “inconclusive”.



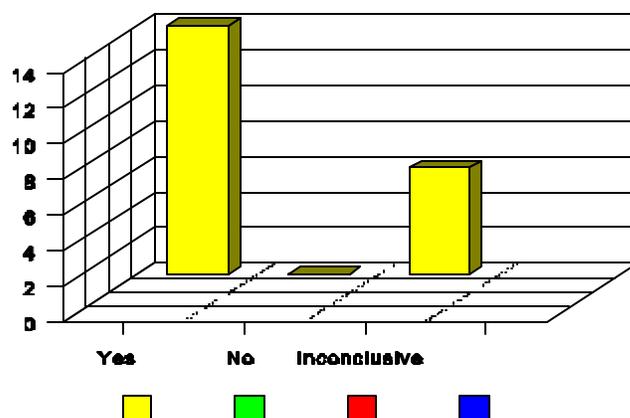
Comments

- Without a doubt!
- The plan provides for communication links to ensure effective allocation.
- Very well done.
- I was not in a position to observe this action.
- My department is Region IV coordination point. The resource matrix was somewhat out of date, but we should expect some “fluid” movement in a plan of this size.
- Daily conference calls were held, may regions used a daily conference call system with their county coordinators.

- We are working on a reallocation plan that will allow us to move units around once a mission is completed rather than sending them back home.
 - As a regional coordinator, I was provided excellent incident status, resource status from a statewide perspective and still had the ability to maintain sufficient resources for protection of our own jurisdiction.
 - Calls from regional coordinator were very complete.
 - As long as the request were ask for by the county EOC.
 - The means were there. The county however did not utilize properly.
 - The coordination through regional coordinators minimized the confusion and sped up the assignments of resources to requests.
 - One call to SEOC ESF 4.
 - In region 4, we did learn to deeper in relief positions within our region.
 - The plan concept continues to work. Will continue to be opportunities to refine.
 - Only when counties participated in plan us free lancing on their own and hoarding resources.
- 4) Did a recognized (ICS) Incident Command System provide an effective means of coordinating relief efforts for the state EOC, Regional Coordinators, and County Coordinators?**

Twenty (20) responses were received on this question. Fourteen (14) or seventy percent (70%) replied “yes”. Zero (0) or zero percent (0%) replied “no”. Six (6) or thirty percent (30%) replied “inconclusive”.

Incident Command



Comments

- Yes, but only where the responding personnel were versed in the ICS system.
- It was also quickly put together in areas that lacked one.
- Believe that ICS utilization was fragmented at various levels during incident.
- ICS broke down at the EOC and I suspect to some degree at other levels.
- ESF 4 & 9 was managed by using ICS. Within my county (who provided 300 people) ICS was the foundation for the structure.
- Most regions used this system. State EOC, FFCA and State Fire Marshal have ESF 4 & 9 set up under the ICS system.
- Lines of command were clear and well defined. Information was provided to all levels of structure.
- I was part of that system.
- Sporadic.

- The NIIMS-ICS format was used: A statewide “Area Command” then more specific “Complex Fire Commands”. Used combination of SDOF Overhead teams, Unified Command with county fire agencies.
 - Was not used by all involved. Where it was used it was successful.
 - System was used but better liaison needed with command teams and local agencies.
- 5) **Did established communications methods such as telephone, fax, cellular, paging, radios, internet, etc., provide an effective means of transfer of information?**

Twenty (20) responses were received on this question. Thirteen (13) or sixty five percent (65%)

replied “yes”. Four

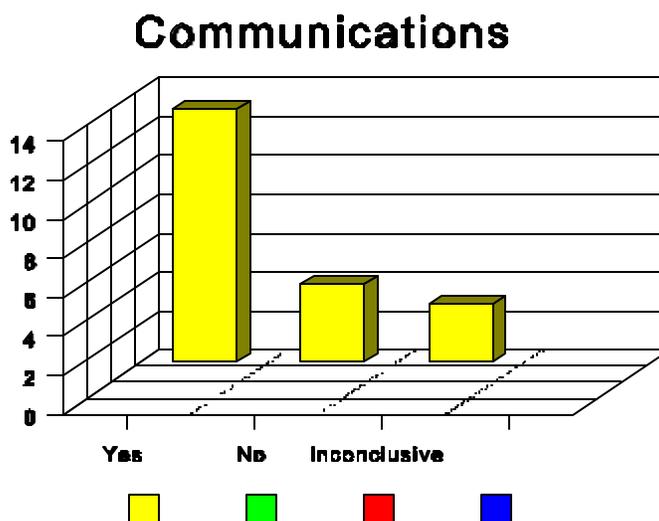
(4) or twenty percent

(20%) replied “no”.

Three (3) or fifteen

percent (15%) replied

“inconclusive”.



Comments

- Mostly yes. There were minor glitches; but yes, the technology worked.
- All methods listed were utilized.

- It provided me with accurate thorough information that I could pass along to our APCO Regional Coordinators.
- State EOC needs to establish a communications officer position to assure that all agencies have lists & methods to communicate.
- At times information sources were overwhelming and led to some confusion.
- Faxes can be cumbersome without access to broad cast fax capabilities. E mail was helpful in some applications. The telephone conference calls from state EOC to the regional coordinators was not on secure lines. There was no way to tell who was listening in.
- Cell phones, fax were used. Need a statewide radio network.
- Some radio communications problems were encountered in some areas, however the use of cell phones allowed crews the ability to communicate with their home base and with the affected jurisdiction.
- No field accessible fax or internet available. Fax at Bunnell CP continued to break down.
- We used all of these methods of communications.
- Required extensive use of all in coordinating between multiple local, state & federal agencies.
- All forms had a problem at some time during the event. A common radio type and frequency are needed.
- Within the region, pagers, E mail and fax's were a big benefit. E mail is the quickest form of information exchange if available. In the field, the units found the cell phones to be of most benefit since many of the units did not have same radio frequencies.
- Communication problems apparent between mutual aid agencies- different frequencies, different

brands. Cell phone system has limited coverage.

6) Please list any successes, failures, or areas requiring improvement to the “Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan” that you recognized during the Florida Fire Storm Disaster of 1998.

- Successes: Qualified personnel worked together. Failures: Lack of communication Re: How resources would be used. This led to the deployment of personnel without proper resources. Poor communications Re: Reimbursement process that is to say, what amounts would be reimbursable. Overall: The plan works.
- I have worked before with ESF 4/9 during Hurricane Erin. This was the first time that we utilized our plan to this scale. I believe we worked well. At the beginning ESF 4/9 personnel were not familiar with how APCO worked the Disaster Mutual Aid plan or that we worked with ESF 2. It did not take long however to smooth out the details and it was smooth sailing after that. I thoroughly enjoyed working with ESF 4/9. Their professional demeanor and outstanding leadership was appreciated. It made our job coordinating easy.
- I have already suggested to State DEM that a communications steering committee be established with all disciplines represented to define method and needs for radio communications for all mutual aid responders. The goal should be to set standards for all and to define radio communications capabilities for command/communication vehicles. ESF 4 personnel at the State EOC did a tremendous job in coordinating with SEOC personnel, DOF and other critical agencies involved. I felt it an honor to work with them during my deployment at the State EOC.

- Resources requested were lost in the transformation. 5 task force of engines and 5 task force of brush truck turned into 5 engines. A request for 10 command staff to Flagler County did not funnel through system.
- All responses were “yes” because the agencies did the best they could with the resources available. Nothing like this extended fire campaign had been seen in the history of Florida and new “ground breaking” ideas were implemented daily. Quite a lot was learned from this experience and will improve future responses
- Training! More personnel needed to fill roles at the State & regional levels. FFCA plan is certainly a step in the right direction. Excellent job done at finding EMS resources fast!!!
- I probably do not have an unbiased opinion as I spent two tours of duty in the State EOC-ESF 4 & 9. I have had previous involvement to coordinate mutual aid for Hurricane Andrew.
- Lack of coordination by county fire with State DOF and US Forest Overhead Teams. Each prepared separate IAP’s, sometimes contradicting each other. More EOC/ICS interface needed by DOF and State EM. Joint planning was not done for several weeks. Flagler evacuation was made difficult due to coordination efforts with Flagler County EM staff. Good coordination between FFCA and the State Fire Marshal’s office. More training of FFCA, DOF and State Fire Marshal’s staff on ICS/EOC interface and ICS positional training.
- Overall the response was a great success with over 6000 staff hours used to coordinate the response. We are refining call-up procedures for PIO’s and Dispatchers, clarifying whether a unit that is sent for a particular task can be held for an extended period of time in staging by the requestor, identifying better means of maintaining contact with dispatched units and refining

further the use of 214 tracking forms. There are a number of other successes and areas for improvement that came out of a critique that was held last month here in Seminole County.

- Successes: Well organized deployment of large quality of resources. Well documented missions and mission tracking systems. Provided good coordination between affected counties and those counties supplying resources. Improvements: Not all of the affected areas understand how the FFCA plan works and how they can access resources. The public information officers section did not deploy effectively. Need to be more specific guidelines to cover PIO's.
- Success: regional calls for resource orders. Task force ID numbers. Red, white, blue VHF communications. Common terms. Failure: Structural firefighters with no wildland gear. Structural fire officers leading wildland crews. Slow distribution of VHF cache radios.
- A great success is that we now do a committee conference call when the hurricanes are coming close to Fla. We do one a day to update the committee on hurricane path and which region made need our help first. This was the first step in planning ahead.
- In Volusia County the ball dropped by Volusia County coordination. The county coordinator who is also a county employee, ignored the resources available in the municipalities. Prior to the "big" fires in Volusia, resources were requested at Volusia's coordinator. His response was none were available. During the fires in Volusia, the county requested resources from State EOC, while at the same time, the cities in the county were never contacted for mutual aid.
- Reliable resources more quickly determined by region. Assignment of needs coordinated through single point, ESF 4/9 @ SEOC/reduced duplications. Assured valid records of assigned resources. Provided interagency fire & EMS coordination. Keep frustration levels at

a minimum.

- Better communications needed from field. A communication plan for the state. Ability to obtain housing as necessary, when necessary.
- Flagler County EM was not familiar with plan and did not use it. Need to have training meeting with county & municipal Emer Managers regarding Disaster Response Plan.

DISCUSSION

The research project results demonstrate support for the FFCA Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan as it applied to the Florida Fire Storm disaster of 1998. As a result of literature review of key elements of the plan, it was determined that the FFCA did meet the needs of ESF 4 & 9 support functions within the plan. Furthermore, the survey results in every element indicated success with the plan and its key components. Much was learned from the Florida Fire Storm event of 1998 and improvements to the plan are recommended in some areas, however the overall plan was identified as a success.

It was decided early that surveying those directly involved with the operations of the plan during the event would provide the best evaluation of the plan. Also other key personnel such as APCO, State Fire Marshal/Bureau of Fire Standards & Training, DOF, State EMS, and the FFCA Director were surveyed to provide an overall perspective to the plan as it applied to the Florida Fire Storm season of 1998. From every perspective the plan received high marks as shown in the graphs in the results section.

Many unmentioned successes were discovered by this researcher during the evaluation of the data collected such as the coordination by regions. The regions as outlined within the FFCA Statewide

Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan provided a system of coordinating resources that did not over tax any one committee or group. The span of control was identified and managed effectively with this part of the plan. This appeared to this researcher to be one of the clearest key elements in making the FFCA plan functional.

Additionally, each survey participant was permitted to add additional comments of success or failures in which the majority provided many good comments and workable suggestions to future updates to the plan. At the beginning of this research project, this researcher was unsure what kind of overall evaluation would be concluded from the project. As a result of the project, this researcher concludes from the materials evaluated that the FFCA Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan was successful in the Florida Fire Storm of 1998.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The FFCA Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan should be evaluated after major incidents in order to amend and update the plan and to address many various types of emergencies.

The FFCA Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan should address the weakest areas as discovered in the evaluation of the Florida Wildfire Season of 1998 including ICS., and communications in an effort to make the necessary amendments to improve upon the plan for future events.

The FFCA Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan should expand to include other related support functions that directly relate to ESF 4 & 9. This may include transportation, police, etc.

The FFCA Statewide Fire-Rescue Disaster Response Plan should address other agencies that are related for events such as DOF, and State Overhead and Federal Overhead Teams.

This researcher recommends to future readers and other agencies that a statewide disaster response plan is an effective means of coordinating relief efforts for the fire and EMS service and can be managed by such groups as fire chief's associations and others effectively. Recommendations pursuant to this research project are to evaluate which association or group can best manage a statewide plan and administer a plan before, during, and after the incident occurs.

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