Emergency Management and Response Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC)

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NOTE: *This INFOGRAM will be distributed weekly to provide members of the Emergency Services Sector with information concerning the protection of their critical infrastructures. For further information, contact the Emergency Management and Response- Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC) at (301) 447-1325 or by e-mail at emr-isac@fema.dhs.gov.*

2011 National Gang Threat Assessment

(Source: Federal Bureau of Investigation)

A Federal Bureau of Investigation National Press Release of October 21 announced that the National Gang Intelligence Center prepared the 2001 National Gang Threat Assessment (NGTA) to examine emerging gang trends and threats posed by criminal gangs to communities throughout the United States. The assessment is based on federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement and corrections agency intelligence, including information and data provided by the National Drug Intelligence Center and the National Gang Center. Additionally, the assessment is supplemented by information retrieved from open source documents and data collected through April 2011.

The Emergency Management and Response—Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC) observed in the NGTA Executive Summary that gangs continue to commit criminal activity, recruit new members in urban, suburban, and rural regions across the United States, and develop criminal associations that expand their influence over criminal enterprises, particularly street-level drug sales. "The most notable trends for 2011 have been the overall increase in gang membership, and the expansion of criminal street gangs' control of street-level drug sales and collaboration with rival gangs and other criminal organizations."

Key findings of the NGTA substantiate that gangs are expanding, evolving, and posing an increasing threat to American communities nationwide. "Many gangs are sophisticated criminal networks with members who are violent, distribute wholesale quantities of drugs, and develop and maintain close working relationships with members and associates of transnational criminal/drug trafficking organizations." Gangs are more adaptable, organized, clever, and opportunistic, exploiting new and advanced technology as a means to recruit, communicate discretely, target their rivals, and perpetuate their criminal activity.

National Fire Incident Reporting System

(Source: U.S. Fire Administration)

In order to comply with the intentions of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (PDF, 12 Mb), the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) established the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) under the supervision of the National Fire Data Center. NFIRS has two objectives: 1) Help state and local governments develop fire reporting and analysis capability for their own use. 2) Obtain data that can be used to more accurately assess and subsequently combat the fire problem at a national level. To meet these objectives, the USFA developed a standard NFIRS package that includes incident and casualty forms, a coding structure for data processing purposes, manuals, computer software and procedures, documentation, and a National Fire Academy training course for utilizing the system.

The Emergency Management and Response—Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC) confirmed that enhancements to NFIRS make the data more accessible to the fire service. The web-based data entry tool provides a direct link to the national database for entering fire incident reports. The NFIRS Bulk Import Utility allows fire departments to submit their incidents directly to the national database.

For summaries and other fire statistics, reports are generated using the NFIRS Summary Output Reports Tool (SORT). The SORT allows fire departments to get statistical reports from their incident data.

According to the October 13 Coffee Break Training document (PDF, 412 Kb), the fire service should be reporting all of its emergency response incidents to NFIRS. "The numbers tell the fire service's story, and only the fire service can best tell its story." NFIRS is the tool that tells the fire service's story. "It is time for the fire service to fully embrace the use of data and to become accountable and responsible for what it reports and how it is being reported."

Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster

(Source: EmergencyManagement.com)

An article at EmergenyManagement.com explained that there has been significant progress in recent years with the integration of national nongovernmental organizations in state and federal response planning, particularly since the creation of Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD). These efforts resulted in the identification of additional human and physical resources, which augment the disaster planning landscape and ensure greater coordination during response.

The Emergency Management and Response—Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC) learned from this article that despite progress, there is ample opportunity for improvement in the coordination of the nontraditional disaster response organizations. Although these organizations provide a superb service, their mission statements do not reference planning and response to disasters. Consequently, the actions of some VOAD entities are not fully coordinated and, therefore, they are not integrated into the community disaster response plan.

While it is essential to maximize the collective assets of public and private stakeholders, it is also advantageous to obtain extra resources and assistance from local VOAD groups. Deliberate coordination and planning with voluntary organizations (e.g., American Red Cross, food banks, faith-based groups, scouting programs, senior citizen councils) can yield supplementary benefits when responding to disaster.

Digital Coast

(Source: NOAA Costal Services Center)

The Emergency Management and Response—Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC) recently discovered the Digital Coast, a website managed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Services Center. The Digital Coast provides geospatial information on the coastal United States, to include the areas bordering the Great Lakes and the island territories.

While the Digital Coast website is not exclusively focused on natural hazards, most of the tools and data available can be used for decision making and research in an all-hazards environment. The following are examples of free services:

- Emergency Response Imagery is specifically designed to aid disaster response for areas hit by hurricanes and is helpful for displaying before and after imagery of damaged areas.
- Southern California Weather and Hazard Data Center shows wind speed and direction, humidity, and temperature and therefore can be helpful to wildfire prediction.
- Hazard Assessment Templates help to construct websites that identify potential hazards for specific locations. An example of a local, publicly-available use of this tool is the Kauai County (Hawaii) Flood Hazard Assessment tool, which shows flood zones and tsunami evacuation zones.
- Historical Hurricane Tracks Tool, which is searchable by year, storm name, category size, and offers worldwide records. It also gives available meteorological data on each storm.

A video tour of the website, available classroom and web-based training, and an interactive map showing some of the regional uses of Digital Coast applications are also offered.

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