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PRACTICE NOTE

Mass Evacuation: South Carolina Highway Patrol's Evacuation Traffic Control Point Staffing Meetings

PRACTICE

The South Carolina Highway Patrol holds annual meetings with state and local law enforcement agencies in each South Carolina coastal county to confirm staffing responsibilities for evacuation traffic control points and to update the traffic control plan in response to new developments.

DESCRIPTION

The South Carolina Highway Patrol (SCHP) coordinates the establishment of traffic control points (TCP) at intersections on South Carolina's evacuation routes before major hurricanes. The SCHP has identified more than 650 TCPs that might be activated for a hurricane evacuation, more than half of which are located in South Carolina's coastal counties. A full coastal evacuation, such as the Hurricane Floyd evacuation in 1999, would require the activation and staffing of most of these TCPs. Since each of these TCPs would be staffed with 1 to 26 law enforcement officers, depending on the complexity and expected traffic of the location, this task would require an enormous amount of manpower. The SCHP has worked closely with the South Carolina National Guard and state and local law enforcement agencies to assign manageable responsibilities to staff TCPs during an evacuation. The SCHP has developed a staffing listing to keep track of how many officers would be required at each TCP and which agency would staff each location.

Evacuation Traffic Control Points

TCPs facilitate traffic flow on evacuation routes by managing intersecting, entering, or exiting vehicles that could otherwise create significant traffic congestion.

The SCHP conducts annual meetings in each coastal county to confirm these staffing responsibilities and to update the traffic control plan in response to new developments. Every February or March, the SCHP Emergency Traffic Unit invites the sheriffs and police chiefs in each coastal county to meet at the county emergency operations center and to review the TCP staffing listing. The unit also invites representatives from local executive offices, state and local emergency management agencies, the National Guard, the South Carolina Department of Transportation, and all other state agencies that would provide staffing or coordination during a coastal evacuation. Attendees review each intersection on county evacuation routes to confirm that the responsible agency would be able to provide the required number of officers during an emergency. Although nearly 98% of the invited local agencies attend these meetings, the Emergency Traffic Unit has also established a process for absent parties to confirm their staffing responsibilities.

The primary benefit of these meetings is that they provide participants with a venue to voice staffing concerns and to inform the SCHP of infrastructural or organizational

developments that may affect the traffic control plan. For example, coastal counties sometimes add intersections on evacuation routes to expand the roadway and to accommodate population growth. Local agencies can inform the SChP of these additional intersections at the TCP staffing meetings; the attendees can then determine which agency would staff any new TCPs that might be required. Agencies are also able to report any changes, such as budget cuts, that would render the organization unable to fulfill its traffic control responsibilities. These meetings also provide the SChP with a number of additional benefits:

- The invitation process requires the SChP to stay informed of changes in local leadership (e.g. new police chiefs, sheriffs) and to update its point-of-contact directory accordingly.
- The meetings allow the SChP Emergency Traffic Unit to talk with newly appointed officials and to ensure that these new officials understand when the plan would be activated and how it would be implemented.

CITATION

Bowman, Mike. Unit Commander, Emergency Traffic Unit, South Carolina State Police. Interview with *Lessons Learned Information Sharing*. 06 Nov 2006.

South Carolina Emergency Management Division. *South Carolina Hurricane Plan Annex 2: Evacuation and Traffic Management*. Jun 2006.

https://www.llis.dhs.gov/member/secure/detail.cfm?content_id=20258

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