



FEMA

LESSON LEARNED

Mass Evacuation: Triage Units at Embarkation Points

SUMMARY

During mass evacuations, a triage unit can be located at embarkation areas to ensure all evacuees are moved to the appropriate shelter quickly and efficiently.

DESCRIPTION

On August 16, 2007, Tropical Storm Dean became a hurricane as it moved through the Caribbean Ocean. National Hurricane Center forecasts indicated that Hurricane Dean could make landfall along the southern Gulf coast of Texas. President George W. Bush issued an emergency declaration for 32 Texas counties to provide federal assistance to state and local preparations for Hurricane Dean. This constituted the greatest mobilization of emergency resources in the history of the state of Texas. The direct threat to Texas lessened as Hurricane Dean approached land, although rains and storm surge had the potential to cause coastal flooding. Hurricane Dean made landfall in Mexico on August 21 as a Category 5 hurricane and dissipated several days later without impacting Texas.

Prior to Hurricane Dean making landfall, Alamo-area emergency managers prepared to evacuate residents from threatened localities. The managers soon realized that their plans failed to address the assessment of evacuees at embarkation points. They became concerned about the potential for confusion and delays because there was no method to designate persons with medical or special needs for transport to designated shelters. The managers recognized that such individuals must be identified quickly to ensure a swift evacuation.

Embarkation points serve as gathering locations for evacuees while they await direction and transportation to shelters.

The Alamo-area after-action report (AAR) recommended the use of triage units at embarkation points to support the evacuation process. Triage personnel could ensure that persons requiring individualized care are transported to appropriate medical or special needs shelter facilities. This would expedite the evacuation process and would ensure people are loaded onto state transportation efficiently. The AAR also recommended training triage personnel to use a standardized screening process to identify medical or special needs individuals.

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CITATION

State of Texas Emergency Management, Governor's Division of Emergency Management. *2007 Hurricane Dean After-Action Report*. 26 Nov 2007.

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