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LESSON LEARNED

Emergency Operations Centers: Requiring that Information Management Systems Be Employed During All Activations

SUMMARY

Emergency operations center (EOC) managers should consider requiring that the EOC's information management system be employed in all activations, regardless of the magnitude of the event. This can help to develop and maintain the ability of EOC personnel to use the system.

DESCRIPTION

On May 1 and 2, 2010, severe storms brought record-setting torrential rain to Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee. Rainfall amounts over a 38-hour period ranged from 13.57 inches at Nashville International Airport to 17.67 inches in the Bellevue area. The unprecedented rains resulted in flash floods and river flooding beginning mid-day on May 1, pushing water and debris into roads and properties. The Cumberland River and Mill Creek each exceeded their respective flood stages by more than 11 feet. From May 1 to 3, 2010, the Cumberland River at Nashville rose from 18 feet to a crest of 51.86 feet. The floods resulted in 10 deaths, damage to more than 10,900 structures, and billions of dollars worth of damages to public infrastructure, making it the costliest disaster in the history of Nashville and Davidson County.

Davidson County is located in central Tennessee and has a population of 626,681 (as of 2010). Nashville is its largest city and serves as both the county seat and the capital of Tennessee. Nashville and Davidson County has a consolidated city-county government structure.

On May 1, 2010, as flooding began to impact Nashville, the Nashville Mayor's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) fully activated the Nashville and Davidson County EOC. By 7 p.m. that evening, dozens of city, county, state, voluntary, and private sector agencies had deployed representatives to the EOC. The EOC remained activated around-the-clock for the next 2 weeks as it coordinated a variety of operational activities, including water rescues, the protection of critical infrastructure, the procurement and delivery of resources, the release of emergency public information, and many other



Flooding in Nashville (Source: FEMA)

emergency response activities.

During the activation, many EOC personnel relied on face-to-face conversations to convey information to other agency representatives in the EOC. However, in some cases, these EOC personnel did not document the information from the conversation into WebEOC, the information management system used by the EOC. Consequently, the EOC's WebEOC system did not have all critical agency events, significant events, or the requested resources. The failure to record this data in WebEOC meant that the critical information was not disseminated to all EOC personnel. Further, it increased the difficulty of documenting times and dates in EOC reports. The Nashville and Davidson County after action report (AAR) noted that while most EOC personnel had received WebEOC training, many did not demonstrate the necessary level of proficiency during the flood operations.

The AAR recommended that OEM undertake measures to increase WebEOC proficiency of EOC personnel. It noted that requiring the use of WebEOC during all activations, even partial ones, could help personnel become accustomed to using the system automatically. The AAR also recommended that OEM expand the use of WebEOC in exercises and simulations. The AAR observed that these measures should place greater emphasis on documenting departmental activities in WebEOC during an activation.

EOC managers should consider requiring that the EOC's information management system be employed in all activations, regardless of the magnitude of the event. This can help to develop and maintain the ability of EOC personnel to use the system.

On May 4, 2010, President Barack Obama issued a major disaster declaration (DR-1909) for severe storms and flooding in Tennessee. This declaration included Davidson County and Nashville.



**Flood Debris in Bellevue
(Source: FEMA)**

CITATIONS

Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee. *Severe Flooding May 2010 After Action Report and Improvement Plan for the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County*. 6 Jul 2011.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=52542>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. *Record Floods of Greater Nashville: Including Flooding in Middle Tennessee and Western Kentucky, May 1-4, 2010*. 11 Jan 2011.

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