

RELATED TERMS

- Winter Storm
- Presidential Disaster Declaration



Lessons Learned Information Sharing

www.LLIS.gov

LESSON LEARNED

PRIMARY DISCIPLINES

- Emergency Management
- Public Works and Engineering
- Volunteer and Donations Management

Emergency Operations Centers: Developing a Support Staff Cadre

SUMMARY

Emergency managers should work with departments and agencies to develop a cadre of employees able to respond to the emergency operations center (EOC) during their normal work hours to function as support staff during a disaster. Managers from these departments and agencies can identify possible duty officer candidates who should receive the necessary EOC training.

DESCRIPTION

During the first week of December 2007, Mason County, Washington, experienced a county-wide winter storm that caused record flooding, extreme landslide conditions, and utility failure. Debris flow from the floods closed roads and destroyed several county and private bridges. The severe weather also caused power and telephone outages that isolated many residents for up to a week. Mason County activated its EOC on December 3, 2007, and issued a local emergency proclamation within 2 hours of activation. For most of the next 2 weeks, the Mason County Department of Emergency Management (DEM) and other local agencies responded to the event. Response crews worked diligently to open roads, to remove debris and landslides, and to restore the severely impacted transportation system. On December 15, 2007, President George W. Bush issued Disaster Declaration 1734 for this disaster.

Mason County DEM held EOC activation drills and training sessions prior to the incident. However, these training sessions were not well attended by county staff members. At the time of the disaster, there were no staff members or volunteers pre-identified, trained, and dedicated to support the DEM by working shifts in the EOC during activation. The DEM issued a request for staff support and received personnel from 11 county departments and agencies. These personnel were unaware that shift work would be required and did not arrive at the EOC at consistent times. Consequently, EOC staff members spent excessive time orienting them and facilitating shift changes to ensure that they provided accurate information and completed forms correctly. The lack of a fully-trained support staff hindered information sharing and resource management.

The incident after-action report (AAR) recommended that Mason County emergency managers work with department heads to develop a list of people who have the necessary training and ability to staff the EOC during activation. The AAR also recommended identifying possible duty officer candidates from local departments and agencies to receive advanced EOC training. These people would serve as a primary point of contact for support staff members coming into the EOC during a disaster. Duty officer candidates would be able to answer questions and to provide guidance during EOC activation so that regular EOC staff members could continue their normal activities.

Emergency managers should work with departments and agencies to develop a cadre of employees able to respond to the EOC during their normal work hours to function as support staff during a disaster. Managers from other departments and agencies can identify possible duty officer candidates who should receive the necessary EOC training.

CITATION

Mason County, Washington. *Mason County After Action Report/Improvement Plan December 2007 Winter Storm (FEMA-1734-DR-WA)*. 26 Mar 2008.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=32544>

DISCLAIMER

Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS.gov) is the US Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency's national online network of lessons learned, best practices, and innovative ideas for the emergency response and homeland security communities. The Web site and its contents are provided for informational purposes only, without warranty or guarantee of any kind, and do not represent the official positions of the US Department of Homeland Security. For more information on *LLIS.gov*, please email Feedback@llis.dhs.gov or visit www.llis.gov.