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LESSON LEARNED

READY WHEN THE TIME COMES PROGRAM: MANITOU SPRINGS 2013 FLASH FLOOD

SUMMARY

An interview with Dr. Lizabeth Jordan, Director, Volunteer and Emergency Services at the American Red Cross, revealed the success of the American Red Cross *Ready When the Time Comes* (RWTC) program in Manitou Springs, Colorado during the 2013 flooding. Thanks in part to the RWTC program and proactive staging of supplies by American Red Cross Pikes Peak Chapter CEO Thomas Gonzalez, Manitou Springs was prepared to respond effectively and efficiently.

DESCRIPTION

On August 9, 2013, Manitou Springs, a small tourist town outside of Colorado Springs, experienced a flash flood. The flood came a year after the Waldo Canyon fire that left few trees and plants to absorb the rain, leading to the flood and subsequent landslide. Manitou Springs sustained damage to homes, businesses, roads, and bridges.¹

During the summer months, Dr. Lizabeth Jordan established a plan with the city of Manitou Springs and a local church to coordinate volunteers from local businesses through the [RWTC](#) program. The RWTC program was started 12 years ago by the American Red Cross and is a corporate volunteer program, comprised of local private sector volunteers and businesses. The American Red Cross trains corporate employees from partnering businesses and mobilizes them as a community-based volunteer force when disaster strikes. All critical disaster zones in the United States have established a RWTC program.²

This Lessons Learned document focuses on the American Red Cross's RWTC program and emphasizes the success of the program in Manitou Springs. Dr. Jordan stated that the Manitou Springs community, "learned how to be proactive rather than reactive." The program positively impacted the community and their ability to respond and recover from the damage of the flood and landslides.



Colorado home affected by flooding and landslide
(Source: FEMA.gov)

ESTABLISHING A PLAN

Establishing a plan specific to a community's critical needs ensures their ability to adequately respond to disasters. Through the RWTC program, Dr. Jordan worked with volunteer teams from local businesses in Manitou Springs to establish a plan that would prepare the community for flooding that was more likely to occur after the fires experienced

in the previous year. Dr. Jordan and American Red Cross Pikes Peak Chapter CEO Thomas Gonzalez coordinated with the police chief, business owners, and leadership of Manitou Springs to establish a plan in anticipation of flooding that could potentially close the main highway, Highway 24. The closure of Highway 24 would significantly limit access to Manitou Springs. It was critical to establish a plan to ensure the city could support its citizens and tourists until outside help arrived while road closures were in place. The plan also included establishing a staging area for supplies, identifying an evacuation center that could be converted to a shelter at night, and providing mass care training for volunteers and businesses assisting during a disaster.³



Road closures resulting from Colorado flooding and landslide
(Source: FEMA.gov)

SUCCESS

When the flood and landslide hit Manitou Springs, the pre-established plan allowed the community to effectively and efficiently respond. As anticipated, outside help was delayed due to road closures and safety issues. The American Red Cross pre-staged trained volunteers before the road closure occurred and then sent additional volunteers once roads were reopened. In the interim the local businesses and churches took responsibility for tourist and resident safety. Local businesses helped tourists and local customers get to higher ground and to the evacuation center during the flash flood warnings. The RWTC program prepared and empowered the community to be resilient.⁴

REFERENCES

¹ State of Colorado

<https://colorado.gov>

² American Red Cross *Ready When the Time Comes*.

<http://www.redcross.org/supporters/corporate-foundations/ready-when-the-time-comes>

³ Interview with Dr. Lizabeth Jordan, El Paso County Emergency Program Manager. September 28, 2013.

⁴ Ibid.

DISCLAIMER

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