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LESSON LEARNED

Emergency Operations: Including Global Positioning System Coordinates in Communications with Responders

SUMMARY

Emergency operations centers (EOC) should consider including Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates of key locations in their communications with emergency responders during incidents. This will enable responders to locate command centers, reception centers, fuel points, and other locations more easily.

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.

As Hurricane Dean approached landfall, EOCs in the Alamo area prepared to evacuate residents from threatened localities. Emergency managers deployed buses, responders, and transports to staging areas. Many of these resources experienced difficulties reaching these locations, however, due to insufficient road signage. In one case, responders received messages that conflicted with signage for the staging area at the Kelly Air Force Base. The Alamo area Hurricane Dean after-action report recommended that the state operations center consider including GPS coordinates in communications with responders to help eliminate confusion.

EOCs should consider including GPS coordinates of key locations in their communications with emergency responders during incidents. This will enable responders to locate command centers, reception centers, fuel points, and other locations more easily.

CITATION

State of Texas Emergency Management, Governor's Division of Emergency Management. *2007 Hurricane Dean After-Action Report*. 26 Nov 2007.
<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=32494>

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