



LESSON LEARNED

Using Exercises to Identify Whole Community Resources: South Carolina's 2013 Hurricane Table Top Exercise

September 4, 2015

SUMMARY

On July 16, 2013, the South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD) hosted a six-hour tabletop exercise (TTX) for members of its Housing Solutions Task Force (SCHSTF) to test the *South Carolina Disaster Housing Plan*. The *Plan* was South Carolina's first attempt at formalizing a disaster housing response and officials had not tested it in an exercise or real-world disaster. The TTX revealed a number of capabilities that were available to the State but previously unidentified. South Carolina is using the results of the exercise to update the *Plan* and strengthen statewide disaster-housing response.

DESCRIPTION

The exercise simulated a Category 3 hurricane making landfall in Georgetown and Horry Counties and covered a 28-day time span, beginning 48 hours post-landfall. The exercise included simulated damages to over 27,000 homes and incorporated a mock Presidential Disaster Declaration and Governor-declared State of Emergency. FEMA Region IV, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and multiple state agencies participated. Representatives from several non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as three county-level emergency management departments, also took part in the exercise.

Exercise Outcomes: Newly-Identified Resources

The inclusion of local and NGO participants in the exercise revealed capabilities available in a disaster housing response that the *Plan* had not accounted for. Participating NGOs self-identified contributions they could make to a housing mission as specific challenges unfolded during the TTX. These newly-identified resources included the following:

- **SC Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) Member Organizations**
 - Assistance with rapid temporary repairs to damaged residences;
 - Volunteers, credentialed personnel, and resources from partner organizations outside the disaster area;
 - Information dissemination mechanisms to inform homeowners about options and resources for reconstruction; and

Exercise Overview

Purpose

- Test South Carolina's Disaster Housing Plan

Objectives

- Identify resources and capabilities at all levels of government, non-profit, and private sectors necessary to repair and/or restore residential properties following a disaster;
- Identify the actions of each member of the SCHSTF during all stages of a disaster housing response; and
- Determine the roles and responsibilities of each member during a disaster housing mission.

- Volunteer hours that could count towards reimbursable recovery spending under FEMA recovery cost-share programs.
- **SocialServe and SCHousingSearch.com**
 - A list of available rental properties;
 - The ability to match disaster survivors—including individuals with access and functional needs—with housing options; and
 - Rumor control and information dissemination through a dedicated call center.
- **Damage Assessment Tools**
 - Real-time imagery from the South Carolina National Guard;
 - Data from FEMA satellite flyovers; and
 - Data from FEMA’s Individual Assistance applications.

Revising the Housing Plan

As a result of the exercise, SCEMD is revising the *South Carolina Disaster Housing Plan* in order to ensure all housing options available to the state are accessible in a single document. This revision includes incorporating updates from the TTX after action report and the newly identified capabilities listed above. In addition, other members of SCHSTF are providing input to the *Plan* to ensure whole community representation, and SCEMD is working with counties to increase local participation in the SCHSTF and understand their resource needs. Emergency managers in other jurisdictions can conduct similar tests of their own housing plans to identify new capabilities to improve disaster housing response and recovery.

REFERENCES

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South Carolina Emergency Management Division. *South Carolina Housing Solutions Task Force Tabletop Exercise: After Action Report/Improvement Plan*. December 2013.

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