Introduction

With all the large-scale disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, flooding, hazardous materials transportation incidents and wildland fires, fire departments are finding a need to incorporate emergency management into their daily operations. More people being affected by these disasters because more people are living closer to the natural environments of our oceans and scenic wildlands.

Recently, the role of the emergency manager has been in response to terrorist assaults on the country. Terrorists use many of the same materials we find in our industrial accidents. Therefore, the emergency manager must be able to rapidly detect and assess situations, mobilize resources and organize their response to limit the casualties and damage affiliated with such acts.

The main role of the emergency manager, however, is to prevent or reduce the loss that occurs due to these hazards, disasters and emergencies. Generally, the losses are calculated on the number of deaths and injuries that occur, along with the amount of property damage from such events. To have an effective emergency management program the emergency manager should focus on improving the public awareness of the hazards in their area. Notice that I said "in their area." Emergency management is a local job and is used to have an influence on local events and consequences. In the National Response Plan put out by FEMA, it states that the local jurisdictions must be able to operate without external help for a period of 72 hours after a hazard impact occurs.

Planning therefore becomes a key element within the emergency manager's scope. They need to identify hazards, estimate the probability and project the consequences. The emergency manager also needs to get the communities involved. Communities need to develop their own hazard management strategies.

Four areas that are used to assist this process are:
• Hazard mitigation
• Emergency preparedness
• Emergency response
• Disaster recovery

Hazard mitigation seeks to address the causes of disasters, while trying to reduce the likelihood they will occur,

or finding ways to limit their impacts. This is easier said than done! In many cases it is hard to change a natural event, but human behavior towards them can be changed. Reducing technological hazards is done by controlling the hazard agent or by controlling the human use of the products.

Preparedness consists of plans, procedures, and resources and must be taken into consideration in advance and deliver support in a timely and effective manner. The programs need to identify the agencies that will be participating along with reasonable response and recovery actions.

Response begins at the onset of the event and locks in on protecting the population while trying to limit the damage. Also keep in mind the secondary impacts. These are events that are the direct result of the initial event, such as a mudslide after a heavy rain event.

Recovery will begin as the disaster is ending and will continue until the community is back to normal. This can take several years, as seen with Hurricane Katrina.

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