

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AS A PROFESSION

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Emergency Management as a Profession

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“The primary activities of Emergency Management and First Response differ, and they both require personnel who are competent, highly skilled, trained, and experienced in their own specific professional areas.”

Introduction

Emergency Management is a relatively new profession that has evolved from emergency services and civil defense backgrounds. Because it is relatively new, it has suffered from many growth and identity problems.

Background

In the 1970's, there was a growing awareness in the United States, that large and catastrophic disasters required extraordinary response at all levels of Federal, State and Local government. Costs of disasters in the U.S. were soaring for governments and there was a need to create a Public Law in order to provide for Federal mitigation, readiness, response and recovery structures, with resource application, in a cost-benefit manner that met the needs of the citizens and the economy. Growing populations and higher concentrations of economic resources in specific geographical areas are being adversely affected by natural and man-made disasters, and these are having greater impact on the “Quality of Life” issues in the U.S.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (U.S.) was established by the U.S. Congress in 1979. Following that, in 1988, the Federal Government passed The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, (hereafter referred to as the Stafford Act) of 1988, which replaced the Civil Defense Act of 1950. The Stafford Act provides for an “All-Hazard Authority” in dealing with risks and tasks involved in disaster activities. To administer Emergency Management programs under the Stafford Act, the Federal, State and Local governments began training individuals to perform Emergency Management functions in all levels of Government and in Non-Government Organizations (NGOs).

Standards

As the Emergency Management systems are maturing, standards are being adopted by both

the public and private sectors. Most standards are based on an integrated “all hazards” Emergency Management programs. Standards are measures of performance and readiness for Emergency Management. Because standards are being adopted, Emergency Managers must be able to incorporate comprehensive policies and procedures based on these standards into their management plans and programs. This requires both training and application of leadership and management skills. The National Fire Protection Association (USA) has published the NFPA 1600 Standard on Disaster /Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs. The NFPA 1600 will require those engaged in the Emergency Management career field to perform at a higher professional level.

Discussion

With the creation of the Federal Emergency Management Agency in the United States, the profession of Emergency Management came into its own. Emergency Management differs from the Emergency Services (ES), sometimes referred to as “First Response” disciplines, which are familiar to most people. First Response disciplines are usually linked to personnel in fire, police, Emergency Medical Services, and public works (civil engineers) services. From the beginning, Emergency Management as a profession has been misunderstood as a distinct and separate career field from other ES professions.

What distinguishes Emergency Management from the other more traditional ES disciplines is in the nature and character of its activities and roles in disaster readiness and response. First response can be considered more tactical in application of management principals, while Emergency Management is more strategic and long range. First Response generally operates in an emergency environment which is smaller in scope (small geographical area, fewer people and economic resources affected). Both Emergency Management and First Response are valuable community resources. For an "All Hazards" approach as outlined in the Stafford Act, Emergency Management is "longer in range" and must cross more of the traditional political, bureaucratic and administrative boundaries (sometimes called "partnering") in order to lessen the impacts of a major disaster on a geographical area. At the Federal level, this “partnering” has been formalized in the Federal Response Plan. Mitigation and preparation are the main focus for Emergency Management. Conversely, Response and Recovery are the main focus of First Response, and both operate together strategically and tactically as conditions dictate. Because recovery is usually a long-term activity, Emergency Management is also heavily engaged in

programs for Business Recovery, Individual and Public Assistance (Government to Government) programs.

Conclusions

In their primary and “strategic” roles, Emergency Managers must analyze the threat to economic and population centers; determine the significance of that threat, gauge the potential scope of the threat (size and impact); project threat frequency and provide a course of action (Emergency Operations Plan) for governing bodies. They must also identify, satisfy and coordinate requirements that are identified in risk (threat) analysis through application of assets in geographically administered areas by integrating and using Academic, Business & Industry, Government, and Volunteer resources. Emergency managers also are required to tactically respond in support of the Emergency Operations Plan when circumstances dictate. They are often in charge of Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) with critical information and communications resources during large disasters and catastrophes.

Money and fiscal policy are required for viable Emergency Management programs in order to man, equip, train, and maintain a "state of readiness." Motivation to mitigate and reduce or negate disaster impacts will determine the level of readiness of a geographical area. It takes a certain amount of fiscal resource to perform this strategic function. Governing bodies are an integral part of Emergency Management programs because they are the legal bodies that set policy, enact legislation and have the legal authority over how public and private monies are acquired, used and disposed of. Emergency managers must work with governing bodies to create public policy, strategically plan, and to reduce or eliminate duplication of effort or misapplication of resources.

Coordination and strategic planning between resource owners to satisfy disaster requirements is a key responsibility of the Emergency Manager. This management effort will produce the some of the best cost-benefit outcomes possible in the saving of lives and the protection of property.

Recommendation

Anyone engaged in emergency management should continue with self-improvement, education, and training opportunities. Emergency Management requires an individual with a breadth and depth of professional experience in academia, government, business, or a volunteer organization specializing in emergency or disaster activities. A four-year college degree or equivalency is helpful with a major in Emergency Management, Public and/or Business Administration, Political Science, or Urban Planning. An advanced College Degree

in these majors would be better. Leadership and management skills coupled with technical competency in communications, information systems, and public speaking is a must.

Having achieved that level of professional competence, peer recognition via certification is highly desirable!

References

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Student Manual (SM 230), Introduction to Emergency Management, FEMA Emergency Management Institute, July 1990. pp. II-18 to II-II-25.

Notes

Crews, David T., This article is adapted from previous articles in the American Society of Professional Emergency Planners (ASPEP) and an electronic article posted on the Emergency Management Gold! by David Crews <<http://www.disasters.org/emgold>>

Copies of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 93-288 as Amended, 42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq, The Federal Response Plan (FRP), as amended, and the FEMA State and Local Planning Guide (SLG 101) can be obtained in hard copy free of charge from the FEMA Distribution Center, 8231 Stayton Drive, Jessup, Maryland 20794 or by calling 1-800-480-2520.

The International Association of Emergency Managers offers a Certified Emergency Management (CEM) program. The website is at: <<http://www.iaem.com>> There are other professional disaster and Emergency Management Associations as well.

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