

Cowlitz County Department of Emergency Management

Annual Report

2013

This report summarizes activities and accomplishments of the Cowlitz County Emergency Management Department (DEM) during 2013. Following that summary, we have also listed the DEM goals and objectives for 2014.

Plans

Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP)

This plan was completely updated and approved by Washington State Emergency Management Division (WAEMD) in July. An updated, current CEMP with its included 15 Emergency Support Functions (ESF) is the pre-requisite for the annual application, qualification, and receipt of Federal grant funding through the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) program.

Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP)

After four years in the making and many Federal hurdles to jump through in the last twelve months due to changing Federal guidance, FEMA finally approved the Cowlitz County Hazard Mitigation Plan and its 21 Annexes in October. The Cowlitz Wahkiakum Council Of Governments (CWCOG) collaborated with DEM in the development of this plan, which was partially funded through a Federal grant program. The approval of this plan is a pre-requisite to apply for any Hazard Mitigation project grants in the future.

Vulnerable Populations Emergency Plan – Second Phase

The original, basic Vulnerable Populations Emergency Plan was developed in 2011. In May, the second phase of this plan which concentrated on notification, communications, and evacuation / transportation was finished with the help of the Cowlitz Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG).

Outreach

DEM organized and conducted a total of 45 Public Education Events in 2013, i.e., almost one each week. Approximately 160 hours were logged teaching emergency and disaster preparedness and response to the public (including schools) using all kinds of media, tools, venues, and guest speakers.

Training

Incident Command System (ICS) - Refresher Workshops at St John Medical Center (SJMC)

In January, DEM conducted a workshop for SJMC's Command and General Staff reviewing emergency planning and disaster operations procedures and protocols.

Incident Command System (ICS) – Tabletop Exercise at St John Medical Center (SJMC)

As an “add-on” to the above listed workshop, DEM facilitated a tabletop exercise (TTX) for SJMC’s Command and General Staff implementing and drilling emergency operations and planning using a hospital evacuation scenario.

EOC Workshop

In September, in preparation for the winter season, DEM conducted a workshop on Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activations and operations with the volunteers who would staff the EOC in case of activation.

Cowlitz County Multi-Agency-Coordination Group (MAC-G) Policy Group

This MAC-G “Policy Group” consists of elected officials and/or their delegates from the County and the five cities in the County. During large scale emergencies/disasters, members of the MAC-G set policy on scarce and critical resource allocations under high demand for these resources, cancellations of public events, evacuations, quarantine, etc. The MAC-G met in June and October to discuss, finalize, and agree on Cowlitz County MAC-G procedures to be followed if activated. The Cowlitz County MAC-G also interfaces with the Homeland Security Region 4 MAC-G, which includes Wahkiakum, Clark, and Skamania County’s policy groups and would be activated during a “Region 4 – wide” emergency or disaster to jointly make policy decisions for the whole four-county region.

Exercises

Washington State Annual Bioterrorism Exercise (WASABE)

In May, together with Cowlitz Public Health, DEM participated in a three-day full-scale exercise which included Clark, Skamania, Wahkiakum counties and the Portland Metro Area responding to a bioterrorism attack using Anthrax. During the seven months leading up to the exercise, DEM participated in all planning meetings and conferences to ensure realistic exercise objectives were set. This exercise was partially funded through a Homeland Security grant.

Active Shooter Exercise RECOIL

In September, DEM participated in an active shooter scenario played out on the LCC Campus together with LCC, St John Medical Center, Longview Police, Cowlitz Sheriff’s Office, Kelso Police, Longview Fire, EMR, and Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue. In the eight months prior to this full-scale exercise (which included over 120 participants) DEM participated in all planning meetings and conferences. This exercise was partially funded through a Homeland Security grant.

EOC Readiness

In an effort to further enhance the Emergency Operations Center’s (EOC) readiness to activate expeditiously, new position binders and job-checklists were developed for each position of General and Command Staff. These checklist-type resources reduce the need (time) to brief EOC staff on the basics, such as email addresses, websites, etc. and enable them to be fully productive with a minimum of ramp-up time. Furthermore, each major General and Command Staff position now has its own new

position email address based on the “gmail.com” platform rather than the County’s system. This makes it easier for EOC staff to use their own laptops/iPads/Smart-phones via WiFi to accomplish their tasks – especially since the EOC does not provide computers to these positions.

ECNS Call Outs

On 33 occasions, the Emergency Community Notification System (ECNS) – aka “Reverse-911” – has been used in 2013 for notification of the public as well as for call-outs/activation of Search and Rescue Teams and SWAT operators.

Supporting First Responder Operations

On numerous occasions during 2013, upon request of an Incident Commander in the field, DEM has stood ready to assist with coordination and support to response operations. In addition to normal office hours, an Emergency Management Duty Officer is on call 24/7/365 and reachable through 911-Dispatch. In this manner, DEM primarily supports Incident Command with notifications (public, government, volunteers), public information (including social media), resource procurement, reporting, etc.

Supporting SAR / Dive / Swift-Water Responses through Volunteer Organizations

DEM also supported volunteer response missions of Cowlitz County Search and Rescue, Dive Team, Auxiliary Communications Services (Amateur Radio communications support) through notification, resource procurement, administrative matters, reporting, etc. In 2013, these volunteers provided the following services at no cost to the County:

- Cowlitz County Search and Rescue had 28 call-outs with 243 personnel spending over 1,600 hours, accomplishing 6 “finds” and assisting in 6 additional “finds.” Additionally, the Team spent over 4,000 hours in training, exercising, and public events.
- The Dive Team had 17 activations with 53 responders for a total of 113 mission hours accomplishing 5 rescues/recoveries. The Team spent almost 1,000 hours in training and public education events.
- The Auxiliary Communications Services provided mission support through auxiliary communications on 16 activations through 72 mission radio operators for a total of 500 mission hours. Additionally, they spent over 1,300 hours on training and exercise events.

Meetings

DEM regularly participates in coordination meeting with groups such as Local Emergency Planning Committee, Regional (SW Washington) Emergency Management, Vulnerable Populations Group, Homeland Security (HLS) Region 4 Coordinating Council, HLS Region 4 Technical Committee, Fire Chiefs, Public Health Coalition, and Safe Schools.

Other

Together with 12 local emergency management directors, the Cowlitz County DEM Director serves on the Washington State Emergency Management Advisory Group (EMAG) whose mission is to advise the

State Emergency Management Division (EMD) Director on issues impacting state, local, and tribal emergency management and the distribution of Federal (FEMA) Emergency Management Program Funds throughout the State.

Social Media Engagement

DEM is pretty much “setting the standard” for social media use by emergency services and responder agencies and organizations.

- In 2013, DEM posted almost 100 times on its Facebook site, providing valuable information to its 2,800+ followers.
- The DEM blog has over 200 subscribers benefitting from over 150 blog posts in 2013.
- The DEM’s two Twitter accounts (one for preparedness purposes and one strictly for emergency messaging) have a total of over 800 followers who received over 350 tweets (of which 27 were emergency-related tweets) in 2013.

Department of Emergency Management

Objectives for 2014

Grants

- Secure increased funding through EMPG and SHSP (Next grant cycles EMPG-E15 for \$40k+ to receive by August, and SHSP-E14 for \$ 50k+ to receive by May)
- Semi-annual and close-out grant reports to State (JAN, JUN, and SEP)
- Closing grants on time and spending awarded funds as close to zero as possible
- Seek additional grant funding for EOC improvements and volunteer Emergency Services groups (ongoing weekly reconnaissance)

Planning

- Transportation/Evacuation Plan and MOUs (by OCT with all CEMP stakeholders)
- Review/update evacuation plans - Woodland & Kelso/Longview (by OCT with all relevant stakeholders)
- Improved interface/collaboration with SAR & other volunteer Emergency Services (develop and agree to protocol/procedures)
- Improved interface/collaboration with 911-Dispatch (develop and agree to protocol/procedures)
- ACS - amateur communications enhancement project (Project Lifesaver, river gages)

Operations

- Provide duty officer coverage (24-7-365)
- Enhance support of operational activities for all disciplines (Interface with appropriate sized incident ICPs – set criteria for initiation of interaction)
- Enhance Social Media and other public information support for all agencies (proactively support ICs with social media engagement, regardless of discipline/agency)
- Research, determine, and seek funding for a low-cost teleconferencing option (by June)

Outreach

- Sustain aggressive public education activities (same engagement as 2013)
- Outreach to mid-size and small businesses via Chamber or similar (by May engage with the Chamber(s) for activities, presentations, newsletter, etc.)
- Sustain/enhance connections with educational stakeholders (continue Safe Schools engagement and expand further throughout the year)

Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

- Continue development/update to the EOC position manuals (for all C&G Positions by JUN and ongoing)
- Technology simplification for immediate operational effectiveness of EOC (establish protocol with IT re laptop deployment during activation, printer issue resolved by AUG)
- EOC position email addresses (for all C&G Positions by JUN)

- Alternate EOC preparation ([re-select, deployment plan, pre-position](#))

Collaboration

- Participation in the Region 4 meetings or conference calls - Reg4 DEM Group, Training/Exercise Subcommittee, Technical Committee, Council ([each month](#))
- Participation in the State's DEM meetings or conference calls ([as required](#))

Compliance

- Participate in the annual financial audit processes as required ([as required](#))
- Participate in statewide data calls, providing timely response to the requested level of data ([as required](#))
- Coordinate County-wide NIMS compliance activities and reports ([annual assessment in SEP](#))

Training

- Training EOC volunteer staff – e.g., G-191 course, workshop ([by OCT](#))
- ICS-300 and maybe ICS-400 course ([in MAR](#))
- ICS Refresher Workshops - Position-Specific Courses (4) ([JAN, FEB, MAR](#))

Exercises

- Region 4 Policy Group/ MAC-G tabletop exercise ([by JUN](#))
- Vulnerable Populations Evacuation Tabletop Exercise ([by OCT](#))
- EOC activation drill with response-related tasks during the activation and recovery-related tasks post-activation ([by NOV](#))
- Volunteer agencies' interoperable communications exercise ([by JUN](#))
- Volunteer agencies' full-scale exercise ([by SEP](#))