



CITY OF KIRKLAND

Fire & Building Department

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MEMORANDUM

To: Dave Ramsay, City Manager

From: Helen Ahrens-Byington, Deputy Chief

Date: September 19, 2006

Subject: Status of Emergency Preparedness

On the September 5th, 2006 City Council meeting there was a request for a status update on Emergency Preparedness for the City of Kirkland. Listed below are some past accomplishments and concerns with, updates included.

Accomplishments:

- The city's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) was approved by the State EMD
- A Terrorism Annex was developed and added to the CEMP
- Grant monies in the amount of \$2,029,291 was applied for and \$671,119 were awarded to Kirkland (some are regional grants).
- Emergency Operations Center (EOC) drills were held to familiarize staff with the set up of the center
- CEMP overview training was provided for the city council
- New phones for ECC have been purchased
- Updated ECC Procedures Manual as of February 2006
- Developed and delivered a business preparedness educational program; in a by request manner only
- Developed and delivering a home preparedness educational program; in a by request manner only
- Started the Citizen Emergency Response Team (CERT) program (Dec 05). We have trained approximately 42 citizens in 2 classes, to date.
- Updated the City's Hazard Vulnerability Assessment
- Completed the City's portion and are a part of the King County All Hazard Mitigation Plan that has been approved by the Department of Homeland Security
- Trained all Fire and Police Department personnel and 62 city staff members assigned to work in the ECC on the National Incident Management System (NIMS) IS 700 class (NIMS Awareness Course)
- Established backup radio communications systems with the AERS Group
- Appointed Helen Ahrens-Byington to Deputy Chief Administration to oversee Emergency Preparedness.

Update

- Reactivated the City EMAT (Emergency Management Action Team) which consists of one person from each department within the City.
- Each Section within the EOC plan will have completed a training session by the middle of October.
- The City's EOC will be participating in a regional activation drill in November.
- Made contact with Evergreen Hospital Emergency Coordinator and joined their Emergency Planning Team.
- Increased the City of Kirkland employee NIMS required training, 90% of all City employees have completed the required NIMS training (IS 100, and NIMS 700)
- The City Council has had a study session on emergency preparedness and has begun to complete NIMS training
- The City Council adopted the Federal NIMS standards
- The City of Kirkland has been reporting biannually to the State on our NIMS compliance
- Two City Council members graduated from the third CERT class
- We are in the process of teaching the 4th CERT class with a City council member attending; there is also a waiting list large enough to fill another class.
- Purchased and filled employee disaster storage supply containers (caches) and installed them at the fire stations and other City facilities.

Concerns:

- Emergency Preparedness and Homeland Security is changing faster than we are able to keep up
- The Emergency Preparedness Coordinator's position is unfunded
- Part time activities are only producing an absolute minimum of preparedness
- Unable to start our business recovery plan to minimize the impacts of loss of our business tax base
- Need staff to coordinate the CERT program; a lot of citizen interest, no one to focus on volunteer & program management
- Unable to take full advantage of the many grant opportunities

Update

- There has not been enough time to start making necessary contacts and relationships with organizations and businesses within the City of Kirkland
- There has not been the time to order and purchase equipment for the EOC
- The City of Kirkland website and the City intra-web site needs to be updated
- City of Kirkland employees need to have personal emergency preparedness training so they (and their families) are prepared at home; this will ensure they are ready to work for the City during a disaster
- Need to complete the rest of the NIMS required training for City employees, ICS 200, 300 and 400
- Need to review CEMP and EOC manual every 2 years, required by FEMA, CEMP due by Jan. 2007, EOC due by Feb. 2008
- Coordination and development of a city wide Citizen Corp to include the needed coordination of the CERT volunteers
- Develop a disaster plan to help special population in the City of Kirkland
- Need to develop a recovery plan
- Need to develop a plan to prepare for and operate through a Flu Pandemic
- Develop and practice the EAS (Emergency Alert System)

- Purchase and train staff on a notification system for EOC activation and disaster response.

As you can see the accomplishments are mainly tasks completed and the concerns are broader in nature and identify our inability to address numerous tasks needing to be completed. We have been able to take part in some regional coordination but have been unable to do much City of Kirkland coordination

We have made some progress towards being better prepared for a disaster in Kirkland. While the progress is slow and sometimes sporadic; I want to recognize the work of Deputy Chief Henderson and others; they split time with an already full workload in their primary areas of responsibilities and put forth a great effort towards making Kirkland more prepared. Given the past minimal level of commitment that has been placed on emergency preparedness in the city, we are getting a good return for our efforts. In my professional opinion the commitment level must be immediately reevaluated; especially in light of many significant disasters which have left cities and counties unable to respond to the needs of their citizens. Many of our neighboring Cities have at least 1 full time emergency manager with several having 3 or more employees in their Emergency Management division.

It is clear that citizens will place a high demands on our emergency response system; which would immediately overwhelm our resources to deal with emergencies. Having a plan to deal with our lack of resources will become the most important thing we can do. Preparing our city is critical for elected official; if you look at how the media has played out the events of Hurricane Katrina; you can see the tremendous scrutiny and finger pointing at elected officials for the outcomes of this disaster. We can't prepare for everything, but we must get better prepared. It would be my recommendation to immediately address three top priority items in emergency preparedness. They are;

- Hiring of a full time Emergency Preparedness Coordinator
- Bringing the ECC up to standards in all aspects of preparedness
- Fund a Public Education campaign on citizen preparedness

The events of 9-11, Nisqually earthquake, numerous hurricanes, especially Katrina, Rita and Wilma, and tsunami disasters have heightened awareness and the need for adequate planning locally. If we have a desire to be prepared and respond to the needs of the community; we must increase our commitment to emergency preparedness now.