RELATED TERMS

- Incident Alerts
- Situational Reporting
- Emergency Operations Center

Lessons Learned Information Sharing
www.LLIS.gov

BEST PRACTICE

PRIMARY DISCIPLINES

- Emergency Communications
- Emergency Management
- Private Sector

Public-Private Partnerships for Emergency Preparedness: Emergency Communications

PURPOSE

Discuss how public and private sector partners can establish methods of cross-sector communication during emergencies.

SUMMARY

Both the public and private sectors mobilize resources and take act respond to and recover from emergencies. However, public and private sector groups often fail to communicate effectively in order to coordinate these efforts. Established methods of emergency communication between the public and private sectors promote coordinated response and recovery efforts and help ensure that informed decisions are made across sectors.

DESCRIPTION

Public and private sector responders require effective, established methods of communication to coordinate and manage emergency response operations. During an emergency, on-scene private sector responders need to receive situation updates from, request assistance from, and report on unfolding events to public sector agencies. Likewise, public sector responders need to communicate with on-site private sector responders to manage and control the incident site.

Private sector firms not directly impacted by an incident will also require current, detailed information on response and recovery efforts in order to mitigate the incident's impact on their own business operations and assess and respond to any related threats. For example, local businesses with headquarters or other facilities located across the country may require up-to-date information on incidents occurring in those jurisdictions to initiate response and recovery procedures. Similarly, public sector agencies conducting response and recovery operations will need information on private sector activities to coordinate resources and efforts effectively.

This Best Practice examines how public and private sector partners establish methods of communication that enable responders from both sectors to share incident information, provide instant situation updates, and control rumors during emergencies. Methods of emergency communication can include maintaining contact information for private sector essential personnel, issuing incident alerts, enabling

Emergency Planning

The private sector is often unable to act on information in coordination with public sector agencies without procedures in place. To supplement emergency communications, public and private sector partners can develop joint emergency response and recovery plans. For more information on developing joint plans, see the *Lessons Learned Information Sharing* Best Practice: Public-Private Partnerships for Emergency Preparedness: Joint Emergency Planning (*LLIS.gov* ID# 15637).

situational reporting for private sector groups, and establishing private sector representation at an Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Private Sector Representation at an Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

During a large-scale emergency, private sector groups will frequently request information, submit incident updates, or voice concerns to their State or local EOC. Many EOCs have established a private sector liaison to address these concerns, but they can be overwhelmed by redundant communications to and from multiple private sector groups. To make public-private communications more efficient during emergencies, jurisdictions including Chicago and New York City have established private sector seats at the EOC. Public-private partnerships can agree on private sector EOC representatives' responsibilities and develop plans to activate and implement private sector representation during emergencies.

Designate Representatives and Establish Responsibilities

Public and private sector partners first designate one or more private sector representatives. Representatives that perform this role on behalf of industries or professional associations, rather than a single business, better ensure broad coverage of private sector interests. A representative should have significant experience with the private sector industry or association being represented.

Next, public and private sector partners establish the roles and responsibilities of private sector EOC representatives. Typical responsibilities include gathering relevant information from the EOC for dissemination to private sector groups, soliciting private sector incident reports and other information and relaying them to the appropriate EOC staff, and advocating private sector interests and concerns to emergency managers. Rules governing the private sector's ability to relay information received through the EOC to the media and other issues should also be agreed upon in advance.

Private Sector EOC Representative

For an example of a private sector EOC representative's duties, see ChicagoFIRST's (http://www.chicagofirst.org/) sample EOC Analyst Position Description, included as Appendix 1 in Improving Business Continuity in the Financial Services Sector: A Model for Starting Regional Coalitions (http://www.fsscc.org/reports/ChicagoFIRSTHandbook.pdf).

Develop Plans and Procedures for Private Sector Representation

Public and private sector partners should establish plans addressing procedures for activating and implementing the private sector EOC seat. Established plans and procedures should be communicated to all partners in advance of an emergency. Typically, the EOC's private sector liaison is responsible for managing all private sector representatives' needs at the EOC. Plans for private sector EOC representation should consider:

- **Types of incidents that will activate the EOC seat:** Public and private sector partners should agree on which incidents activate private sector EOC representation and the procedures for mobilizing private sector representatives in advance of an emergency. Limiting the type of incidents that require a private sector representative to those with a clear impact on business and industry can help avoid crowding of the EOC during other emergencies. It is important to note when limiting private sector representatives that large corporations are affected by almost all large-scale incidents.
- **The placement of representatives within the EOC:** Public-private partnerships can also agree on the placement of private sector representatives within the EOC in advance of emergencies to reflect their number and designated responsibilities. For example, the New York EOC places its multiple business liaisons in a room adjacent

to the EOC, whereas in Chicago the single financial industry representative is placed beside individuals from the public sector.

- **Rotating shifts for representatives:** To help ensure 24-hour representation at the EOC during emergencies, participating private sector groups can establish a schedule of rotating shifts for multiple private sector representatives in emergency communications plans. For example, ChicagoFIRST established a schedule of three 8-hour shifts to be filled by three designated representatives.
- **Training and preparing representatives:** Private sector representatives should be introduced to EOC command staff before emergencies. ChicagoFIRST also recommends that private sector representatives be given advance tours of EOC facilities and trained on the Center's organization, equipment, plans, and procedures. Giving representatives copies of response plans and EOC personnel contact information in advance can also help prepare representatives for operating in the EOC during emergencies. Private sector EOC representatives can also be regularly included in public safety agencies' training exercises to test cross-sector coordination in emergencies.

Virtual Private Sector EOC Representation

As an alternative to establishing a private sector seat in the EOC, jurisdictions using WebEOC or other online emergency management software may consider allowing private sector groups to monitor communications. Though this method can limit effective cross-sector communications during emergencies, it may serve as a cost-effective method of giving the private sector access to information during emergencies.

Incident Alerts

Public-private partnerships can establish procedures and designate public sector agencies to disseminate incident alerts to partners in addition to regular public messages during emergencies. Emergency public messages may not be sufficiently detailed or be announced in time to enable private sector groups to enact emergency response plans and/or evacuate personnel. Moreover, because the private sector issues its own alerts and disseminates information to employees and stakeholders, early and accurate information is needed to control the spread of rumors. To better meet these needs, public safety agencies and private sector partners can agree on the kind of information to be included in alerts, the partner responsible for managing incident alerts, the groups that will receive them, and standards to protect sensitive information.

Determine Content of Incident Alerts

Public-private partnerships can establish the general kind of details to be included in incident alerts. Alerts should include detailed information in order to inform private sector response and recovery decisions, including the incident's:

- Type/Nature;
- Location;
- Expected impact on the surrounding area; and
- Dispatched Resources.

When appropriate, incident alerts can include additional information to provide guidance to private sector partners. Additional information like area maps, established response plans, or contact information can better inform partners' decisions following notification of an incident. Portland, Oregon's Regional Alliances for Information and Network Security (RAINS-Net): Connect and Protect (http://www.rainsnet.org/) network also supplements incident alerts with missions or steps to be taken in response to the incident. Connect and Protect tags related resources to incident alerts including geospatial imagery system (GIS) maps of the incident scene, related response plans, and contact information.

Establish a Single, Trusted Source of Incident Alerts
The spread of false information during an emergency can result in misinformed decisions, limiting the effectiveness of response operations. In order to control rumors, Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) often include a separate private sector liaison to direct all communication with private sector partners, but these liaisons can be overwhelmed by information requests during emergencies. Establishing a single, trusted, automated public sector source of incident information for private sector partners, such as an alert notification system, can assist private sector liaisons in sharing information and controlling rumors.

Public-private partnerships can establish methods to disseminate incident alerts from a single, trusted source to private sector partners to help ensure that accurate, timely information is used to make decisions. A single public sector source of incident alerts for private sector partners can also limit the spread of false information through private sector networks. A public sector agency acting as a source of incident alerts can also set standards for information security and integrity. For example, the Seattle, Washington EOC controls rumors by prohibiting business associations participating in the Business Emergency Network from modifying information disseminated to their members.

Establish Methods to Disseminate Alerts
Public-private partnerships can develop plans to post incident alerts to a website open to private sector partners or disseminate them through a network of email, phones, fax, and/or pagers. In addition, private sector partners can designate geographic areas or incident types of interest in advance, enabling public sector responders to target incident alerts during emergencies. Plans for disseminating alerts often pre-designate business associations or other groups as responsible for passing incident-related information to individual stakeholders. Pre-designating larger business associations as the initial recipient of incident alerts can help limit the number of interested parties requesting and receiving information from the public sector, freeing scarce public sector communications resources.

Situational Reporting
Public and private sector partners can also establish methods to share situational updates during emergencies. Situational updates can increase public and private sector partners' awareness of an incident's overall impact on the community and enable the public and private sectors to better coordinate response efforts and resources across sectors. Public-private partnerships can develop plans to enable private sector responders to submit information on incidents and related response activities through an established information sharing system, website, or other forum. These procedures should also clarify the information to be included, such as:

- Observed developments in the incident (e.g., spread of fire);
- Needed resources from the public sector;
- Private sector dispatched resources;

> **Information Sharing Networks**
> Public-private partnerships often disseminate incident alerts through an established information sharing network. Information sharing networks can allow partners to pre-screen the groups receiving alerts and protect sensitive information contained within. For more information on information sharing networks, see the *Lesson Learned Information Sharing* Best Practice: Public-Private Partnerships for Emergency Preparedness: Information Sharing (*LLIS.gov* ID# 15638).

- Private sector response actions taken, such as a decision to evacuate employees; and
- Extent of damages and impact.

Plans can also establish a standard, concise format for submissions so that receiving public safety agencies can easily process and compile reports.

Contact Information

Public and private sector responders can establish procedures for contacting each other directly during emergencies. Emergency contact procedures allow public sector responders to give private sector partners advance warning of an incident's predicted impact on a facility and coordinate on-scene efforts between responders from both sectors. For example, Oklahoma City emergency managers responding to the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing needed to contact a number of people from businesses and voluntary organizations for response support. As a result, the emergency managers recommended that public safety agencies maintain emergency contact information for personnel and services determined to be vital to response and recovery efforts. Private sector essential personnel can include crisis management teams, upper-level management, human resources staff, and security and safety officers at high-risk facilities.

Through public-private partnerships, public and private sector groups can share contact information and establish contact procedures to communicate with each other during emergencies. Contact information typically includes:

- Name;
- Employer;
- Title/Position;
- Primary phone number;
- Secondary phone number;
- Address; and
- Backup contact information.

Both primary and backup contacts for an agency or organization should be listed in case a primary contact cannot be reached during an emergency. Public-private partnerships can also establish phone trees, designate public sector individuals responsible for contacting private sector partners, and conduct other planning efforts to ensure contact information is used effectively during emergencies. Established procedures for contacting private sector personnel

Public-Private Relationships

Personal relationships enhance contact lists by enabling public and private sector responders to immediately recognize personnel at an incident scene. Personal relationships also help responders establish an understanding of each other's response functions and capabilities. For more information on developing public-private relationships, see the *Lessons Learned Information Sharing* Best Practice: Public-Private Partnerships for Emergency Preparedness: Developing Partnerships (*LLIS.gov* ID# 15636).

Maintaining Contact Lists

For more information on the Oklahoma City emergency managers' recommendations following the 1995 bombing, see the *Lessons Learned Information Sharing* Lesson Learned: Maintaining a Readily Available Contact List for Use in an Emergency (*LLIS.gov* ID# 7505).

Updating Contact Lists

The New Jersey Business Force's (http://www.njbusinessforce.org/) statewide resource database sends periodic, automated messages requesting updated contact information to participants. Automated requests can help ensure regularly updated information in larger contact databases with an unmanageable number of members.

should be included in training exercises. According to Oklahoma City's emergency managers, contact information should also be updated at least 4 times a year.

RESOURCES

References

Congressional Research Service. *Information Sharing for Homeland Security: A Brief Overview*. 10 January 2005. http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/RL32597.pdf

DallasALERT. *Downtown Dallas Emergency Response Resource Manual.* http://www.dallasalert.com/DDERM.pdf.

Department of the Treasury. *Improving Business Continuity in the Financial Services Sector: A Model for Starting Regional Coalitions*. December 2004. http://www.fsscc.org/reports/ChicagoFIRSTHandbook.pdf

Government Accountability Office. *Testimony of Robert F. Dacey, Director, Information Security Issues -- Critical Infrastructure Protection: Establishing Effective Information Sharing with Infrastructure Sectors*. 28 April 2004. http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04699t.pdf

Lessons Learned Information Sharing. Good Story: "Portland, Oregon's Regional Alliances for Infrastructure and Network Security (RAINS-Net): Connect and Protect". 18 April 2005. (*LLIS.gov* ID# 13448)

Lessons Learned Information Sharing. Lesson Learned: "Maintaining a Readily Available Contact List for Use in an Emergency". 19 April 2004. (*LLIS.gov* ID# 7505)

National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. *5th Public Hearing: Private-Public Sector Partnerships for Emergency Preparedness*. 19 November 2003. http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/archive/hearing5/9-11Commission_Hearing_2003-11-19.pdf

Regional Alliance for Information and Network Security (RAINS-Net). *RAINS-Net Solution Blueprint*. http://www.rainsnet.org/downloads/Intel_RAINS-Net_Solution_Blueprint.pdf.

Swan Island Networks, Inc. *Sensitive Information Exchange: A New Security Framework*. January 2004. http://www.swanisland.net/docs/0010021_RevB_SensitiveInformationExchange.pdf

The White House. *The National Strategy for the Physical Protection of Critical Infrastructure and Key Assets*. February 2003. (*LLIS.gov* ID# 11888)

Links

ChicagoFIRST: www.chicagofirst.org

DallasALERT: www.dallasalert.org

Federal Bureau of Investigation, Dallas Division, Emergency Response Network (FBI ERN): www.fbiern.org

Homeland Security Information Network-Critical Infractructure (HSIN-CI): www.swern.gov

New York City's Public-Private Emergency Planning Initiative (PEPI): http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/oem/html/programs/pepi.html

Regional Alliance for Information and Network Security (RAINS-Net): www.rainsnet.org

DISCLAIMER

This website and its contents are provided for informational purposes only and do not represent the official position of the US Department of Homeland Security or the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) and are provided without warranty or guarantee of any kind. The reader is directed to the following site for a full recitation of this Disclaimer: www.llis.gov.