EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANNING IN SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

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Solamente San Antonio (nowhere else but San Antonio)

Residents of San Antonio are justified in regarding their city as unique and as uniquely interesting. This belief is supported by the large number of visitors to the city every year.

San Antonio, Texas, has a population of approximately one million. It is the tenth most populous city in the United States. The city is notable for its cultural diversity. Approximately half the citizens are Hispanic and the Spanish influence is evident everywhere – in music, dance, architecture and in the widespread use of the Spanish language. The Mexican border is only three driving hours away and it is common to see Mexican nationals shopping in San Antonio or visiting relatives.

San Antonio has a medical school, five major universities and a large community college (two-year college) system with four campuses. These institutions contribute further to diversity by attracting students from all over the world. Two Mexican Universities have branches in the city as well.

The city is a major medical center for the South Central United States. In addition to the University hospital, there is a major Veterans Administration hospital and many private hospitals and clinics. The medical industry is a major part of the economic life of the city. The community colleges offer medical training in a number of sub-specialties such as medical imaging and local graduates are employed widely throughout the United States.

San Antonio has four major military bases and a large civilian depot where military aircraft receive periodic maintenance and refurbishment. One of the bases is the home of the Air Force's Education and Training Command. Pilot training is also conducted at this base and many foreign military officers attend this training. Another of the bases is the home of the USAF Air Intelligence Agency. Two of the bases have major

medical facilities which provide training to US Air Force and US Army personnel, and serve as specialist hospitals for their respective services. The Brook Army Medical Center has a renowned burn treatment center and a deployable team which is an element of the city's emergency response plan.

The military bases also provide Basic training to Air Force recruits, Security Police training and language training to military members from many other nations. In some cases, the foreign military personnel go on to USAF flight training or other schools for advanced training.

There is little heavy industry in the city besides stone quarrying. There are many high-tech enterprises including biotechnology developers. One of the largest insurance companies in the world is located here [1] as well as other insurance providers. Oil company management and civilian aircraft modification are other significant elements of the economy.

San Antonio is a popular location for conventions all throughout the year. It is also a very popular tourist destination with many attractions. There are festivals of different types during every month of the year and large gatherings of people are common.

The diversity of San Antonio and the military presence mean that the potential for a variety of emergency situations exists. However, the military also offers resources that can be mobilized in emergency situations. It seems only natural that the Emergency Management Plan for the city and its Direction and Control Annex should closely resemble military contingency plans in format and in content. This plan was signed by the Mayor on August 26, 2001 and the Annex was approved in April of the same year. The responsibility for the maintenance and execution of the plan is with the City of San Antonio (COSA) Fire Department.

In this report some of the elements of the plan will be quoted and others will be summarized.

Outline of the basic plan

A city Executive Group consisting of the Mayor, City Manager(s), and the Emergency Management Coordinator provides guidance and direction for emergency management programs and for emergency response and recovery operations. The responsibilities of the members of the Executive Group are clearly specified in the Basic Plan.

The Table of Contents of the Basic Plan is presented in Annex 1 to this article. Its organization is consistent with the model of Command and Control described in the Introduction to this issue of the Journal. In fact, the plan closely resembles a military

operations plan. Situation Assessment, Planning, Coordination and real-time Direction are explicitly addressed by the plan.

A particular strength of the plan is the comprehensive coverage of *coordination* with other agencies: the State of Texas, Federal, Local, private and non-governmental agencies, e.g., the Red Cross. Another strength of the plan is the explicit determination of responsibilities for reporting and Situation Assessment by the on-scene *Incident Command Post* (ICP) and the *Emergency Operations Center* (EOC).

The scope of the plan is necessarily broad, since the environment in the City is so diverse. The variety of possible hazards to be encountered is presented in a table from the plan – Hazard Summary – given as Annex 2 to this paper. Response guidelines are given for each type of hazard, but it is recognized that the Planning function continues on a real-time basis as information about the specific incident is received.

The current situation

In the ninety days following the World Trade Center attacks, bio-hazards have appeared in many places in the United States. Anthrax anxiety has proven to be challenging for local agencies in almost all cities, but there has been little impact on capital budgets in the City of San Antonio. The city had already made major capital investments to equip the Fire Department's *Hazardous Materials Response Team* which is responding to 10 times the normal volume of calls. These investments were to ensure logistics readiness consistent with the requirements in the Emergency Response plan.

Similar capital investments were made several years ago by the Metropolitan Health District which operates the disease surveillance laboratory for 46 South Texas counties, including the county in which San Antonio is located (Bexar County). The Bexar County Metropolital Health District is one of the agencies cooperating with the City of San Antonio in accordance with the Response Plan.

Although there has been no credible indication of anthrax in the State of Texas, there have been many reports of possible cases and many corresponding investigations. The Hazardous Material Response team has responded to calls 303 times, compared to 16 responses in the same period last year. More than 250 items have been tested by the city health department. None has tested positive for anthrax. Each basic laboratory culture costs about $30 to $35. In about 4 percent of the cases, additional tests are needed to confirm or deny false positive results.[2]

Concept of operations

In the Concept of Operations (CONOP), responsibilities are clearly defined and the elements of Command and Control as presented in the Introduction are explicitly

called out. Initially, the authority for response to any emergency is the senior officer on the scene.

Emergency responders from the City of San Antonio (COSA) are likely to be the first on the scene of an emergency situation. They will normally take charge and remain in charge of the incident until it is resolved or others who have legal authority to do so assume responsibility. The first responders will seek guidance and direction from COSA officials and seek technical assistance from State and Federal agencies and industry where appropriate.

The first local emergency responder to arrive at the scene of an emergency situation will implement the incident command system and serve as the *Incident Commander* until relieved by a more senior or more qualified individual. The Incident Commander will establish an Incident Command Post (ICP) and provide an assessment of the situation to local officials, identify response resources required, and direct the on-scene response from the ICP.

COSA will use its own resources to respond to emergency situations, purchasing supplies and equipment if necessary, and requesting assistance if COSA resources are insufficient or inappropriate. Bexar county will be the first channel through which the city will request assistance when its resources are exceeded. However, the presence of the military bases within a 25-kilometer radius of the center of the city means that non-civilian resources can be made available quickly and with only local coordination and approval. For example, The United States Army Fort Sam Houston is home to a major medical complex. Assigned to this complex is a renowned, deployable burn treatment team. In addition, Fort Sam has a Hazardous Materials Response Team that could supplement City resources on short notice. Lackland Air Force Base is home to Wilford Hall hospital, the largest in the US Air Force. Sufficient coordination with military resources has been done so that minimal approval would be needed in the event of an emergency requiring their assistance. Very specific direction for requesting military, County, State and/or Federal assistance is provided in the plan.

The incident command system

The Incident Command System (ICS) is both a strategy and a set of organizational arrangements for directing and controlling field operations. It is designed to effectively integrate resources from different agencies into a temporary emergency organization at an incident site that can expand and contract with the magnitude of the incident and resources on hand. A detailed description of the ICS is provided in one of the Attachments to the Basic Plan.

The Incident Commander is responsible for carrying out the ICS function of command – managing the incident. The four other major management activities that form the basis of ICS are operations, planning, logistics, and finance/administration. For small-scale incidents, the Incident Commander and one or two individuals may perform all of these functions. For larger incidents, a number of individuals from different departments or agencies may be assigned to separate staff sections charged with those functions.

An Incident Commander using response resources from one or two departments or agencies can handle the majority of emergency situations. Departments or agencies participating in this type of incident response will normally obtain support through their own department or agency.

In emergency situations where other jurisdictions or the state or federal government are providing significant response resources or technical assistance, it is generally desirable to shift from the normal ICS structure to a *Unified Command structure*. This arrangement helps ensure that all participating agencies are involved in developing objectives and strategies to deal with the emergency.

Interface between the ICS and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

For major emergencies and disasters, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will be activated. When the EOC is activated, it is essential to establish a division of responsibilities between the Incident Command Post and the EOC. A general division of responsibilities is outlined below. It is essential that a precise division of responsibilities be determined for specific emergency operations.

The Incident Commander is generally responsible for field operations, including:

- Isolating the scene;
- Directing and controlling the on-scene response to the emergency situation and managing the emergency resources committed there;
- Warning the population in the area of the incident and providing emergency instructions to them;
- Determining and implementing protective measures (including evacuation or in-place sheltering) for the population in the immediate area of the incident and for emergency responders at the scene;
- Implementing traffic control in and around the incident scene;
- Requesting additional resources from the EOC.

COSA has two mobile command and control vehicles operated respectively by the Police and Fire Departments which may be used as an Incident Command Post.

The EOC is generally responsible for:

- Providing resource support for the incident command operations;
- Issuing community-wide warning;
- Issuing instructions and providing information to the general public;
- Organizing and implementing large-scale evacuation;
- Organizing and implementing shelter and mass arrangements for evacuees;
- Coordinating traffic control for large-scale evacuations;
- Requesting assistance from the State and other external sources.

Actions by phase of emergency management

This section of the Plan addresses emergency actions that are conducted during all four phases of emergency management.

Mitigation

COSA will conduct mitigation activities as an integral part of the emergency management program. Mitigation is intended to eliminate hazards, reduce the probability of hazards causing an emergency situation, or lessen the consequences of unavoidable hazards. Mitigation should be a pre-disaster activity, although mitigation may also occur in the aftermath of an emergency situation with the intent of avoiding repetition of the situation. The COSA mitigation program is outlined in an annex to the Basic Plan – Annex P, Mitigation.

Preparedness

COSA will conduct preparedness activities to develop the response capabilities needed in the event of an emergency. Among the preparedness activities included in the emergency management program are:

- Providing emergency equipment and facilities;
- Emergency planning, including maintaining this plan, its annexes, and appropriate procedures;
- Conducting or arranging appropriate training for emergency responders, emergency management personnel, other local officials, and volunteer groups who assist COSA during emergencies;
- Conducting periodic drills and exercises to test COSA plans and training.

Response

COSA will respond to emergency situations effectively and efficiently. The focus of most of this plan and its annexes is on planning for the response to emergencies. Response operations are intended to resolve an emergency situation while minimizing

casualties and property damage. Response activities include warning, emergency medical services, fire fighting, law enforcement operations, evacuation, shelter and mass care, emergency public information, search and rescue, as well as other associated functions.

Recovery

If a disaster occurs, COSA will carry out a recovery program that involves both short-term and long-term efforts. Short-term operations seek to restore vital services to the community and provide for the basic needs of the public. Long-term recovery focuses on restoring the community to its normal state. The federal government, pursuant to the Stafford Act, provides the vast majority of disaster recovery assistance. The recovery process includes assistance to individuals, businesses, and to government and other public institutions. Examples of recovery programs include temporary housing, restoration of government services, debris removal, restoration of utilities, disaster mental health services, and reconstruction of damaged roads and bridges. The COSA Recovery program is outlined in an annex to the Basic Plan.

Communications

Primary responsibility for this function is assigned to the EOC Communications Officer who will prepare and maintain the Communications Annex to the Basic Plan and supporting procedures.

Emergency tasks to be performed include:

- Identify the communications systems available within the local area and determine the connectivity of those systems;
- Develop plans and procedures for coordinated use of the various communications systems available in this jurisdiction during emergencies;
- Determine and implement means of augmenting communications during emergencies, including support by volunteer organizations;

Direction and control

Primary responsibility for this function is assigned to the Emergency Management Coordinator who will prepare and maintain the Direction and Control to this plan and supporting procedures.

Emergency tasks to be performed include:

- Coordinate COSA operating forces;
- Maintain coordination with neighboring jurisdictions and the Disaster District 3B at Department of Public Safety Headquarters in San Antonio;

- Maintain the EOC in an operating mode or be able to convert the designated facility space into an operable EOC rapidly;
- Assign representatives, by title, to report to the EOC and develop procedures for crisis training;
- Develop and identify the duties of the staff, use of displays and message forms, and procedures for EOC activation;
- Coordinate the evacuation of areas at risk.

Terrorist incident response

Primary responsibility for this function is assigned jointly to the Police Chief and the COSA Emergency Management Coordinator who will prepare and maintain the Terrorist Incident Response Annex to the Basic Plan and supporting procedures.[3]

Emergency tasks to be performed include:

- Coordinate and carry out defensive anti-terrorist activities, including criminal intelligence, investigation, protection of facilities,[4] and public awareness activities;
- Coordinate and carry out offensive counter-terrorist operations to neutralize terrorist activities;
- Carry out terrorism consequence operations conducted in the aftermath of a terrorist incident to save lives and protect public and private property;
- Ensure that required notifications of terrorist incidents are made.

Readiness levels

The following Readiness Levels will be used as a means of increasing the COSA alert posture.

- Normal Conditions;
- Increases Readiness/Watch Conditions;
- High Readiness/Warning Conditions;
- Maximum Readiness/Emergency conditions.

For each of these alert levels, specific threat conditions are defined and required actions are specified. The types of threats are:

- Tropical weather threat (San Antonio is only 240 kilometers from the Gulf of Mexico. A number of tropical storms enter the Gulf every season);
- The Tornado threat;
- Flash floods (the soil in the San Antonio region is generally hard-packed

clay and heavy runoff is encountered. Low water crossings are clearly identified, but explicit and timely warning is required);

- Wildfire threat;
- Winter storm warnings (although the San Antonio climate is mild, treacherous icing conditions sometimes occur and timely warning is needed);
- Mass gatherings.

Reports

Reporting is a critical element of the Situation Assessment. In some cases, Hazardous Materials incidents for example, reporting is a federal and state requirement. In all cases covered by the Plan, specific and formal reporting requirements are specified as the basis for Situation Assessment. Requirements for record-keeping and reporting are given in the annexes to the Basic Plan.

Review and critique

The Emergency Management Coordinator is responsible for organizing and conducting a critique following the conclusion of a significant emergency, incident, or exercise. The critique will entail both written and verbal input from all appropriate participants. Where deficiencies are identified, an individual, department, or agency will be assigned the responsibility for correcting the deficiency and a due date shall be established for that action.

General provisions for direction and control

Our direction and control structure for emergency operations includes an on-scene control system—the Incident Command System (ICS)—and a centralized direction and control system—the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). These two systems may be employed individually or in combination, depending on the situation.

Emergency situations classified as incidents will normally be handled by an Incident Commander using response resources from one or two departments or agencies. The EOC will generally not be activated.

During major emergencies and disasters, both an ICP and the EOC will generally be activated. The Incident Commander will manage and direct the on-scene response from the ICP. The EOC will mobilize and deploy resources for use by the Incident Commander, coordinate external resource and technical support, research problems, provide information to senior managers, disseminate emergency public information, and perform other tasks to support on-scene operations.

For some types of emergency situations, the EOC may be activated without activating an incident command operation. Such situations may occur:

- When a threat of hazardous conditions exists, but those conditions have not yet impacted the local area. The EOC may accomplish initial response actions, such as mobilizing personnel and equipment and issuing precautionary warning to the public. When the hazard impacts, an ICP may be established, and direction and control of the response transitioned to the Incident Commander.
- When the emergency situation does not have a specific impact site, but rather affects a wide portion of the local area, such as an ice storm. For operational flexibility, both ICS and EOC operations may be sized according to the anticipated needs of the situation. The structure of ICS is specifically intended to provide a capability to expand and contract with the magnitude of the emergency situation and the resources committed to it. The EOC will also be activated on a graduated basis.

The first local emergency responder to arrive at the scene of an emergency situation will serve as the Incident Commander until relieved by a more senior or more qualified individual. The Incident Commander will establish an ICP, provide an assessment of the situation to local officials, identify response resources required, and direct the on-scene response from the ICP.

The Incident Commander is responsible for carrying out the ICS function of command – making operational decisions to manage the incident. For small-scale incidents, the Incident Commander and one or two individuals perform all major management activities. For more serious emergency situations, representatives of various local departments or agencies or external response organizations may be assigned to the respective ICS staff sections. If the EOC has been activated, the Incident Commander shall provide periodic situation updates to the EOC.

Conclusions

The Emergency Response Plan for the COSA closely resembles a typical military Operations Plan. All the elements of Command and Control are addressed and responsibilities are clearly identified. Provisions are made in the plan for review and update and these might be needed as a consequence of the events of September 11, but the essential elements for emergency response are there. The Plan is specific and comprehensive and is the basis for long-term preparedness.

Annex 1

BASIC PLAN

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ASSESSMENT OF THREATS

	Likelihood of Occurrence*	**Estimated Impact on Public Health & Safety**	**Estimated Impact on Property**
Hazard Type:	**(See below)**	**Limited, Moderate, Major**	**Limited, Moderate, Major**
Natural			
Drought/Heat Wave	Highly Likely	Limited to Moderate	Moderate
Earthquake	Unlikely	Limited	Limited
Flash Flooding	Highly Likely	Moderate to Major	Moderate to Major
Flooding (River Or Tidal)	Likely	Moderate to Major	Moderate to Major
Hurricane	Occasional	Moderate	Moderate
Tornado	Occasional	Moderate to Major	Moderate to Major
Wildfire	Unlikely	Limited	Limited to Moderate
Winter Storm/Ice	Occasional	Major	Major to Moderate
Technological			
Dam Failure	Unlikely	Major	Major
Energy/Fuel Shortage	Occasional	Limited	Limited
Hazmat/Oil Spill (Fixed Site)	Highly Likely	Limited to Major	Limited to Major
Hazmat/Oil Spill (Transport)	Highly Likely	Limited to Major	Limited to Major
Major Structural Fire	Occasional	Limited	Limited
Water System Failure	Occasional	Limited to Major	Limited to Major
Security			
Civil Disorder	Occasional	Limited to Major	Limited to Major
Enemy Military Attack	Unlikely	Major	Major
Terrorism/Domestic	Occasional	Major	Limited to Major

***** Likelihood of Occurrence: Unlikely, Occasional, Likely, or Highly Likely

Notes:

[1] United Services Automobile Association.

[2] Additional details were provided at the session on "Bioterrorism: An Overview of Medical Aspects and Community Preparedness", organized by the Texas A&M International University and The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA) Mini-Medical School, October 22, 2001.

[3] Requirements based on Post-September 11 analyses were quickly reflected in emergency arrangements. See for example Governor's Task Force on Homeland Security Releases Report, Press Release (Austin, Texas, Texas General Land Office, January 31, 2002).

[4] Preparedness to address the relatively novel issue of cyber-terrorism was tested in a recent multi-agency exercise. For details see Dan Caterinicchia, "Cyberterrorism drill set: Operation Dark Screen to help government, industry prepare for attacks," *Federal Computer Week* (July 22, 2002).

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