Proposed Best Practice

Government Emergency Response and Recovery Preparedness
City of San Jose

Description
Local governments develop emergency response and recovery plans, train their employees and volunteers, and periodically exercise and refine their plans to prepare for eventual major disasters.

Problem
Governments that fail to incorporate effective emergency response and recovery plans in their daily operations and training run the risk of greater life and property loss, excessive reliance on mutual aid from neighboring jurisdictions and state and federal agencies, and higher costs and delays in both response and recovery.

Solution
- Develop and exercise plans for emergency communications.
- Install and periodically test emergency power generators for essential services facilities.
- Develop a plan to protect and recover data records.
- Reach out to volunteers in the community, train and enable them to respond effectively.
- Develop a plan to resume operations after disasters.

Example
The City of San Jose provides several examples of effective emergency response and recovery efforts within a variety of agencies. Below is a brief sampling of their relevant activities and resources:

- **Fire Department** – Incident Dispatcher Team, Incident Command System, certified HazMat team
- **Police Department** – National Night Out and Citizens’ Academy, Emergency Communications
- **Public Works** – Response and recovery planning, transportation planning – Jim Helmer
- **Environmental Services** – Carl Moser, HAZMAT, Building debris disposal planning, Public Health, Municipal Water System and Waste Water planning
- **Public Works** – Katy Allen, public facilities inspections, infrastructure mitigation planning
- **Housing** – Leslie Corselia, Residential Seismic Safety Program
- **Planning, Building and Code Enforcement** – Larry Wang, ATC 20 training, informal building occupancy resumption policy
- **Emergency Services** – Frances Winslow, *San Jose Prepared* – 1300 trained volunteers and outreach newsletter, 140 amateur radio volunteers and classes, resourceful website with downloadable brochures, training, resources and
proficiency criteria for the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) for city departments and the community, video lending library, Metropolitan Medical Task Force integrates Police, Fire, OES, EMS for multi-victim disaster response

- **Information Technology** – Wandzia Grycz, essential systems recovery planning, computer/telecom redundancy

- **Finance Department** – Mark Burton, – Overall Financial Recovery Planning

In addition, San Jose’s emphasis on disaster preparedness is reinforced by strong vocal support from its Mayor and Council. For example, Mayor Ron Gonzales recently recognized *San Jose Prepared*, a Community Emergency Response Training program, with his Good Neighbor Award. He encourages other residents to join the more than 1300 residents that have been trained to provide immediate neighborhood level response and become self-sufficient during emergencies.

**Resources**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends that jurisdictions provide at least one professional staff per 100,000 citizens, and one support staff for every three professionals. However, in this fiscal climate, many jurisdictions must make do with shared resources and personnel in a variety of departments. For example, even though San Jose’s Emergency Services staffing is less than levels recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA), San Jose has nevertheless been able to integrate comprehensive emergency response and recovery planning and preparedness into the operations of other key city agencies.

**Adaptability/Sustainability**

Jurisdictions can borrow and adapt successful programs and resources from other communities. Many options are available at no or very low cost with great potential benefits. Professional collaboration through regional and statewide organizations such as the California Emergency Services Association, the California Building Officials, CA Fire Chiefs Association, can help key personnel learn about and adapt what works best for others.

Methods used to assure sustainability of the practice:

- Expressed priorities for emergency and recovery preparedness by the City Council or Board of Supervisors and government management
- A professionally-qualified emergency management staff with resources, training, support and cooperation of general management and other agencies
- Broad volunteer base of commitment from the citizenry
- Periodic exercises of emergency and recovery plans
- Periodic reassessments of priorities and capabilities for government readiness
- Active involvement by staff in professional emergency management and preparedness associations
- Implementing strategic plans to make incremental improvements