Course Learning Outcomes for Unit II

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

   1.1 Assess geographic and social vulnerabilities for a defined area.
   1.2 Identify the structure and stakeholders for a successful planning team.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 2: Assessing Vulnerabilities
Chapter 3: Developing a Planning Team

Access the following tutorials from the Success Center to aid you in writing your research paper. These topics address common guidelines for the paper that you will want to keep in mind as you work on each section over the term of the course.

In-text Citations
https://columbiasouthern.adobeconnect.com/_a1174888831/intextcitations/

References
https://columbiasouthern.adobeconnect.com/_a1174888831/references2014/

Punctuation Webinar
http://columbiasouthern.adobeconnect.com/dasheshyphenscolonsetc/

Unit Lesson

After the emergency planning team is selected and the potential hazards for the area are identified and assessed, the next step is to gather demographic data on the population within the areas of known hazards. Some hazards are limited to a specific area while others can affect an entire city, county, or township. Software technology is available to the planning team that will assist to pinpoint the approximate perimeters for known hazards. This discussion will expand the knowledge of a planning team to further assess the populations within the vulnerable areas of a potential or known hazard.

Eisenman, Cordasco, Asch, Golden, and Glik (2007) conducted a random study of 1,182 adult evacuees from New Orleans that were transported to Houston after Hurricane Katrina. These evacuees stayed in three evacuation centers in Houston and were predominantly poor African Americans from the most severely affected areas from the hurricane. The information obtained from the research study will assist the emergency planning team to identify obstacles that inhibit vulnerable and minority populations from evacuation and develop education programs and alternatives to minimize obstacles.

First, the emergency plan should identify numerous shelters within the demographic area where friends and families can evacuate. These shelters are pre-stocked with water, food, cots, and blankets. Restrooms are available with sufficient supplies. It is important to determine the number of shelters that are needed for the approximate number of people within the affected area to prevent overcrowding. Security is also a
consideration. Non-governmental organizations such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and local churches are important stakeholders in planning for evacuation shelters. Evacuation shelters should also provide kennels for pets as some pet owners will not evacuate without their pets (Eisenman et al., 2007).

Second, transportation for evacuees to shelters is necessary. City and school buses are excellent modes of transportation for transporting citizens without vehicles. Bus routes and pick-up locations are pre-identified in the evacuation plan. Many families have children and elderly parents that cannot walk long distances. Likewise, safety is another consideration for walking to an evacuation shelter. Time is another consideration as there may not be sufficient pre-warning prior to a disaster to evacuate by private vehicle (Eisenman et al., 2007).

Third, many residents will not evacuate because they do not have the disposable income for gas, hotel, and food. Likewise, residents may fear looters may come into their homes if they evacuate. Other residents are reluctant to leave the disaster area for fear of losing their job. Many employers will not save jobs for employees that chose to evacuate (Eisenman et al., 2007).

Fourth, residents may choose not to evacuate because of health reasons. Many residents are under a doctor’s care and take medications. Moreover, residents on medication are unable to safely drive and require transportation. These residents may be elderly or disabled and under the care of family members or live in an assisted living home (Eisenman et al., 2007).

Fifth, social networks are an important consideration for evacuation. These social networks include immediate families, extended families, and church and organization affiliations. Frequently, a family car is unable to transport the immediate and extended family because of the large number of family members. Consequently, the family chooses to shelter-in-place or obtain transportation to a nearby shelter. If one member is reluctant to evacuate, the remainder of the family will stay with this person because of the close family network (Eisenman et al., 2007).

An additional consideration for the emergency planning team is to communicate to the public the level of the hazard, directions for evacuation, and the timeframe before the hazard arrives so the population has time to evacuate. Many residents have prior experience with similar hazards in the past where a voluntary evacuation did not require them to evacuate or they chose not to evacuate. It is therefore important for the emergency manager to emphasize the level of the hazard. When disseminating emergency messages, the most common mode of communication identified by vulnerable and minority populations was the television. Residents listen to determine the level of severity of a hazard and the time element if known before the hazard arrives. In addition, residents listen to emergency communications for messages that report either voluntary or mandatory evacuations. When a city official announces a mandatory evacuation, it is necessary to provide a sufficient time element for residents to move to a location where a bus can transport them to a nearby shelter. The emergency planning team should develop a sufficient timeline for evacuation to include in the emergency plan (Eisenman et al., 2007).

This research study concluded with suggestions for an emergency planning team to overcome these evacuation obstacles. First, local authorities must establish a relationship of trust with the public and eliminate misconceptions about hazards. When an evacuation order is issued, residents can follow the directions of the emergency communications message, knowing the safety of the public is a high priority of city leadership. Second, the emergency evacuation plan is conveyed to the public prior to the disaster through media promotions and educational programs. The emergency planning team can also coordinate with the social networks within local churches and organizations. Research indicates that residents were more likely to listen to instruction from trusted social networks than public media. Thus, emergency plans should disseminate emergency messages through various social networks that provide ample time for family units to evacuate. Social networks can also educate the public about hazards and the terms associated with them. For example, citizens should understand the different hurricane categories and know that a level 5 hurricane is more dangerous than a level 4 hurricane. Emergency management can coordinate with social networks to disseminate emergency messages to the public through telephone call-out lists. Research notes that messages from inside trusted sources are more likely to be followed than from an external media source. Moreover, residents should receive information about locations of shelters, transportation to the shelters, and pickup locations for buses. Information should further include a list of personal belongings that residents can bring to the shelter and directions for sheltering pets. Finally, the emergency planning team should coordinate...
with local policymakers to ensure employees maintain their employment if a mandatory evacuation order is issued for the community (Eisenman et al., 2007).

The emergency planning team can overcome these obstacles through developed educational programs, coordination with policymakers, and community networks of churches, organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the media. It is critical for the emergency planning team to identify potential hazards, develop an emergency preparedness plan, and conduct annual exercises with the public and private sectors to protect the public from the effects of a hazard.

Reference


Suggested Reading

