Emergency Managers: Their Historical Origin and Current Role

February 21, 2020
The position of an emergency manager has its roots in civil defense during World War II (WWII) and the Cold War.

- Civilians were trained to help the military spot enemy aircraft and submarines and practice blackouts.
Historical Timeline:

Cold War (1947-1991)

The position of an emergency manager has its roots in civil defense during World War II (WWII) and the Cold War.

- The threat of bombing and nuclear war led to creation of a federal office of civil defense (1953) and the need for “civil defense directors” to lead preparatory actions within the communities.
  - Often part-time employees
  - Many selected were military retirees given their experience
In 1950, severe flooding impacted the Upper Midwest resulting from a combination of “high soil-moisture content, unusual accumulation of snow during the winter, unseasonable continuation of cold weather into spring and heavy precipitation during the snow-melt” (Geological Survey Water-Supply Paper 1137-G)

In response, Congress passed the Disaster Relief Act which, for the first time, gave the federal government limited ability to provide disaster relief in future disasters.
Historical Timeline:

Additional natural disasters (Ex: Hurricanes Camille and Agnes) helped broaden emergency managers’ job

Hurricane Camille
  Location: near Waveland, MS
  Date: August 17, 1969
  Intensity: Category 5 hurricane
    2\textsuperscript{nd} most intense hurricane on record to have hit the continental U.S.
  Winds: $\sim$150 knots ($\sim$175 mph)
  Storm surge: Up to about 24 feet
  Deaths: $\sim$256
  Damage: $\sim$1.42 billion
Additional natural disasters (Ex: Hurricanes Camille and Agnes) helped broaden emergency managers’ job.

Hurricane Agnes

Location: near Panama City, FL
Date: June 19, 1972
Intensity: Category 1 hurricane
Winds: ~ 64 knots (~ 74 mph)
Storm surge: Up to 7 feet
Flooding: Exacerbated conditions in the Middle Atlantic States which eventually were record-breaking
Deaths: ~122
Damage: ~$2.1 billion
Historical Timeline:

In 1979, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was created to centralize federal emergency management efforts.
Historical Timeline:

Disasters, like Hurricane Hugo, showed the weaknesses within FEMA.

Hurricane Hugo

- Location: near Charleston, SC
- Date: September 22, 1989
- Intensity: Category 4 hurricane
  - Strongest storm to strike the U.S. in the last 20 years
- Winds: ~117-122 knots (~135-140 mph)
- Storm surge: Up to about 20 feet
  - Highest ever recorded along the U.S. East Coast
- Deaths: ~49
- Damage: ~$7 billion
Historical Timeline:

FEMA put together a Federal Response Plan with other federal agencies and the Red Cross.

Disaster response responsibilities were distributed among the federal agencies and the Red Cross via Emergency Support Functions (ESFs). Each organization was expected to lead their function and collaborate with other agencies to carry out the disaster response.

Ex: The Department of Human Services led tasks related to health and medical services and worked in collaboration with the agencies such as Department of Agriculture and Department of Transportation.
After his election, President Clinton appointed James Lee Witt as the new FEMA director. Witt, with his lengthy experience in emergency management, and associate director, Kay Goss, greatly shaped the current vision of FEMA.
The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 highlighted additional problems within FEMA.

President Bush and the U.S. Congress created the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). FEMA was put under this new department.
Historical Timeline:

Hurricane Katrina tested the newly formed department and identified some weaknesses.

Hurricane Katrina

Location: southeast LA
Date: August 28, 2005
Intensity: Category 3 hurricane
Winds: ~109 knots (~125 mph)
Storm surge: Up to ~20 feet
Deaths: ~1,833
1 of the 5 deadliest hurricanes to hit the U.S.
Damage: ~108 billion
Costliest hurricane to have hit the U.S.
Historical Timeline:

Hurricane Katrina tested the newly formed department and identified some weaknesses.

It drew attention to people at high risk (Ex: Those with disabilities, medical conditions and inadequate resources)

Evacuation and shelter plans were revised

Drills and exercises between agencies were increased to improve relationships
Role of an emergency managers today

Their job depends on the level at which they work:

- National/Federal
- State
- Regional
- County
- City
- Special (Universities, hospitals, etc.)
Emergency Management in New York

New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Regions

UAlbany Emergency Manager
Stephen Conard
Role of an emergency managers today

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Hierarchies in which they work:
- Some report to political officials or heads of organizations
- Others to chiefs of emergency response groups
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Primary hazards in their location:
- Blizzards
- Hurricanes
- Storm surge
- Flooding
- Severe Thunderstorms
- Tornadoes
Their role, put simply, is to ask “What if?” and plan for it. They do this by:

- Building collaborative teams
- Creating plans
- Conducting drills and exercise
- Monitoring the situation
- Advising officials and first responders
- Responding to situations
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activation Levels</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steady State</td>
<td>Normal day-to-day operations</td>
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<td>Monitor for the potential for an emergency</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Be prepared to activate in an emergency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 4: Enhanced Monitoring</td>
<td>Enhanced monitoring</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Active preparation to respond to an emergency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 3: Partial Activation</td>
<td>Multi-agency coordination in preparing or responding to an emergency</td>
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<td>Activation of several command and staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Partial activation of a limited number of ESFs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 2: Full Activation</td>
<td>An emergency has the potential or is causing significant impacts</td>
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<td>Activation of all command and staff</td>
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<td>Activation of most or all ESFs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 1: Full State/Federal Response</td>
<td>An emergency has the potential or is causing significant impacts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Activation of all command and staff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activation of all ESFs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration with higher levels of emergency management (Ex: FEMA)</td>
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One way in which they plan for the future is by running models, such as FEMA’s HAZUS-MH model, and assessing the maximum damage that occurs in these scenarios.
In a Hurricane Scenario

The National Hurricane Center and local National Weather Service Forecast Offices play an important role in monitoring for potential tropical cyclone threats.

Emergency management organization may also have their own meteorologists on staff to assist in monitoring for tropical cyclone threats.
Once an active tropical cyclone has been identified, emergency managers hone in on the storm, focusing on location, proximity to emergency management area and intensity as well as forecasted track, intensity and hazards.
If it is forecasted that the tropical cyclone could impact their area, emergency managers also use forecasted timing to carry out preparations.
STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER LEVEL 4 - GOAL: Conduct joint assessment and decision-making, initial Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Group call, begin measures to increase state posture, and notify agencies of staffing requirements for upcoming operational period(s).

Activities: The State EOC maintains a readiness posture. Proceed with following at no later than -144 to -120 hours (6 days out):

- Direct State Watch Center staff, OEM Planning, Operations and GIS staff, to assess the anticipated storm path and timing.
- Obtain synopsis for informed Executive decision making.
- Decide to activate the State EOC to a Level 3 at no later than 120-96 hours (within the next 24 hours).
- Decide to conduct an initial MAC Group conference call.
- Decide on 8 or 12 hour shifts for the upcoming operational period.

MAC Group call conducted with DPC Agencies:

- SOFA
- Ag& Mkts*
- OCFS
- DOCSS
- DGS
- State ED
- ESD
- NYSERDA
- DEC*
- DFS
- OFPC*
- OGS
- DOH*
- DHSES*
- HCR
- ITS
- DOL
- OMH
- MTA
- DMNA
- OPWDD
- PANYNJ
- PSC*
- DSP*
- DOS
- TA
- DOT*
- OVS
- ARC

Direct ESS Coordinators (*only) above to begin staffing State EOC no later than 120 hours.

Key: Local Decision-Making Timeline

1 = Data Gathering/Assess 2 = Mobilization 3 = JIC established 4 = HCF Evacuation 5 = GP Evacuation 6 = Partial EOC 7 = Full EOC Activation 8 = Shelters 9 = Begin Mass Transit Shutdown

- Westchester
- Suffolk
- Nassau
- NYC

February 2019
STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER LEVEL 3 - GOAL: To provide a continued assessment of storm information, make projections on potential consequences, assess local preparations, conduct initial briefings/analyses with agencies, and make preparations to increase the state response posture.

Activities: This level should be initiated no later than -120 to -96 hours (5 days out) prior to the forecast arrival of tropical storm force winds. Level 3 will consist of ESF Coordinators only.

- Determine if day-time staffing of the State EOC may be sufficient.
- Implement 8 or 12-hour staffing patterns to support operations.
- Stand up the SEOC Situation Room, ESF #5; basic Ops section/ESF #7.
- Determine need to activate multi-agency situation unit (MASU).
- Determine the need for mobilization and pre-deployment of State resources/staff and/or an increase or decrease in state posture.
- Instruct all DHSES-based assets to ensure a state of readiness. This includes:
  - Logistical facilities, emergency stockpiles, supplies and equipment.
  - Emergency communications equipment, support equipment and vehicles.
  - Identifying staffing patterns, operational periods, shift rotations, and potential field deployment.
  - Initial notification to State IMT personnel of potential deployment.
- Direct State ESF Coordinators to address preparatory measures with partner agencies:
  - Instruct ESF Coordinators in the SEOC to identify potential actions, develop staffing patterns, begin preparations to implement response activities, and identify any resource support issues as the State moves forward in the response.
  - Ensure State OEM and the ESF Coordinators jointly identify which agencies are required to address current needs.

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- Conduct MAC Group conference call to discuss the implications of the weather synopsis; include aggressive development of staffing plans. Direct agencies to:
  - Assess the level of vulnerability to the impending event, and mitigate as appropriate.
  - Review the level of agency-specific preparedness to implement continuity measures.
  - Review the level of preparedness to support a collective, state response as identified in each ESF Annex and the Coastal Storm Annex.
  - Establish priorities in preparing for the event - such as identifying available resources, future resources requirements and internal staffing patterns.
  - Address any sector-specific coordination or customer-based concerns or outreach, as appropriate.
  - Identify and raise any specific needs, issues or gaps that require support or coordination from State OEM.

- Advise all Coordinator and Member Agencies of Level 2 (Days only) at 96 hours.
- Advise all Coordinator and Member Agencies of 24/7 ops at 72 hours.
STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER LEVEL 2 - GOAL: In addition to those identified in Level 3, assess local response posture and activities, continue briefings/analyses with ESFs, increase in preparations implementing the state response posture, make preparations for initial requests for assistance, and make provisions to rapidly assess damages.

Activities: This level should be initiated no later than -96 to -72 hours out (4 days out / at least 48 hours in advance of a Tropical Storm Watch).

- Direct all ESF Coord. and Member Agencies to report to the State EOC.
- State EOC will be maintained at 12-hour (Day) staffing.
- Primer for initial consideration for a Governor’s declaration of a State Disaster Emergency.
- Facilitate a RETL conference call (anticipate local request, protective actions, local response actions)
- Initial consideration to establish JIC.
- Contact FEMA Region II to determine Federal posturing, resources being mobilized.
- Open dialogue with other at-risk states in region to determine operating timelines and potential protective actions.
- Inquire of local, State, Federal partners to ascertain current status and availability of potential field locations for staging, mobilization, etc...

At 72 hours expect increase in local request for assistance:
- Begin 24 hour staffing – All ESF Coord. and Member Agencies.
- Follow-up Executive-level discussion regarding Governor decision to declare State Disaster Emergency. Direct Legal staff to draft declaration and pre-landfall request.
- Follow up RETL call. Continue to facilitate at regular intervals until 12 hrs.
- Direct assembly of multi-agency teams to local EOCs, as needed.
- Stand up all Command and general staff positions.
- Reinitiate contact with FEMA Region II; determine Federal posture. Request may be made for federal IMAT.
- EMAC outreach to determine status of resources and other mission request.

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- Convene MAC Group meeting. Direct agencies/ESFs to identify potential actions, staffing/resource support issues, and any specific agency issues (Protective actions of affected facilities, COOP issues, the need for AOC, etc.).
- Direct the pre-positioning of relief supplies, equipment, materials, and personnel to support feeding shelters, and short-term recovery efforts (coordinated with ESF #7). Include the following:
  - Food, water, bedding, durable medical equipment (ESF #6 and #8).
  - Generators, fuel, tarps, portable pumps (ESF #7).
  - Debris clearing equipment, chippers, chain saws (ESF #1 and #3).
  - Security, access, egress supporting equipment (ESF #13).
  - Environmental monitoring equip., supplies, personnel (ESF #8).
  - Personnel to support damage assessment (State DHSES).
  - Deployment of sandbags/equipment (ESF #7).
  - Establish contact with Hurricane Liaison Team at the NHC (ESF #5).
  - C/IR sectors, efforts to support restoration of energy sector (ESF #12).
  - Support Healthcare evacuations coordinated with the HEC (ESF #8).
  - Prepare USAR/Swift Water Rescue Teams (ESF #9).
- Identify and direct the deployment schedule of field-level ops components considered. Take note to deploy w/in 48 hours to allow staff to be in position 48 hours prior to landfall; test communications lines, coordination, incident reporting, and assess local needs, gaps and issues.
- If not identified at 96 hours, set activation for the JIC NLT 36-48 hrs through ESF #15.
- Incident support facilities that have been identified should be established and become functional.
- State DHSES begin to identify PDA teams, potential site visits, and deployment timeline.
- Agencies may activate their Agency Operations Center to support the level of response.

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STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER LEVEL 1 - GOAL: In addition to those previously listed, ensure the appropriate level of functionality to effectively respond to requests for assistance, storm-related impacts, make final state-level preparations, and be capable to fully integrate with an incoming Federal response organization.

Activities: This level will be initiated no later than -36 to -24 hours (1 day out).

- Deployments should begin arriving at forward locations.
- Last opportunity to make decision and quickly deploy state resources and personnel to the at-risk areas.
- Deployments must be completed and in place within 24 hours.
- Facilitate final pre-landfall IRELT conference call with the at-risk communities:
  - Update on storm-related specifics, questions, or concerns.
  - Update on the state’s response posture and structure.
  - Status of local response actions and protective actions.
  - Identify any outstanding resource requests and anticipated needs and gaps.
- Inquire as to State and Federal disaster declarations may be in process, pending or complete.
- MAC Group meetings will continue. State Agencies in the State EOC will be advised of storm-related data to disseminate to their home agency staff for internal distribution. At this point, State agencies in the at-risk areas may be advised to cease all operations and implement continuity measures.

This time will likely coincide with the activation of the National Response Framework, the Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) and the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC), bringing Federal Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) on line. This level marks the point where a Federal IMAT and appropriate ESF leadership may begin to deploy/arrive at the State EOC. This will warrant the integration of the Federal system into the State’s response organizational structure. Includes integration into:

- Arrival of Federal IMAT in the State EOC.
- MAC Group meetings, conference calls and briefings.
- ESF #5, Operational Planning Cycle, and Command and General Staff meetings.
- Logistics and Operations sections.
- State and Federal ESFs begin integration and unity of effort.
- Preliminary discussions regarding a joint field office (JFO).

- Designate a State Coordinating Officer (SCO).
- Direct the assembly of and push out EMAC requests.
- Assess the need for the implementation of the FUEL NY Plan.
- Advise to cease all operations and implement continuity measures.

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Westchester
Suffolk
Nassau
NYC

February 2019
In a Hurricane Scenario

HURREVAC is a common tool used by emergency managers who live in hurricane-prone areas. It was jointly produced by FEMA, the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the National Hurricane Center.