

Regional Development and Sustainability Committee

Earthquake Briefing Series

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Emergency Support Function 6, Mass Care, Housing and Human Services

Human sheltering, pet sheltering, and housing in response to a disaster are encompassed in Emergency Support Function 6 (ESF 6), Mass Care, Housing and Human Services, which is led by the Human Services Department (HSD). Addressing these needs in a disaster involves a coordinated effort between a myriad of governmental and non-governmental agencies.

In Seattle, a key strategy has been to develop a very active ESF 6 group. The group meets monthly to plan, exercise, examine best practices and improve capabilities. Participants are a cross section of ESF 6 partners including HSD, Seattle Parks and Recreation (Parks), Seattle Animal Shelter, Office of Housing (OH), Public Health – Seattle & King County, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Administration for Children and Families, The American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, 2-1-1, and the Seattle Housing Authority to name a few.

Overview on Human and Pet Sheltering

Shelter is one of the many human service needs that may arise after disasters. Research indicates that roughly 10 percent of the affected population initially needs sheltering. This amount varies depending on the type of event that has occurred, whether homes remain habitable, and the resources of the population impacted. Experience also tells us that of those needing shelter, approximately 10 percent have a pet with them. Applying these percentages to Seattle, if a disaster impacted the entire city approximately 60,000 people and 6,000 pets would need shelter. It would take a national response to shelter this many people and it is reasonable to assume it would take at least 72 hours to set up the first shelters.

Vulnerable Populations

In a disaster, vulnerable populations are more likely to be impacted and have more challenges in recovering. The King County Vulnerable Populations System Coordination Steering Committee has identified 16 segments of the population considered at greater risk during an emergency. This includes people who are physically disabled, seniors, limited English proficiency, children, mentally ill, homeless

and shelter dependent, developmentally disabled, and impoverished. A common estimate is that roughly one in five, or over 120,000 people in Seattle, have some type of vulnerability.

Planning for the most vulnerable in a disaster was raised as a critical national issue after Hurricane Katrina. An example of one of these national planning efforts is FEMA's recently issued "Guidance on Planning for Integration of Functional Needs and Support Services in General Population Shelters" (http://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/odc/fnss_guidance.pdf) to help planners meet access and functional needs in general population shelters. This guidance is now used by the American Red Cross and Parks to set up and operate shelters.

To help identify and address gaps in our disaster planning and response for vulnerable populations, HSD has received funds through the Homeland Security Grant Program to hire a Vulnerable Populations Coordinator. This person will work on incorporating access and functional needs in mass care, strengthening our disaster plans around vulnerable populations, and responding in emergencies with a focus on the impact to those who are most vulnerable.

With State and Federal funding for human services diminishing, we anticipate the number of people to increase who are vulnerable in a disaster and who will have challenges in recovering.

Opportunities

To have the best outcome in a disaster, personal preparedness and community resilience is essential. People who are able to care for themselves and each other, especially during the first three days, enable limited resources to be focused on those areas of greatest need. It also shortens the time to when the focus can turn to recovery.

Sheltering

Parks works with the HSD within ESF 6 to coordinate, administer, and staff mass care shelters. We work in partnership with the county, state, and private/non-profit partners to provide sheltering services.

Our largest private/non-profit partner is the American Red Cross (ARC), with which we have a local operating agreement listing our 25 Parks community centers available as shelters. In the past five years various community centers have served as shelters after fires and during inclement weather seven times. Parks community centers and facilities at the Seattle Center are listed on the FEMA National Shelter System (NSS) database, which has recently been developed to track and collect data for shelters that are open and operating across the country.

There are several ways mass care shelters could be set up in Seattle. The determination will be made based on the number of people who need sheltering, the number of people available to staff the shelters, and buildings that are usable after the incident. The different types of mass care shelters are: ARC operating a shelter in a Parks facility, ARC operating a shelter in a non-City facility, ARC operating a mega shelter in the city (e.g. Qwest Event Center) with help from Parks staff, or Parks operating shelters in community centers and schools.

Following a large earthquake, Seattle's ESF 6 Branch would communicate with King County and the ARC before deciding the best way to serve the anticipated number of people needing shelter in the city and county. We believe, based on planning, that in the time between the event and when national help arrives we will be operating shelters in Seattle at local community centers with staff on-hand and local volunteers. Our goal is to have shelters available within 72 hours of the event if at all possible. That will depend on structural inspection, water availability, delivery of supplies, and the number of staff able to work.

*While all Parks community centers have been surveyed and listed as potential shelters, we have a protocol for opening those best suited for this function. There are six Priority One sites dispersed across six city sectors: Bitter Lake (northwest), Meadowbrook (northeast), Queen Anne (central west), Garfield (central east), Southwest (southwest), and Rainier Beach (southeast). These sites have emergency generators to provide electricity until power is restored, an identified pet shelter nearby, and they have the capability to be expanded into a campus concept using adjacent schools (e.g. capacity goes from 140 to 600-700). [Attached is a conceptual diagram for the shelter campus at Meadowbrook Community Center and the surrounding schools. More planning work needs to occur with Seattle Public Schools in order to put this concept into practice.] There are also four Priority Two sites that will have emergency generators installed and a pet shelter identified by the end of 2012: Magnuson Park (northeast), Jefferson (south of downtown), Rainier (southeast), and Delridge (southwest). Each of these sites will shelter 140 each. All other community centers shelter 60-140 people each; they do not have generators or identified pet shelters. Total projected capacity in Priority One sites is 5,000.

*Parks has 180 staff trained in shelter operation, and 10 staff trained in shelter management. Community Center staff members participate in different aspects of shelter training every year. Each community center has a kit on-site with basic supplies (flashlights, radio, intake forms, instructions, etc.).

*Sheltering supplies such as cots, hygiene kits, nurse kits, and blankets are located at four city caches. Those supplies will be transported when an event occurs. The supplies, which were purchased with funding from the Fire and Emergency Facility Levy, can serve 3,500. The caches are located at the Haller Lake Shops site, Magnolia Community Center, Parks Westbridge Shops, and the Sunny Jim Warehouse. During a large earthquake, remaining needed supplies will be obtained through the City's emergency resource ordering system.

*Funding constraints have limited further shelter capability development. Staff reductions have resulted in fewer staff trained and available for assignment; there is a need to purchase shelter supplies to accommodate vulnerable populations (different cots, wheelchairs, cribs, etc.) that were not provided with the original supplies; and the closure or change in operation of some community centers may affect sheltering capacity. We also need to address the issues around tent camping locations after a disaster and support for citizens who choose to stay with their residence but need feeding or other assistance from a shelter site. At the present time we plan to request feeding support from King County, however more planning needs to be done.

Pet Sheltering

Background

In 2006, the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act was signed into federal law. This act amends the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act to ensure that state and local jurisdictions take into account the needs of household pets and service animals during a major disaster. The act further allows FEMA to reimburse local municipalities for expenses incurred while housing, caring for, and rescuing these pets.

Seattle Animal Shelter's Role

The Seattle Animal Shelter has been identified in the Seattle Disaster Readiness and Response Plan Emergency Support Function 6 annex as the City's source of guidance about, and sheltering for, household pets during disasters. To this end, an Emergency Pet Sheltering Plan has been developed. This plan outlines the concept of co-located human and animal sheltering using a campus concept. For instance, human sheltering would occur at Bitter Lake Community Center, and the pets belonging to people in shelters at that site would be cared for at the Bitter Lake Shelter House, a small structure within proximity to the Community Center. This concept keeps the complete family unit together, while complying with the requirement to have pets and humans sheltered in separate buildings. The plan also outlines the requirements to set up a pet shelter and identifies non-profit organizations that can aid in pet sheltering.

Current Readiness

To increase readiness for pet sheltering, two grants were funded by the Department of Homeland Security to buy pet supplies (e.g. crates, leashes, collars, bowls, animal handling equipment) for the disaster caches and obtain a trailer with pet sheltering capabilities. The Seattle Animal Shelter has enough supplies to provide sheltering for 500 large dogs or groups of small animals, such as cats or small mammals. The grant-funded trailer will be equipped to work as a stand-alone animal shelter and can provide housing for 40 dogs or small animal groups.

The Seattle Animal Shelter is currently working to execute Memoranda of Understanding, for staffing and supplies, with several non-profit agencies including the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), Humane Society of the United States, and American Humane Association. We are also working to train our large volunteer base to participate in emergency pet sheltering. Further integration of household pets into all disaster planning throughout the city is ongoing.

Post Disaster Housing

After a major disaster, we want to minimize the number of people who need to leave their homes and seek mass care sheltering. For those who do end up in shelters, it's important to help them transition to interim or, ideally, long term housing as soon as possible. Seattle will need to work with many partners, within the region and nationally, to achieve this. As a complement to federal assistance in post-disaster housing, the City's central strategy is to make most effective use of the available housing stock.

The Office of Housing's (OH) main line of business is to administer capital dollars to affordable housing developers primarily through loans using Seattle Housing Levy, Federal CDBG and HOME fund sources and then monitor the funded housing projects for compliance and performance to ensure the long-term sustainability of our publicly funded housing. OH does not directly provide or manage housing.

Starting in February 2008 and continuing to present, OH developed an internal protocol in the event of a major disaster. The key roles defined for the office are to assess the conditions of our City funded affordable housing (currently over 280 projects/11,000 units) as well as be an information conduit and coordination partner with other City departments, King County, State, and Federal entities regarding multi-family affordable housing after a disaster.

- After a disaster, owners in the OH portfolio are asked to report conditions in all of their buildings, and whether they have any available units for displaced households. If they don't report, we call them. Although OH has in place a way to assess our City funded portfolio of affordable housing, this housing will *not* meet the needs of displaced households after a major disaster. There is not enough affordable housing now and after a disaster, the affordable housing owners will look to take care of their own displaced residents first before offering any units to the general public.
- Following the guidance of the Office of Emergency Management, our affordable housing owners are encouraged by OH to develop emergency plans for their agencies and buildings as well as provide information to residents in order to take care of themselves individually and as a group. All of the larger non-profit affordable housing owners have developed or are in process of developing emergency plans for their portfolio of housing. This effort will reduce the need for the City to step in and help when a disaster hits.
- Owners are given on-going technical advice on "What to Do" both before and after a disaster in the form of flyers, emails, workshops through OEM and at conferences with Affordable Housing Management Association (AHMA) and Washington State Housing Finance Commission's (WSHFC) Housing Washington. (See sample flyer attached.)

OH is an active regional partner in disaster planning, exercising and resource development on housing issues:

- OH participates in post-disaster housing planning with the City's ESF-6; King County (through its Post-Disaster Interim Housing Task Force); HUD (Mary McBride's staff at Local/Regional level); and industry colleagues—AHMA, SHA, Housing Development Consortium (HDC).
- OH participates in exercises at the City's Emergency Operations Center. As a discrete emergency mission in a real event, the office would likely be part of a disaster housing task force.
- OH staff participated in reviewing the National Disaster Housing Task Force's "Practitioner's Guide to Disaster Housing". The purpose of this guide is to assist State, Tribal, Territory and local practitioners in developing and implementing strategies to provide disaster housing assistance. It proposes an integrated approach to address the disaster housing continuum, which includes emergency sheltering, interim housing, and permanent housing, and discusses key assumptions and tools for each phase.
- OH is developing a disaster response component of its Housing Locator efforts. The Housing Locator will be a "real time" resource database of available affordable housing in the Seattle/King County area. After disaster, this system will boost our regional capacity to identify housing options for people displaced from their homes. We hope to launch Housing Locator before year end 2011.

Long-term rebuilding and replacement of damaged housing will require working with external funding programs, such as those offered by Housing and Urban Development and limited FEMA grants, as well as new partners, such as the insurance industry. Long-term recovery planning is needed to prepare the city to guide this important and difficult process.