

2019 CSAC CHALLENGE AWARD NOMINATION
FROM FLOODS TO FIRE WITH PREDICTABLE SUCCESS
MARIPOSA COUNTY

Overview:

In 2017 Mariposa County undertook the two pronged process of; Writing an effective / current Emergency Operations Plan and Training ALL responder staff in execution.

Challenge:

The primary challenge faced by the Mariposa County and its Sheriff's Department beginning in early 2017 were many given that the Emergency Management administrative function had previously been centered in another organizational unit and that the plan, as inherited could be described as minimal and outdated when compared to the EOP that resulted from this effort. Beginning in early 2017 an effort was launched to take a plan that could be described as framework documentation and convert it to one of dynamic operational efficiency, met challenges not previously adequately addressed from an effective solution perspective and provide extensive training to achieve effective and successful execution. Under the leadership of Sheriff Binnewies and his appointed Emergency Management Team they gained universal acceptance across the County organization and throughout the community in the worthiness of this undertaking.

The challenges were many beginning with the identification of individual organizational units that would be responsible for effective execution of the plan while also identifying a minimal three-deep position strength of fully trained and competent individuals in order to sustain productive execution of the plan over extended periods of Disaster Management and Recovery periods.

There were many challenges successfully achieved during the Plan Development stage including:

- Strict adherence to Federal and State Incident Management System protocols (NIMS/SEMS)
- Painstakingly identifying both internal (County) and external contributing government and NGO partners to effect a successful planning and implementation processes;
- Gaining partner understanding of the Mission, Goals, and Objectives of the project undertaking in order to foster partnerships around common goals;
- Building trust amongst the Team to the point where confidential personal contact information of contributors was be assembled in a readily available in an emergency and safeguarded.
- Identification or roles toward achieving collaborative adherence to individual and collective responsibilities leading to seamless mission accomplishment;
- Successfully training vast numbers of internal and external contributors from various professional disciplines, organizational units, and private sector NGO participants
- Insuring that the needs of vulnerable population sectors were addressed both from a health, emotional care, and transportation perspectives.

Innovation:

The Emergency Operations Plans (EOP) as adopted by Mariposa County actively sought to achieve a new level of detail especially when it come to the procurement of partnerships, resources, and ~~comedies~~ needed specifically in an emergency environment. This was achieved through the melding of County resources ~~willing~~ and collaborative partnerships formed throughout the plan development, implementation, and the training processes. The Public/Private sector relationships formed through the project development identified available resources from all of

the participants which were meticulously cataloged along with the steps to be undertaken to insure prompt delivery of the needed service or product.

In-depth planning of specific type events were commonplace in the planning and training efforts. Particular emphasis was placed on pre-planning to address a myriad of possible emergency scenarios in order to establish more than a surface only solution knowing that any emergency situation contains multiple layers of necessary response to be considered successful . Problem solving scenarios involving multiple aspects of achieving successful response were commonplace and achieved throughout training exercises.

Results:

Even before formal adoption of the plan by the County Board of Supervisors segments of the response protocols and training segments undertaken proved to be of tremendous benefit. The redefined command structure under the leadership of the Sheriff's Office performed with efficient effectiveness in response to a Flood Disaster of 2017. Months later the County experienced and responded effectively to the Detwiler Fire which resulted in an activated Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at Level 1 for a period of roughly four weeks. In February 2018 we experienced another Declared Disaster due to flooding which pre-training was credited with the prompt establishment to detours and deployment of prompt and reassuring public information, all leading to safety. In the summer of 2018 we again experienced the ravages of wildfire as the response dictated the standing up of the EOC for a period of just over four weeks and at again Level 1 in response to the Ferguson Fire. Once again the plan development and resources and response scenarios deployed were put to test in yet another Declared Disaster flood event in March of 2019.

In each of these five (5) Declared Disasters that the County has endured over the past 30 months the benefits of approach contained in the new EOP development approach led to a successfully realized operational response to both disaster management as well as post event recovery. The benefits realized through the extensive command and responsibility training contained in NIMS/SEMS was found to be invaluable to the organization replicability and consistency of our response.

The development of our EMP and the approach to training as a multi-layered and in-depth practice of possible response scenarios based again in the very successful NIMS/SEMS command structure coupled with the aggressive training regimen that was developed, deployed, documented and practiced proved invaluable to a predictably successful emergency response and recovery result.

Replicability:

The basis of all of the activities associated with the development, deployment, and training of the EOP is centered in the ability to replicate predictable results by remaining consistent in assignments and responsibilities. The success to maintaining this level of success is rooted in having multiply trained persons for each and every position in the EOC leading to operational sustainability over the long periods of response and recovery.

The successful deployment of Response and Recovery achieved through the successful implementation of the Mariposa County Emergency Operations Plan has a track record of five successful periods of Emergency Response and Recovery with the past 30 months. Success can be measured in many ways but one of the most rewarding is recognition of professional peers which happened earlier this year when it was announced that Mariposa County was awarded the prestigious national award for "Excellence in Emergency Management/Response for Communities under 100,000 population from the American Public Works Association (APWA).

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