Leveraging Community/ Regional Participation

Hurricane Preparedness: "The Georgia Plan"

Nearly 350,000 people reside on or near the 112-mile stretch of Georgia coastline--a coastline affected by one out of every seven hurricanes in the Atlantic region. In 1980, Georgia's Coastal Area Planning and Development Commission (CAPDC) began studying the needs of local governments in disaster preparedness planning. The study resulted in a model storm preparedness program that is both comprehensive and innovative.

What began as a prototype storm program funded under FEMA's Comprehensive Cooperative Agreement was continued through successful local initiatives. Federal funding totaled $133,000 and was awarded to the CAPDC in 1981-82. Money to continue the project was obtained through a voluntary tax of 50 cents per capita in the 29 coastal and host counties involved.

The key to the success of "The Georgia Plan" is found in this introductory statement to the Storm Preparedness Guide developed by the CAPDC and published last April: "A storm preparedness program is more than just a set of documents containing response procedures. It is an ongoing, coordinated effort to prepare the general public for emergency situations. It is also an effort to prepare responsible public and private agencies and groups that direct, control, and support operations in emergency situations. In short, it is the difference between having a written plan and active planning."

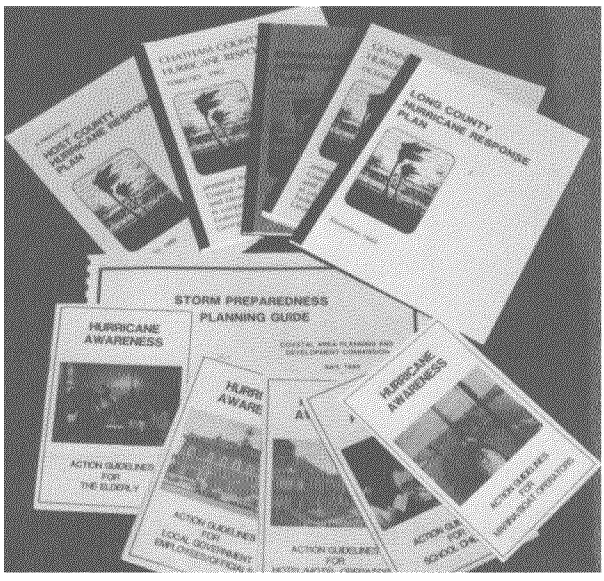
Fully implemented in the coastal Georgia area by 1983, the program incorporates several critical elements: the intergovernmental coordination process guided development of the overall program followed by the development of major functional areas including planning, public education, and mapping.

Planning

A unique element of the plan is the designation and participation of inland or "host" counties. In addition to the six coastal counties designated as evacuation areas, 23 host counties participated in planning and preparedness efforts. Uniform plans were developed for reception and care of evacuees in host areas, with routes mapped, shelters identified, and emergency personnel designated for both response and recovery phases. Evacuation planning began with a telephone survey of households in the designated evacuation areas. Survey results indicated that the least likely residents to evacuate were those with the longest period of residency. Obviously, an effective public information/education program was needed, as well as a reliable network to inform residents of the dangers of "riding out" a storm.

Public Education

Public education efforts began with the identification of target audiences--local



government employees/officials, the elderly, school children, hotel/motel operators, and marina/boat operators. Then a series of formal action guidelines were prepared and distributed. Each guideline provides preparedness and safety information designed for a specific target group. An ongoing educational program, including seminars and other "hands-on" public contacts, was initiated and made an important part of the public information program.

CAPDC staff also worked with the local news media to ensure a uniform program of communication and warning for the general public. In cooperation with the National Weather Service, a five-phase storm condition/preparedness/response activity was put into operation. Beginning with "Condition 5," which identifies the development of a tropical storm disturbance, the public is made aware of the various stages of hurricane development. At "Condition 1" (a declaration that a hurricane will probably strike an area of the Georgia coast within 12 hours), a full-fledged emergency is declared and hurricane response plans are implemented.

Mapping

Perhaps the most time-consuming aspect of developing the storm preparedness program was the mapping procedure. Two types of maps were developed: Emergency Operation Center maps to be used by civil defense and other emergency managers and simple maps for use by the general public. Maps outlining evacuation routes, shelter locations, and other pertinent information were published in local phone books.

"The Georgia Plan" illustrates how regional planning agencies can be an effective mechanism to help groups and agencies coordinate their emergency preparedness planning efforts. The Georgia experience also shows how a little "creative financing" can go a long way at the local level.

Information about "The Georgia Plan" can be obtained from: The Coastal Area Planning and Development Commission, P.O. Box 1917, Brunswick, Georgia 31521.

Developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency with the cooperation of the Coastal Area Planning and Development Commission, Brunswick, Georgia.

Improving Regional Cooperation: The Southeast Louisiana Hurricane Study

The Jefferson Parish Office of Civil Defense has put together a tabloid telling residents how to prepare for a hurricane, with help from the Louisiana Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP), local elected officials, meteorologists from the National Weather Service, public utilities, and local businesses. Jefferson Parish's hurricane preparedness tabloid will eventually be adapted for use by eight other parishes in the New Orleans area that are part of the Southeast Louisiana Hurricane Study. It is one example of the resource-sharing and cooperation that have grown out of this two-year-old hurricane study and preparedness planning project, which involves the Louisiana OEP and the parishes (or counties) of Jefferson, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Tammany, Lafourche, Plaquemines, and Orleans.

"Usually the state produces a massive report with hazard analysis on a broad scale, throws it at the parishes, and tells them to read it when they have a chance," explained Hurricane Study Program Manager Madhu Beriwal of the Louisiana OEP. This time, the individual parishes are working together with the state and with each other on virtually every aspect of a coordinated hurricane survival study and plan for the area.

The hurricane study relies on SLOSH (Sea, Lake, and Overland Surge from Hurricanes), a sophisticated computer simulation model available through the National Hurricane Center, to facilitate evacuation planning. The State OEP has provided the parishes with SLOSH data showing the rise and fall of surge levels and wind speeds for 12 different hurricane scenarios. The SLOSH model makes it possible to show tide surge differentials in minute detail and in areas as small as one-quarter square mile.

The parishes use the SLOSH data to develop evacuation zone maps and to

American Red Cross photo

determine evacuation routes and timeframes for the 12 hurricane scenarios. Each parish also updates data on shelters and community facilities at risk, and identifies households requiring special assistance. To aid in evacuation planning, the State OEP coordinated a behavioral study with the parishes in which people responded to questionnaires about what they had done and would do during a hurricane.

Improving regional cooperation has been a special challenge in the New Orleans area effort, where the nine parishes involved are autonomous political jurisdictions, each with its own form of local government. Jefferson Parish Civil Defense Director Paul Connick says that the civil defense directors in a few of the parishes had met together to discuss common problems before the State OEP organized the Southeast Louisiana Hurricane Study, but that the study has broadened and solidified regional relationships. "We know each other and we know each other's politics," Connick explained.

All nine parishes in the area now participate in regular regional meetings and are working on a number of projects connected with their overall goal of coordinating emergency response efforts and developing generic plans for all hazards. The group is negotiating with an airborne traffic monitoring company that provides daily traffic reports to radio stations. They are planning an aerial monitoring and reporting system with ties to the Emergency Broadcast System to aid traffic flow during evacuations. The nine parishes have also agreed in principle to work with the University of New Orleans on development of course materials on emergency management issues.

Because of their close economic and social ties, geographic situation, and mutual interests, the nine parishes present an ideal subject for a comprehensive emergency management project. In August 1983, FEMA Region VI, the Louisiana Office of Emergency Preparedness, and the nine parishes agreed to build upon the foundation laid by their participation in the Southeast Hurricane Study. The hurricane study forms the nucleus of a project enlarged to include all hazards and a wider scope of activities, and is designed to use Integrated Emergency Management System (IEMS) concepts and methods to improve the region's overall emergency management systems.

Developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency with the cooperation of the Louisiana Emergency Preparedness Association, Jefferson Parish Civil Defense, and the State of Louisiana Office of Emergency Preparedness.

Hawaii's Hurricane Week Campaign Spurs Interest in Preparedness

The Hawaii experience is another example of how it often takes a disaster before people start to think seriously about preparedness. When Hawaii State Civil Defense (SCD) offered awareness materials for its 1983 hurricane season campaign, public response trickled in. Then came Iwa, the most damaging hurricane ever to enter Hawaiian waters. Between November 19 and 25, 1982, Hurricane Iwa caused an estimated $234 million damage to the Islands.

The storm also caused a surge of public interest in the hurricane hazard, reports Hawaii SCD Public Information Officer Marilyn Kali. The next time SCD promoted hurricane preparedness, there was an attentive audience for its message. Hawaii Hurricane Preparedness Week (July 17-23, 1983) was successful mainly because SCD sparked the interest and active participation of public officials, the private sector, news media, and Hawaii residents in a variety of activities designed to increase awareness and offer ideas for preparing for the next Pacific hurricane.

Sponsored jointly by state and county civil defense agencies and the National Weather Service (NWS), the campaign was kicked off by Governor George Ariyoshi, who signed the Hawaii Hurricane Preparedness Week proclamation and urged the public to become more aware of how to prepare for an eventual hurricane.

Kali pointed out that SCD had originally scheduled only one activity to mark 1983 Hurricane Preparedness Week--a Hurricane Conference sponsored by NWS, to which the general public was not invited. Instead, SCD decided to expand the scope of the week's events. "A proclamation from the Governor declaring Hurricane Week is not a newsworthy event unless it can be built around activities that will include the public and the media," Kali explains.

To publicize the week, SCD prepared and distributed 80 press kits for the media, issued 25 press releases, 19 public service announcements (PSAs) for radio, and produced two PSAs for television with the Hawaiian Electric Company (HECO). As a result of the effort, newspapers provided a total of 1,601 column inches of publicity along with editorials in three major newspapers.

"Electronic media also generously supported the program, which is noteworthy because Hawaii Hurricane Preparedness Week was not 'hard news' but more in the line of a public service feature," Kali said in a summary of SCD's Hurricane Week effort. Two of the three networks attended a kick-off press conference and ran news features. Later in the week, each ran a feature story on the "Hurricane Guide" prepared by SCD. All three networks covered Governor Ariyoshi's tour of the NWS Forecast Office at Honolulu International Airport, where he received a personal briefing from the meteorologist-in-charge.

Radio coverage included live and taped interviews with civil defense and NWS staff. Many radio stations also used the PSAs that SCD had provided.

Almost 500 people attended open houses and took tours of the state and Oahu Emergency Operating Centers and NWS forecasting offices. More than 1,200 people viewed a 20-minute slide show put together by SCD and shown in public

libraries and other locations throughout the state.

Perhaps the most dramatic measure of how much interest the hurricane preparedness campaign generated was in the public demand for more information on how to prepare themselves for a hurricane. SCD produced a special edition of its newsletter, Civil Defense Report, that included an eight-page insert, "Hurricane Guide for Hawaii Residents." Based on past demand for this type of publication, SCD decided to print and distribute 2,000 copies on a by-request basis. That wasn't nearly enough: at last count, Kali said, more than 30,000 copies of the Hurricane Guide had been distributed, and requests still come in.

Major retailers were invited to support Hawaii Hurricane Preparedness Week through special promotions. Foodland, Sears, Pay 'N Save, A. L. Kilgo, and Honsport purchased newspaper advertising during the week to advertise survival kits. Kilgo's radio advertising featured hurricane preparedness. The Army-Air Force Exchange Service set up special displays of survival kits in all exchanges and distributed hurricane preparedness brochures.

At SCD's request, Foodland printed hurricane preparedness messages on grocery bags and distributed 960,000 of them during July.

HECO promoted Hawaii Hurricane Preparedness Week in its "Consumer Lines" insert and on electric bills. HECO also produced a brochure, "Setting Up Your Hurricane (and Power Outage) Survival Kit," and received 1,620 individual requests.

SCD also produced a brochure, "Hurricane Preparedness Information for Boaters," that was distributed by the State Harbors Division to all registered boat owners in the state, marinas, yacht clubs, and boat dealers. Total distribution was 20,000 copies. Survival kits were featured on a bus poster developed by SCD and printed by Oahu Civil Defense. The poster was displayed on 600 Oahu buses from July through October.

Developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency with the cooperation of Hawaii State Civil Defense.