

Inclement Weather and Emergency Management Operations

Serving the Homeless and Vulnerable Populations

Agenda

- ▶ Types of Response
- ▶ Disaster Declaration
- ▶ Unified Resource Center (URC)
- ▶ Role of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
- ▶ Non-Profit and NGO role
- ▶ The first 72 Hours
- ▶ Plan, Prepare, and Site visits
- ▶ Alert and Notification
- ▶ Information Management

Stick To The Basics

- ▶ Plan (All Hazards)
- ▶ Prepare
- ▶ Mitigate
- ▶ Respond
- ▶ Recover

Community Support

During an emergency event cities rely on non-profits organizations, charities, faith-based groups, corporations, and private businesses to assist with responding to a natural disaster. These partners are often the first line of defense and play a critical role in the community.

The needs of the community will vary depending on the type of disaster, but certain functional requirements can be anticipated and staffed in advanced. These roles include temporary shelters, providing food and water, outreach, assisting with transportation, prepositioning supplies, and managing points of distribution.

You are the experts.

Types of Response

- ▶ Limited Response
 - ▶ Short Term
 - ▶ All hazards (Natural and Manmade disasters)
 - ▶ City staff initial response element
 - ▶ NGO Support
 - ▶ Non-Profit and Faith Based Organizations
- ▶ General Response
 - ▶ Long Term
 - ▶ EOC Activation
 - ▶ State Assistance
 - ▶ Federal support and reimbursement

Limited Response

Type of events may include alerting unsheltered homeless prior to a storm, operating temporary shelters, organizing Points of Distribution (POD's), transportation of clients to safe haven, meal service, and assisting with recovery.

- ▶ Short duration, usually less than 72 hours
- ▶ Limited or no funding available (UFR)
- ▶ Self Sufficient
- ▶ Resources and staff limitations
- ▶ Specific geographical areas
- ▶ Incident based response
- ▶ Includes support from non-profit organizations and NGO's
- ▶ Scalable tiered response (Triggers)

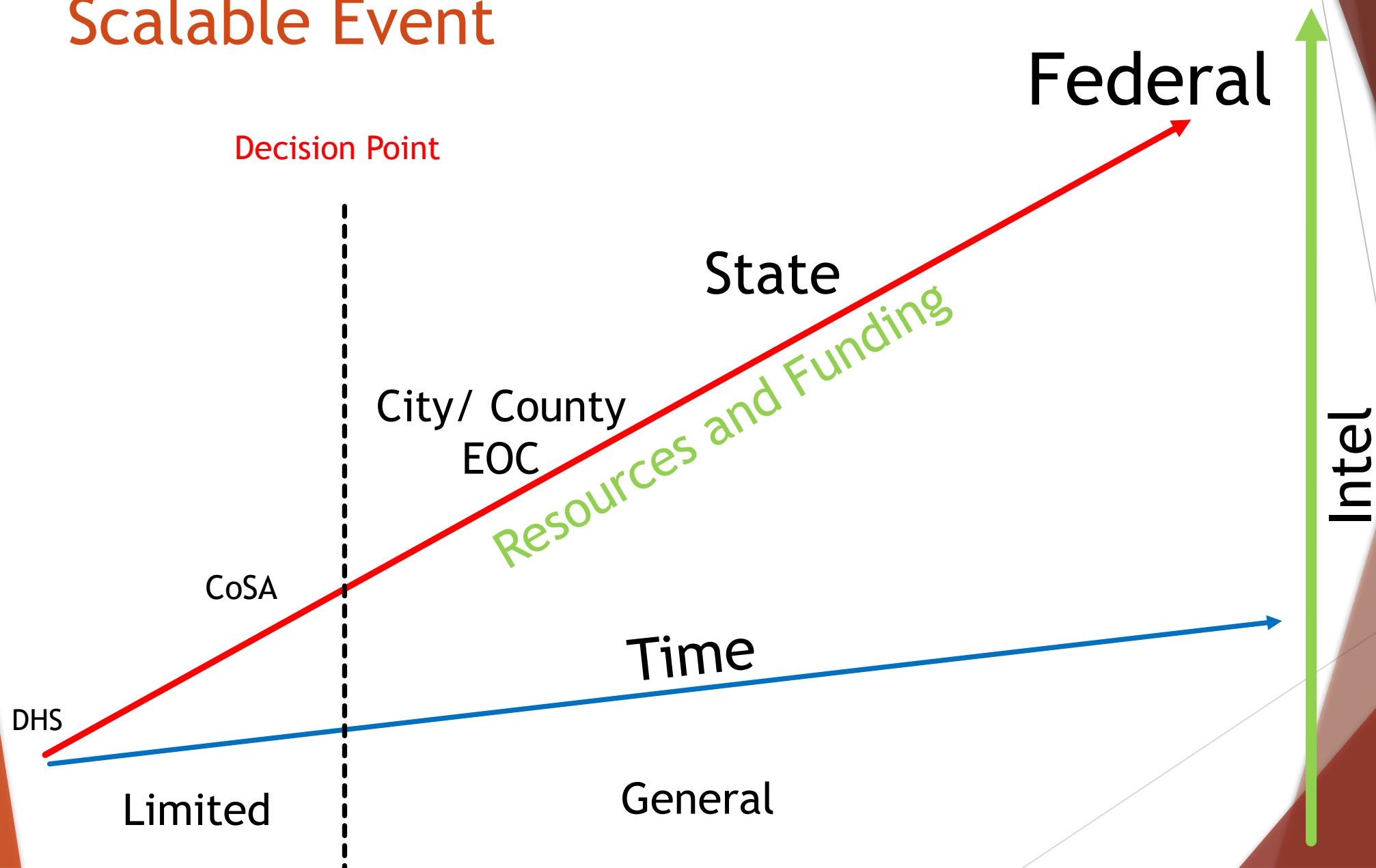
General Response

- ▶ EOC is Activated (City, County, and State)
- ▶ State of Emergency or Emergency Declaration
- ▶ Isolated event or regional catastrophe
- ▶ Clearly Defined Strategic Goals (Exit Plan)
- ▶ Looks at the bigger picture and includes all residents, visitors, and infrastructure
- ▶ Additional City Staff and Resources Available
- ▶ State and Federal Aid
- ▶ Long term 5 days or more
- ▶ 24 hour Operations
- ▶ Predetermined End Date, Goals, or Objectives
- ▶ Fog of war

Disaster Declaration

- ▶ Mayor declares a State of Emergency and submits requests for aid to the Governor.
- ▶ Governor concurs and issues a State of Emergency or submits Disaster Declaration to POTUS who can approve or deny request. If approved, FEMA coordinates aid and sends Incident Management Assistance teams (IMAT) to the affected area.
- ▶ A disaster declaration allows public officials to exercise emergency powers to preserve life, property, and public health following a disaster.
- ▶ Allows Federal Government to provide assistance and aid to individuals and public entities.
- ▶ Brings in equipment, personnel, and supplies from other states.
- ▶ Managed at the local level

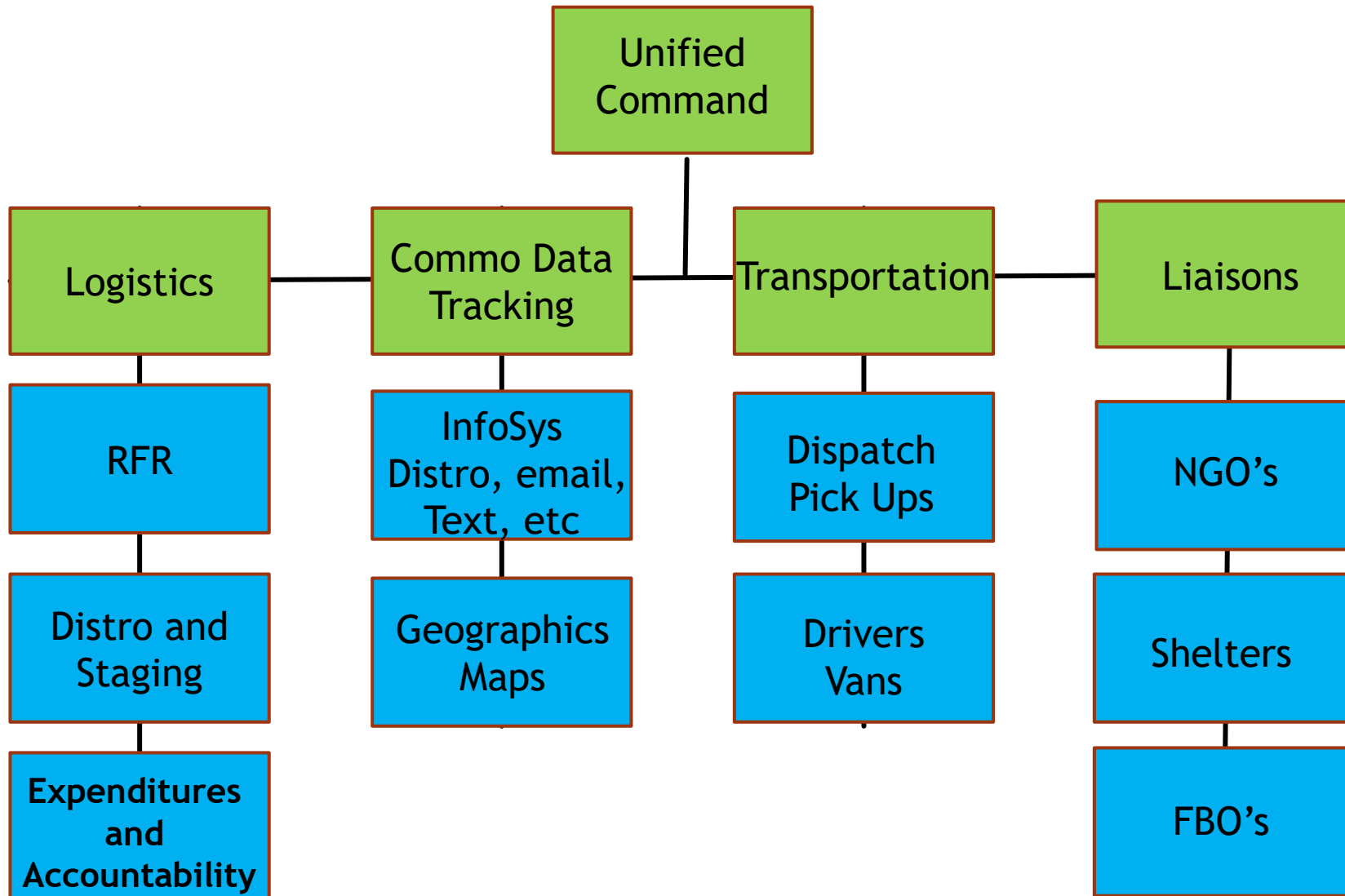
Scalable Event



Unified Resource Center (URC)

- ▶ Only activated when necessary
- ▶ Establishes a centralized Command and Control for the event
- ▶ Coordinates the local response for homeless services
- ▶ Staffed with Subject Matter Experts (SME) not necessarily leadership held positions
- ▶ Operated by City staff with partner agencies (Unified Command)
- ▶ Incorporates liaisons from participating agencies (Decision Making Process)
- ▶ Fusion Center for information, resource coordination, and provides guidance to prevent duplication of effort.
- ▶ Provides single source “Reach Back” capability for partner organizations
- ▶ Tracks expenditures, gathers intelligence, maintains personnel and equipment accountability, receives and sends SITREPS to City Leadership, EOC, and Non-Profits.
- ▶ Operates a Needs Based Logistic System

Example URC Structure



Emergency Operation Center (EOC)

- ▶ An Emergency Operations Center is a centralized command and control facility responsible for carrying out emergency management and ensuring the continuity of operation.
- ▶ Branches include Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance. May be further broken down by branches.
- ▶ Activated by the Mayor or their delegated official.
- ▶ Coordinates the overall response effort, manages supplies, equipment, and personal. Tracks expenditures and requests reimbursement from the Federal Government.
- ▶ RFI, RFP, RFR

Communications

- ▶ Internal and External Alert Rosters and contact lists
- ▶ Three types of communications (Voice, Cellular, Text, Landline, VoIP, Radios, Runners)
- ▶ Centralized location and number to receive updates or send critical information
- ▶ Actions when comms fails
- ▶ How do you communicate with outreach teams or drivers
- ▶ Establish rally points
- ▶ Accountability at all times of staff
- ▶ Communicating with City or State assets

Non-Profit and NGO role

- ▶ Provide Services and Support from existing operations and facilities
- ▶ Augment City temporary shelters with SME's
- ▶ Well established volunteer pool
- ▶ Experience with specific demographics
- ▶ Subject Matter Experts (SME) in their field
- ▶ Access to large support networks local, regional, and nationwide
- ▶ Best prepared to handle emergency responses with minimal notification.
- ▶ Can provide temporary shelters, outreach, counseling, Point of Distribution (POD'S), transportation, meals, medical services, and communications.

Way Forward

Build a comprehensive plan that can be activated with minimal notice and brings together organizations with the common goal of providing life savings services to the unsheltered homeless community.

- ▶ It starts with Outreach, the eyes and ears of the community
- ▶ Create an organizational data base, contact list (24/7), and maps
- ▶ Assistance with developing Emergency Action Plans (EAPs)
- ▶ Conduct site visits and review prepositioned inventory requirements
- ▶ Designate URC staff and locations (Primary/Alternate)
- ▶ Sharing resources, information, and experience
- ▶ Tabletop exercises
- ▶ Plan, Prepare, Mitigate, Respond, Recover

Prepare and Site visits

- ▶ Develop and review your Emergency Action Plans (EAP)
- ▶ City and County Emergency Management Staff can assist with site visits and emergency shelter planning
- ▶ Determine local capabilities and limitations of non-traditional Shelters, Outreach staff, POD's, Logistics, Transportation
- ▶ Preposition necessary supplies
- ▶ Train volunteers and staff
- ▶ Exercise the plan to failure
- ▶ Determine burn rates for long term planning and resupply (5-7 days)
- ▶ Backup plan if your facilities is in affected area. Relocate or cross load supplies with nearest provider.

Prepare and Planning for Staff

- ▶ Designate critical staff
- ▶ Create an alert rooster
- ▶ Have a safe haven designated for family members
- ▶ Understand staff will be affected too and unable to respond
- ▶ Work rest cycles
- ▶ Identify necessary training, First aid, Cold Weather survival, vehicle operations in extreme weather,
- ▶ Standardized packing lists, clothing, and credentials
- ▶ Exercise your plan to the limit and identify failure points
- ▶ Don't expect leaders to know everything, work as a team

First 72 hours

If the EOC is activated, it takes time to gather information on the size and scope of the operation and the needs of the community. It could take 3-5 days before resources are available or longer if the whole region is affected. All teams and shelters must be self sufficient for the first 72 hours.

Triple redundancy when planning

Shelter List - Water, Food, Personal Hygiene, Cots, Blankets, Baby Items, Pet Food, Emergency Lights, Batteries, etc.

Outreach, Shelter, and URC staff- “Go bag”, food, water, batteries, flashlight, power source for cell phones, sleeping bag, cot, change of clothes, hygiene kit, field stove, wet weather gear, etc. There may not be time to return home for more items.

Example Timeline of Events

Situational Dependent

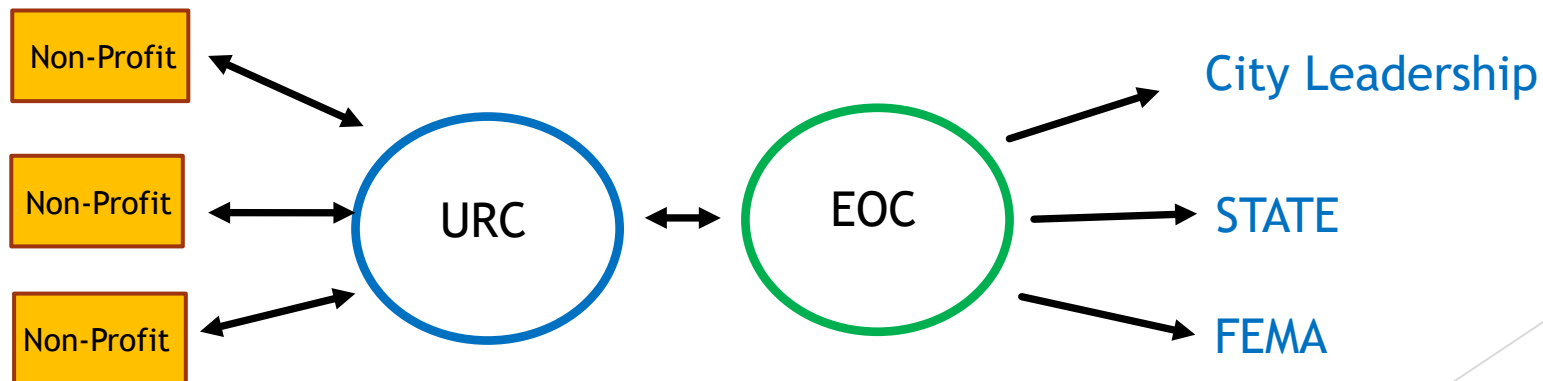
- ▶ T-3(5) NWS sends weather forecast with watch or warning alerts. City staff alert non-profit organizations and partner agencies.
- ▶ T-3 Outreach teams begin warning the unsheltered homeless. In San Antonio this is 500 square miles assigned to 20 outreach staff and SAFFE Officers.
- ▶ T-1 Most accurate forecast issued (12-24 hours prior to event) Decision is made to establish URC (Shelters, PODs, etc.) and partner organizations are notified.
- ▶ T-0(3) Outreach teams continue to engage with clients. Additional resources and supporting sites designated.
- ▶ T+1 account for clients, stand up additional shelters as needed, distribute supplies, conduct damage assessments, update partners
- ▶ T+3 (5) Begin recovery phase turn in durable items, prepare for After Action Review (AAR)
- ▶ T+14 conduct AAR, update plans, restock prepositioned supplies, prepare for the next event.

Alert and Notification

- ▶ Anticipated 2-5 days notification from National Weather Service (NWS), City or County Office of Emergency Management, or local news.
- ▶ Essential City staff will be on standby and ready to respond within 2 hours.
- ▶ If the URC is activated, staff will contact partner organizations on location of URC and request support from providers.
- ▶ Communications plan becomes operational and provided to all supporting agencies
- ▶ Liaisons are critical staff in the URC and assist in the response
- ▶ Information updates will come from the URC at regular intervals
- ▶ Logistics supply points identified

Information Management

- ▶ Critical information will be received at the URC from City Departments and participating agencies. The URC will act as a conduit to ensure everyone receives updates in a timely manner
- ▶ Situational Reports (SITREPs) will be sent to OEM to develop a common operating picture, determine if EOC activation is necessary, and assist with operational requirements as needed.
- ▶ The URC will field request for personnel, supplies, and issue them as they become available. EOC activation may be required to fulfil this need.
- ▶ URC staff will engage with homeless shelters to verify bed space, coordinate enrollment, assist with transportation, and track referrals.





It's Show Time!

Winter storm expected to hit large portions of Texas beginning Wednesday



WINTER STORM URI

Winter Storm Uri dumped record amounts of snow on Texas, with the frigid temperatures and severe weather impacting all 254 counties in the state. In February 2021, Millions of Texans lost power. Snow and ice paired with ultra-low temperatures caused widespread road closures and dangerous travel conditions. State emergency management leaders activated warming centers in communities across Texas and numerous personnel were deployed to assist stranded motorists and conduct welfare checks. Gov. Greg Abbott issued a disaster declaration for all 254 counties in the state.

State of Texas

- [Governor Abbott Issues Disaster Declaration In Response To Severe Winter Weather In Texas \(2/12/2021\)](#)
The Governor of Texas declared a State of Disaster in all 254 Texas counties using his powers under state law.



BUSINESS

Texans suffer more power outages than residents of any other state



Things we had to consider!

- ▶ Do we have shelter capacity?
- ▶ What resources do we have and not have?
- ▶ What about COVID protocols?
- ▶ Is it safe for staff to be on the roads?
- ▶ How long will this winter storm last?
- ▶ What if clients decline assistance?
- ▶ What supplies are needed for those seeking shelter and those who decline shelter?
- ▶ What's the plan once we pull staff from operations due to hazardous conditions?
- ▶ Identifying communication access points and flow?
- ▶ What data should be collected?

Communication Strategy

How do clients request Assistance?

Key Access Points for those Requesting Assistance:

- City and County Leadership
- Press Releases
- Emergency Operations Command Center
- Homeless Connections Hotline
- Homeless Shelters
- Homeless Street Outreach Staff
- Resource Hubs
- San Antonio Police Department
- Homeless Continuum of Care Lead
- Non-profit Partners
- 311 and 211 Customer Service Centers
- Faith Based Organizations

How do we communicate with participating partners?

- Email
- Text Messages
- Phone Calls
- GroupMe Chat
- Site Visit Check-Ins (if possible)



Types of Information Collected and Disseminated to Partners

- ▶ Organization's Name, Address, Role, Hours of Operations, Capacity Limits and Point of Contacts
- ▶ Number of clients served
- ▶ Information on any challenges that requires assistance?
- ▶ Are there any needs?
- ▶ Will you be re-opening or suspending services?
- ▶ Capacity Updates throughout the day and night.



Document

What worked well or was most helpful throughout the process?

311 opening transportation options

Convention Center resource

Having direct access to POC (Morjoriee)

Travis Park Church's Food delivery to the Hub was great

Regional assignments (who is serving who where)

Agencies reporting up where they had gaps or extra resources

Travis Park Church's food delivery to the Hub was great

Haven opening up to anyone, no IDs needed.

SAPD's involvement. Often providing the needed transport between locations.

Moved as one community rather than individual entities.

Learned more about each other (partners in different parts of the community)

Morjoriee's text group kept everyone connected and addressed resource gaps

The speed at which needs were met and problems were solved.

shelter census being sent out

All requests were responded to, no gaps in response

Using 2 words, how would you describe
last week's experience?

catastrophe,
miraculous

life
saving

God-inspired

Empathetic

Hardcore

Grateful and
collaborative

persistent

Compelling
and essential

Brilliant
Coordination

Catastrophe

organized
chaos

Amazing

exasperating,
satisfying

challenging

Exasperating
and satisfying

Resourcefull

Empathically
motivating

Miracles

intense
reactive

positive,
euphoric

grateful

Intense
and
reactive

amazing
synergy

compelling,
essential

Compassionate

Uplifting
and
inspiring

Encouraging

Intense

Resilient

humbling

Life-changing

TY - Were able to have staff stay downtown in hotels, not risking the transportation

What were some challenges experienced throughout the process?

Meals provided by 60 different partners and lost some of those partners in the storm

Within Our Control

staffing challenges

Missed data collection opportunities

Having a security guard/security access. Had people present 24/7 for long periods of time.

Security needs, when at capacity during the day, made for difficult situations and frustrations.

Demand for supplies (blankets, warm clothing)

After the immediate crisis, not a solid response or plan for keeping people inside, in shelter or stable housing.

Many people coming in without phones. Asking for phones to contact family, seek shelter from friends and family.

Calls from people confined to wheelchairs, etc. Unable to address basic needs.

Response for pets, prevented access to shelter when people had pets

Homeless Hotline - ppl unable to leave their homes, w/o electricity and water (especially vulnerable populations)

Accessing Mental Health and Substance Use resources given the length of the crisis.

Needed preparation for staff and volunteers around responding to MH and SU needs

Outside of Our Control

Man Power

road conditions

Volunteer shortages

power outages

water outages/burst pipes

What are some things we've learned from this experience?

More & faster reaction and/or assistance from Bexar County

We can only get stronger and better

incorporate wellness and selfcare

we can do it but we can make it easier

State and Federal resources come in when the EOC stands up. Need the information from community partners to effectively deploy these resources.

It's not that people don't want help, they just might not want the help that is available immediately

We opened during the shelter beyond our hours to treat our guests and that was helpful. If meds are an issue during this time. We can be prepared with for that need.

Maybe along with the designated shelters, maybe have a designated representative from each agency positioned within their designated

The types of communications that occurred amongst everyone should be a year around thing instead of a disaster response thing. This will allow for a seamless response during emergency response.

Emotional/mental health Team check ins, in addition to organizational needs

Communication was key across all parties

Big difference between working with the population in downtown as opposed to outlying areas

Amazing things can happen when we come together collaboratively

Lessons Learned from Winter Storm Uri

February 13-19, 2021

- ▶ Established coordination with EOC early
- ▶ Being mindful that staff are also impacted by storm
- ▶ Understand and accept that clients will refuse services
- ▶ Survival kits for those who remain in encampments
- ▶ Medical training needed for staff. EMS couldn't respond due to road conditions. (Basic first aid, Stop the Bleed, Cold weather injuries)
- ▶ Safety Equipment for staff (Flashlights, reflective vests, radios, etc.)
- ▶ Establish safe haven for non-city staff and families earlier
- ▶ Account for clients who were hospitalized long term (Frostbite)
- ▶ Some planned shelters lost power or pipes froze. Clients were cross loaded to other locations
- ▶ Access to Behavioral Services

Lessons Learned

Sustain

- ▶ Communications Plan worked but internet access and cell towers not always available.
- ▶ Open day warming centers
- ▶ Activated alert roster early.
- ▶ Utilized phone app (GroupMe) for communications
- ▶ Transporting clients using outreach teams
- ▶ Homeless Hotline used for public to ask for help or report clients in need
- ▶ Multiple non-standard shelters prepared and ready.
- ▶ Outreach teams assigned sectors
- ▶ Block hotel rooms for staff or designated sleep areas in shelter























Special Thanks to the many partners who assisted during the inclement weather operations and serve our residents experiencing homelessness everyday in the San Antonio and Bexar County Area!

Open Discussion