

## **Community Disaster Planning for a Rural Maine County**

The vast majority of municipalities and counties in the State of Maine have obsolete and inadequate emergency management plans, if they have any plans at all. County government in Maine is very small and weak and municipal governments in Waldo County are nearly all operated by volunteers. If emergency planning is to be accomplished and is to be effective, it must be simple, yet comprehensive and must demonstrate the benefits of emergency planning fairly well to the non-emergency management public official. This will require effective leadership by the County Emergency Management Director.

### **Abstract**

The concept and benefits of community disaster planning is not well understood in the State of Maine. The State of Maine has not often been subject to major disasters that can cause mass casualties and catastrophic property damages and the general public and government officials are very complacent. Maine is a very sparsely populated rural state and government at county and municipal levels is small and provides only basic services. Emergency management is not one of those services that receives attention or funding. This case study will review the current situation in one Maine county, the County of Waldo and what activities may be accomplished to build a solid and effective community disaster planning program.

## Waldo County, Maine

Waldo County is located midway along the rugged Maine coast and contains twenty six (26) municipalities. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the County is home to 36,280 residents living in 14,726 households. The County encompasses 730 square miles, 85.6% (625 square miles) is land surface and 14.4% (105 square miles) are water bodies. This derives a population density of 49.7 people per square mile. The largest municipality is the county seat of Belfast which has about 6,400 residents. The 2000 Census County median household income (\$33,986) is well below the state median (\$37,240) and the state is well below the national average (\$41,994). Additionally, the County's median age of 39.8 is higher than the State's 38.6 and the national median of 35.3. The residents of Waldo County are less affluent and older. This presents a greater vulnerability to disasters.

The County government consists of the Sheriff's Department and Jail, Regional Communications Center, Clerk's Office, Registrar of Deeds, Registrar of Probate, District Attorney's Office and the Emergency Management Office. The municipalities within Waldo are responsible for education, property tax collection, general welfare, official personal records, public works, sanitation, land use planning and code enforcement, animal control, public safety (primarily fire protection), and local elections.

Waldo County does not have a significant amount of public safety and emergency management resources. The County Sheriff maintains sixteen full time law enforcement officers for round the clock operations in 26 towns. Only three municipalities have their own full time law enforcement departments and only Belfast has round the clock coverage. The County does not provide fire protection services and all municipal fire departments are volunteer and greatly

understaffed and under-trained. Two municipalities do not even maintain a fire department. The County employs a full time emergency management staff consisting of a director and an administrative assistant. Each municipality has appointed a volunteer emergency manager.

In 2006, the new Waldo County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) Director reviewed the status of existing emergency management planning at the county and municipal level. He discovered that the County EMA maintained an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) based on a FEMA format from two decades ago, a separate Hazardous Materials Response Plan that had not been updated in eighteen years and a recently developed Hazard Mitigation Plan. The County government has no Continuity of Operations Plan, Recovery Plan or Emergency Management Strategic Plan. He also discovered that the County had constructed municipal EOPs for each town, however they have never been signed or read by the municipal officials. The municipalities also do not have continuity of operations plans, recovery plans or strategic plans.

### **State of Maine**

In the State of Maine, the emergency management program is overseen by the Maine Emergency Management Agency or MEMA. MEMA is staffed with 27 personnel responsible for the coordination of preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery activities for state agencies, volunteer organizations, and county and municipal emergency management programs. Currently, the State of Maine government does not have a comprehensive Continuity of Operations Plan, Recovery Plan or Strategic Plan. The MEMA staff are currently working on rewriting the State EOP. A State Hazard Mitigation Plan was completed in 2005.

State emergency management requirements are found in State of Maine Statute Title 37-B, Chapter 13, which is referred to as the Maine Emergency Management Act. One purpose of this act is to “authorize the creation of local organizations for emergency management in the political subdivisions of the State” (37-B). The local emergency management organizations created by this act are the county emergency management agencies and the municipal emergency management directors. Section §781 of this Act, requires the formation of municipal and county agencies responsible for emergency management. It further tasks the county emergency management director to coordinate the municipal emergency management activities. It requires each municipality to support the county program. This is the impetus for county authority and for the responsibility for county leadership in the emergency management program.

The Maine Emergency Management Act, Section §783 requires each municipality and county to “prepare and keep a current disaster emergency plan.” (37-B) This is the only emergency management plan required under this Act. Therefore, the only emergency management plan that the county emergency management can require each municipality to develop is the municipal Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), referred to as the “disaster emergency plan” in state law.

By the Maine Act, the “disaster emergency plan” must include a hazard identification, risk analysis and vulnerability assessment. The plan must also include resource identification and management in order to secure those resources that will be needed for a disaster response. Finally, the Act requires that the plan identify response procedures and operations. A section of this paragraph requires “recommendations to appropriate public and private agencies of all preventive measures found reasonable in light of risk and cost” (37-B). This appears to be a

requirement for each county and municipality to develop a Hazard Mitigation Plan. However, in reality, this has not been required, indicated or enforced by the Director of MEMA.

### **Federal Emergency Planning Requirements**

By U.S. Code or by Federal Regulation, there is only one directive that requires states and local communities to have an emergency management plan. This is the Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act or EPCRA, which is overseen by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Office (CEPPO). EPCRA requires all levels of government to determine what chemicals are present within their jurisdiction and to develop emergency plans to respond and recover from chemical accidents. This requirement has been in place since the late 1980's. Unfortunately, the original late 1980's version of the Waldo County Hazardous Materials Response Plan (HMRP) is also the most current. The municipal HMRP's are vague templates that say little and include the same outdated information as the County plan.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency or FEMA encourages the development and continual revision of Emergency Operations Plans (EOP), Administrative Plans, Preparedness Plans, Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP), Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP) and Disaster Recovery Plans (DRP). There are no federal mandates that require any of these emergency management plans to be developed by state and local governments. However there are several "monetary incentives" that are in place to strongly encourage the development of a couple of these plans.

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended by Public Law 106-390, October 30, 2000 required state and local governments to develop and periodically revise natural disaster Hazard Mitigation Plans by October 2004 in order to receive pre-disaster mitigation grants, hazard mitigation grants and flood mitigation assistance grants. Because many communities in all states have received a great deal of mitigation funding in the past, there was a great push by all state and local emergency managers to complete this task. FEMA also expended a large amount of the Disaster Mitigation Act funding to provide an opportunity for state and local emergency managers to use FEMA employees and contractor technical advisors to assist with the development of the HMP.

Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5 (HSPD-5) signed in February 2003 directed that “beginning in Fiscal Year 2005, Federal departments and agencies shall make adoption of the NIMS a requirement, to the extent permitted by law, for providing Federal preparedness assistance through grants, contracts or other activities. The [DHS] Secretary shall develop standards and guidelines for determining whether a State or local entity has adopted the NIMS.” (HSPD-5). The one of the standards for which the DHS Secretary has adopted is the requirement to institutionalize the National Incident Management System (NIMS). This standard is met by state and local governments by integrating the Incident Command System (ICS) into their EOPs.

The Waldo County EMA Director and several of the municipal emergency managers see the benefit of implementing a single standard for incident management. This allows for better integration of public safety and response agencies and for the effective integration and operation of local, state and Federal departments during an emergency. The remaining communities are grudgingly adopting NIMS because of the possibility of losing out on future federal preparedness

grants. The communities in Waldo County have faired very well with federal preparedness grants, so this HSPD-5 policy is a major incentive.

The most current list of federal preparedness grant programs reported to the NIMS Integration Center was published in August 2005. (Fed Grants). This lists includes 61 separate grant programs from eleven (11) departments and agencies and literally amount to billions of federal dollars earmarked for state and local governments. Some of the more popular grant program on this list include:

Department of Justice (DOJ)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State Domestic Preparedness Equipment Support Program</li> <li>2. Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance Program</li> </ol>
Department of Agriculture (USDA)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State Fire Assistance</li> <li>2. Volunteer Fire Assistance</li> <li>3. First Responder Initiative</li> </ol>
Department of Homeland Security (DHS)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State Homeland Security Grant Program</li> <li>2. Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program</li> <li>3. State and Local Emergency Operation Centers</li> <li>4. Community Emergency Response Teams</li> <li>5. Emergency Management Performance Grants</li> <li>6. State and Local Emergency Operations Planning Grants</li> <li>7. Citizen Corps</li> <li>8. Metropolitan Medical Response System</li> <li>9. National Fire Academy Training Grants</li> </ol>
Department of the Interior (DOI)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rural Fire Assistance Program</li> </ol>
Department of Transportation (DOT)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Operation Respond</li> <li>2. Port Security Grant Program</li> </ol>

Fully two-thirds of all the municipalities in Waldo County have received the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program and several communities have received the grant more then once. The Town of Thorndike has received the AFG four times. The Waldo County RCC has received nearly a half million dollars in Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) funding for upgrades to regional communications and half of the County emergency management program is paid for under the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) each year. The County

and communities have received Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), Citizen Corps and Volunteer Fire Assistance grant funding in past years. Many of the public safety and emergency management programs in the County would be susceptible to termination or major scaling back, if it were not for these federal preparedness grants. Implementation of NIMS and integration of NIMS into the county and municipal EOPs is not an option; it is a necessity. Funds can be as great an incentive as legal requirements.

FEMA has developed several programs to help communities develop Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP), however, to date, there are no federal mandates or grant funding to create such plans. Through the Emergency Management Institute (EMI)'s Independent Study program, two home study courses, "*IS 546 Continuity of Operations (COOP) Awareness Course*" and "*IS 547 Introduction to Continuity of Operations (COOP)*" (EMI Website) are available for state and local emergency managers to gain greater familiarization. FEMA and the General Services Administration (GSA) developed a COOP template that is very user friendly and adaptable to any jurisdiction. Although there are very good resources, this is not a widespread program. There are no mandates or grant incentives. It will take local leadership and plenty of effort to get a COOP program going in Waldo County.

FEMA has not provided much guidance and has established no requirements for emergency management strategic/administrative plans, preparedness plans or recovery plans. FEMA does have its own 5 year Strategic Plan, "*FEMA Strategic Plan in Brief, Fiscal Years 2003 – 2008*", but has not provided information on the development of state and local emergency management strategic planning. Likewise, there are no FEMA guides or handbooks on the development of Recovery Plans. The FEMA website does contain a couple of examples of recovery plans

developed for past disasters. For most local entities, this is not a plan that is even considered, until after the long term recovery following a disaster is already underway.

### **Planning Guidance**

The two primary sources used for the development of emergency management plans are provided by FEMA and by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). FEMA has excellent references for creating Emergency Operations Plans (EOP), Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMP) and Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP). The NFPA has created a code titled “*NFPA 1600, Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs, 2004 Edition*” (NFPA 1600). This code provides general guidance on what topics should be included in Strategic Plans, Emergency Operations Plans, Hazard Mitigation Plans, Continuity of Operations Plans and Disaster Recovery Plans.

FEMA has developed two guides for emergency response planning. The first guide was Civil Preparedness Guide “*CPG 1-8, Guide for the Development of State and Local Emergency Operations Plans*” (CPG 1-8) This was replaced in 1996 with the guide “*SLG 101, Guide for All-Hazard Emergency Operations Planning, State and Local Guide*” (SLG 101) CPG 1-8 described the contents of a plan for civil emergency response operations. These contents listed several emergency functions, some of which were hazard specific. The follow on guide, SLG 101, took a different approach. This guide is an “All-Hazards” operations planning manual.

SLG 101 outlines a planning process that is based on an “risk-based, all-hazards” approach. This involves the identification of what hazards your jurisdiction may be subject to, a determination of the severity and likelihood of those hazards, and an analysis of the vulnerability of that jurisdiction – its residents and infrastructure – to a disaster event. Within an EOP, there

are three primary sections. These consist of a Basic Plan, Functional Annexes and Hazard Specific Attachments.

The basic EOP covers topics that apply to all hazards that could impact a jurisdiction. As stated in SLG 101, “the Basic Plan is an overview of the jurisdiction's emergency response organization and policies. It cites the legal authority for emergency operations, summarizes the situations addressed by the EOP, explains the general concept of operations, and assigns responsibilities for emergency planning and operations” (SLG 101). These are activities that will remain the same whether the incident involves a hurricane, a terrorist attack or a hazardous materials accident. For example, during any type of disaster, a community might activate its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in order to manage the community’s response and recovery. There would not be a different type of community command and control function established for each type of disaster – the EOC will always be utilized. To further detail specific emergency response functions, the sections that follows the Basic Plan of an EOP are the functional annexes.

The Functional Annexes of an EOP comprise eight primary emergency functions that would be performed in nearly any disaster and therefore are all-hazard in approach also. The emergency functions include:

Direction and Control	Evacuation
Communications	Mass Care
Warning	Health and Medical
Emergency Public Information	Resource Management

These functions are operationally-oriented. Direction and Control will describe a jurisdiction’s incident management organization and authorities. It may detail the inter-relationship between the EOC and the on-scene incident command system (ICS).

Communications will specify what type of emergency communications will be utilized by whom at what point. It also typically identifies methods of backup communications. The Warning function will describe the process that emergency information will be distributed to jurisdiction leadership, public safety agencies and the general public. This would include procedures for activating the Emergency Alert System (EAS). Emergency Public Information will establish procedures for working with the media and for providing emergency-related information to the general public. Whereas the Warning function may communicate information to shelter-in-place, Emergency Public Information may communicate the need to have private water wells tested before use to ensure that the wells were not contaminated. The Evacuation function will describe how and where public evacuations would be handled and who is responsible for implementing evacuations. Mass Care details the efforts to provide the basic needs of the evacuees, to include providing safe shelter, food and water. Health and Medical describes the efforts to provide such emergency services as “emergency medical service, hospital, public health, environmental health, mental health, and mortuary services” (SLG 101). The last annex is Resource Management. This annex details the ability of a jurisdiction impacted by a disaster to acquire, track and distribute resources needed by the emergency responders and incident managers to effectively respond from the disaster. All of these emergency functions typically are required for any disaster.

The Hazard-Specific attachments are developed from the Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment and Vulnerability Analysis that should be completed before the development or update of a jurisdiction’s EOP. From the Hazard Analysis, a jurisdiction’s top priority hazard events are listed. These are the hazard events that require further description of the emergency response. For any given jurisdiction, hurricanes and hazardous material accidents may be two of

these hazard events that require profiling. In both events, evacuations may be required, however there may be different procedures for evacuation during either events. For example, a hurricane will typically impact a far greater geographic area than hazardous materials accidents, but will come with warning. A far greater number of people would need to be evacuated, yet there may be 1-3 days to implement the evacuation. Because of the quantity of people that would need to be evacuated, the evacuation routes would most likely be predetermined state and federal highway systems. However, in the case of the hazardous materials accident, the event will come with no warning. Evacuation routes will be determined according to the wind direction and may be over low-capacity secondary roads. It will be very expedient. The Hazard-specific attachments will not repeat the information detailed in the functional annexes, but will detail the activities that are specific in nature to each identified hazard event.

NFPA 1600 also describes the requirements for an EOP and Hazard Mitigation Plans, but SLG 101 goes into far greater detail.

FEMA has developed several guides that detail the Hazard Mitigation Planning process. These guides include “*Getting Started: Building Support For Mitigation Planning (FEMA 386-1)*”, “*Understanding Your Risks: Identifying Hazards And Estimating Losses (FEMA 386-2)*”, “*Developing The Mitigation Plan: Identifying Mitigation Actions And Implementing Strategies (FEMA 386-3)*”, “*Bringing the Plan to Life: Implementing the Hazard Mitigation Plan (FEMA 386-4)*”, “*Integrating Historic Property and Cultural Resource Considerations into Hazard Mitigation Planning (FEMA 386-6)*” and “*Integrating Manmade Hazards Into Mitigation Planning (FEMA 386-7)*” (FEMA Mitigation). These manuals were developed to support state and local emergency planners to meet the hazard mitigation planning requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, a legislative update to the Stafford Act. In the case of the

Waldo County municipalities, this requirements was completed in October 2004 and will not have to be updated until 2009.

FEMA, with support from GSA, developed Federal Preparedness Circular-65 (FPC-65), titled “Federal Executive Branch Continuity of Operations (COOP)” and a the COOP Template to assist Federal, State and local emergency managers with the development of Continuity of Operations Plans. Continuity of operations describe the essential functions that a government department or agency need to be able to continue to operate during and after a disaster event. The COOP typically covers topics dealing with succession, delegation of emergency authorities, identification of primary and alternate command and control facilities, vital records that must be safeguarded and the protection of department or agency resources, facilities, and personnel (NFPA 1600). A great many government and business entities discovered the importance of COOP planning following the terrorist attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Those that had COOPs recovered far quicker then those who did not have COOPs in place.

As was mentioned earlier in this case study, there is very little guidance on emergency management Strategic Plans and Recovery Plans. NFPA 1600 does provide some minimal direction on what is found in these plans. Strategic Plans for an emergency management program involve the development of a program vision statement, mission statement, long-term goals and measurable objectives for determining successful completion of the goals and achievement of the mission and vision. Recovery Plans are implemented following a disaster in order to “return conditions to a level that is acceptable to the entity” (NFPA 1600). A recovery plan will contain details on the priorities and resources needed for restoration. It will normally contain short term and long term goals.

## **Solutions for Waldo County Disaster Planning**

The Waldo County emergency management programs, county and municipal levels, are responsible under federal and state law with disaster planning. The elected officials and their emergency managers are negligent if they do not take this responsibility to safeguard their citizens seriously. This study has shown the legal requirements for the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) or Disaster Plan under State of Maine statute and Hazardous Materials Response Plans (HMRP) under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act (EPCRA). But how will it be possible to ensure the completion of the remaining planning requirements and what tactics can be used to ensure that the currently outdated response plans are updated?

Most of the communities in Waldo County have very small populations; of the 26 municipalities, twelve (12) have less than 1,000 residents and ten (10) have populations between 1,000 and 2,000 residents. The disaster plans do not need to be extremely comprehensive. One tactic that may be taken is to incorporate several of the different emergency management plans into one “Disaster Plan”. The following paragraphs will review how this incorporation may be accomplished.

There is already a very well established format for the EOP as laid out by FEMA’s SLG 101 guide. One tactic may be for the County EMA Director is to create a Waldo County municipal EOP template using the SLG 101 format. Most of the current municipal plans are formatted on the old CPG 1-8 planning guidance from twenty years ago. Proving a new template will bring these municipal plans up to date. The County EMA Director has a good understanding of the municipalities in his county and can develop a plan that would fit any one of them. However, it is critical that the County EM Director not write a final draft EOP for the municipalities. Here is

where past directors made their mistake. A community must be a part of the planning process if it is going to take “ownership” of that plan. The County EM Director must find ways to encourage the municipalities to accept ownership.

This will take a lot of public relations work with the municipal elected officials and their volunteer emergency managers. The public officials must be made to understand that they have a responsibility for the safety of their residents and for civil preparedness. This may involve briefings and local publications explaining the Federal and State legal requirements to have EOPs and HMRPs. They will also need to become educated on the requirements of HSPD-5 which requires state and local jurisdictions to be “NIMS-compliant” in order to receive federal preparedness grants. The EOP template should be written to incorporate NIMS policies and procedures so that this will not be a process of reinvention for each community.

A final encouragement to the municipal elected officials and emergency managers will be to make the planning process simple. The best way to accomplish this will be to roll up the requirements for all the plans (except the County Hazard Mitigation Plan, which was developed and signed off in 2004 by all municipalities in the County) into one plan. The Hazardous Materials Response Plan can easily be incorporated into the EOP as a hazard-specific attachment. Much of the HMRP information is already stated in the basic plan and functional annexes of the EOP. The Continuity of Operations Plan can easily be incorporated into the EOP as a functional annex. The basic outline and requirements of a Recovery Plan can be described in another functional annex. The Strategic Plan could be added to the Basic Plan itself, under the Situation and Assumption paragraphs.

This incorporation of emergency planning requirements will be a similar process for the County EOP. The County EMA Director can incorporate the Strategic Plan, COOP, Recovery

Plan, and Hazardous Materials Response Plan into a newly updated Emergency Operations Plan. This new EOP should incorporate the format of the current SLG 101 planning guidance and of the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The County EMA Director will also review the current State EOP and the latest version of the National Response Plan (NRP) to ensure compatibility.

In order to ensure that a small rural county and its component municipalities meet the emergency planning requirements and recommendations of state and Federal laws, codes and guidance, the plans need to be simple yet effective. Full time career emergency management directors at a higher level of government (in this case study – the County) must assist the part time volunteer emergency managers in meeting their responsibilities to their constituents. Educating the volunteer emergency managers and their elected officials is necessary in order to accomplish this task. It is vitally important that every government level of our nation is prepared. The inability to do so, was well exemplified during the Hurricane Katrina disaster.

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