



FEMA

R0673

Dear National Fire Academy Student:

By now you should have received an email notification from the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) Admissions Office. This notification indicates your acceptance into the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), National Fire Academy (NFA) “Service Area Risk Reduction” (SARR) course.

This course is designed for Company Officers (COs) who want to learn about community risk reduction and how it is done at the station level. You will conduct a risk assessment of your station area. This will lead you to develop an action plan with effective intervention strategies and activities targeting a specific risk. You will learn the steps to follow to complete a risk reduction program in an organized and planned process. This course is also directed at chief officers, administrative personnel and firefighters who want to learn more about community risk reduction to support the CO in station-based delivery.

This course is about how COs can plan, implement and evaluate risk-reduction activities to benefit the citizens they serve. The course features the role of the officer as an inspirational leader for the risk-reduction cause. The course also provides an opportunity for you to apply risk-reduction activities in communities with diverse populations. A portion of the course is devoted to learning how to interact and work effectively in intercultural settings.

Your pre-course assignment, as well as an example of a completed pre-course assignment, is enclosed with this letter. The example is provided to help you complete the assignment and to show you the level of detail expected to be successful in this course. Please follow the instructions on the assignment and bring it to class.

This is a six-day class that starts on Sunday at 8 a.m. Subsequent classes will meet daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with evening classes possible.

The course materials for this course are now available in a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) format that will function on any electronic device. If you own an electronic device (laptop computer, tablet, etc.) and are familiar with its document reader functions, we are asking you to download the Student Manual (SM) **before you travel to Emmitsburg** and bring the preloaded device with you. Please see the page following this letter for complete instructions on successfully downloading your course materials. Please note: If you plan to bring/use an iPad, you may experience issues saving/storing/printing course assignments since there is no USB/thumb drive capacity for these devices.

The NFA classroom environment is computer based. Increased numbers of students and instructors are bringing laptop computers or other electronic devices to campus; you are responsible for the security and maintenance of your equipment. The NFA cannot provide computer software, hardware (which includes disks, printers, scanners, monitors, etc.), or technical support for your device. For your convenience, we do provide surge protector power strips at each classroom table.

December 2023

If you need additional information related to your course's content or requirements, please contact Mr. Michael Weller, Fire Prevention Management Curriculum training specialist, at 301-447-1476, or by email at michael.weller@fema.dhs.gov. Good luck, and I hope to see you on campus.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eriks J. Gabliks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Eriks" being the most prominent.

Eriks J. Gabliks, Superintendent
National Fire Academy
U.S. Fire Administration

Enclosures

National Fire Academy Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Course Materials/Download Instructions

If you own an electronic device (laptop computer, tablet, etc.) and are familiar with its document reader functions, we are asking you to download the Student Manual (SM) before you travel to class and bring the preloaded device with you.

The **first step** is to download Adobe Acrobat Reader to your device. This will enable you to read and manipulate the course materials. Adobe Acrobat Reader can be used to comment and highlight text in PDF documents. It is an excellent tool for note-taking purposes.

For laptops and computers

Adobe Acrobat Reader can be downloaded from www.adobe.com/downloads/. It is a free download. Please note that depending on your settings, you may have to temporarily disable your antivirus software.

For tablets and other similar hand-held devices

Adobe Acrobat Reader can be downloaded onto devices such as iPads, Android tablets and other hand-held devices. The application can be found in the device's application store using the search function and typing in "Adobe Acrobat Reader." Follow the instructions given. **It is a free application.**

After you have successfully downloaded the Adobe Acrobat Reader, please use the following web link to download your SM. You may copy/paste this link into your web browser.

https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/ax/sm/sm_0673.pdf

Note: In order to have the editing capabilities/toolbar, the SM needs to be opened with Adobe Acrobat Reader. There should be a function on your device to do this.

If you need assistance, please contact nfaonlinetier2@fema.dhs.gov.

SERVICE AREA RISK REDUCTION

Name: _____
Department: _____
Position: _____
Daytime Phone: _____
Email: _____

Dates of Class: _____
Type of Profile:
____ Entire Community
____ Station Service Area Only

**Service Area Risk Reduction
Graded Pre-Course Assignment**

Welcome to the “Service Area Risk Reduction” (SARR) course. SARR is intended to inspire Company Officers (COs) to lead and conduct risk-reduction activities within the service area of their station/community.

SARR is about how the CO can plan, implement and evaluate risk-reduction activities to benefit the residents they serve and those in the fire and emergency services who provide the services. The course features the role of the officer as a champion for the risk-reduction cause. The course also provides an opportunity for the CO to apply risk-reduction activities in communities with a diverse population.

You will learn that a broader approach to risk reduction involves multiple interventions, and when all are applied to a specific community risk issue, a difference is likely to occur, reducing risk for civilians as well as those in emergency services.

As part of the SARR course, you will complete a series of activities that will result in the creation of a draft plan of action for addressing a risk in your service area or community. You will need data from your local community to successfully accomplish this task.

Please note: If you are a company-level officer, you will seek information pertinent to your service area. If you are in a position that oversees an operation that is communitywide, you will seek information covering the entire area that your department serves. At the top of the page, you will see “Type of Profile” for you to indicate which type of area you are building a profile for.

We realize that some of the information asked for may be challenging to obtain. Please do your best to obtain the data, as it will build the foundation for a risk assessment of your community and service area. The instructors want to see that you put forth a good effort in obtaining the information to the best of your ability.

Most National Fire Academy (NFA) community risk-reduction courses have a pre-course assignment. While each pre-course assignment has sections that are exclusive to the specific course, nearly all require students to come to the NFA with data about their community’s demographics and risk issues. Please check with colleagues who have recently (within the last year) attended an NFA risk-reduction course to see if they may be able to help you with data collection. Save the data you collect on your community, as you may be able to use it as a baseline should you attend future risk-reduction courses.

SERVICE AREA RISK REDUCTION

There are six parts to the SARR pre-course assignment. Directions are provided that identify the depth of effort you are expected to put into each part. The actions you need to take are in blocks and noted as “Action Items.” Before you begin, here is a general overview of what you will be doing:

- Part 1 calls for reading a FEMA publication entitled “A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action.”

It also requires completion of two NFA online self-study courses on community risk reduction. Each course will take approximately four hours to complete.

- Part 2 involves researching your department’s mission statement. In addition, you will develop speaking points so you can discuss a current risk-reduction program that your department offers.
- Part 3 involves developing a demographic overview of your service area.
- Part 4 requires exploration of the man-made and naturally occurring hazards/risk issues that are impacting your service area. This section is the most labor intensive of the overall assignment. It also includes several Action Items.
- Part 5 requires you to describe a high-risk location within your service area.
- Part 6 asks you to sign up for Fire is Everyone’s Fight[®] (not graded).

The SARR pre-course assignment is a graded assignment worth 200 points (1/3 of your NFA grade for this course). Here is how you will be evaluated:

Assessment Area	Assessment Criteria	Points Awarded
Part 1: Complete two NFA online self-study courses.	Certificates of completion are documented by the student. (50 points for each course)	_____/100
Part 2: Locate mission statement and identify current community risk-reduction programs.	Mission statement is listed. A current community risk-reduction program offered by your department is identified.	_____/25
Part 3: Define your service area and its associated demographics.	Geographic boundaries of station service area are defined, and community demographics are explained.	_____/25

SERVICE AREA RISK REDUCTION

Part 4: Analyze service demand data.	After analyzing response data, a profile of at least four types of service demands worthy of further exploration is created. Where a student is unable to gather the requested data for analysis, an explanation is provided in writing as to why the data could not be obtained.	_____/25
Part 5: Explore high-risk sections of your service area.	Demographics and service demands are explored to identify potential high-risk neighborhoods or localities in the service area.	_____/25

Please plan to invest eight hours on the self-study courses and several additional hours working on the pre-course material. The written components of your assignment should be word processed, saved and brought with you to the NFA on your laptop computer (or other portable device).

So we can grade your work, please print a hard copy of your certificates from the online courses and the written components of the assignment outlined below. You will submit it to the instructors on the first day of class. The assignment should be placed in a binder or notebook and divided into sections. The instructors want to see you put forth a good faith effort in completing the assignment. It is not possible for us to evaluate your data. We know many of you will have issues in acquiring what is asked for in the assignment. The most important thing for you is to hand in your assignment the first morning of class. To ensure you receive credit, please use the correct format so we can see you completed the assignment to the best of your ability. Note: You do not have to print massive spreadsheets of response data. Simply bring those files with you in electronic format, as you will be using them in class.

Here is your assignment:

PART 1: READ FEMA PUBLICATION COMPLETE TWO NFA ONLINE SELF-STUDY COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION COURSES
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Begin by reading a FEMA publication entitled “A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action.”

Next, please take two NFA online self-study courses on community risk reduction.

You should take the courses listed in the order shown below. Information from both courses will be used extensively during your on-campus NFA experience.

Course One: Introduction to Strategic Community Risk Reduction (ISCRR)
<https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/nfacourses/catalog/details/10802>

ISCRR will provide you with a basic understanding of what constitutes strategic-level risk reduction.

Course Two: Introduction to Community Risk Assessment (ICRA)
<https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/nfacourses/catalog/details/10807>

ICRA will enlighten you on how to perform a basic community risk assessment.

NOTE: Failure to complete the two online self-study courses will make it impossible to receive an “A” in the course due to their value within the overall assessment plan.

PART 2: YOUR DEPARTMENT’S MISSION STATEMENT AND COMMUNITY RISK-REDUCTION PROGRAMS

Most fire departments have a mission statement that provides a high-level directive as to the services it provides. Also, most fire departments offer community-based risk-reduction programs.

Part 2 — Action Item:

1. Copy your organization’s mission statement and bring it to class.
2. Networking with peers is an important component of the NFA experience. You should be prepared to discuss a current risk-reduction program being offered by your department **that your station is involved with**. This could be any type of risk-reduction program, not exclusively fire-related. As part of the discussion, you will be asked to:
 - Explain the scope of the program.
 - Highlight both the strengths and challenges associated with the program.
 - Offer an opinion as to the level of impact the program is making and how it is being measured.

Please develop a brief (one or two paragraph) summary of each bullet point topic listed above. You will also need to be prepared to discuss the program during class.

Also, bring whatever you would like to support the above. Often, students will bring an overview of a program that can be shared electronically with others, such as a written overview, PowerPoint presentation, etc.

PART 3: DEFINE YOUR SERVICE AREA

A logical first step in the risk-reduction assessment process is the ability to succinctly explain the demographics of your overall city/community and the specific service area you protect. Think of this as being able to explain to a stranger what your city and specific service area look like within two minutes (you will be doing this in class, so be prepared).

As you learned in the online self-study courses, a good way to build a basemap of what your existing service area looks like is to divide it into four environments.

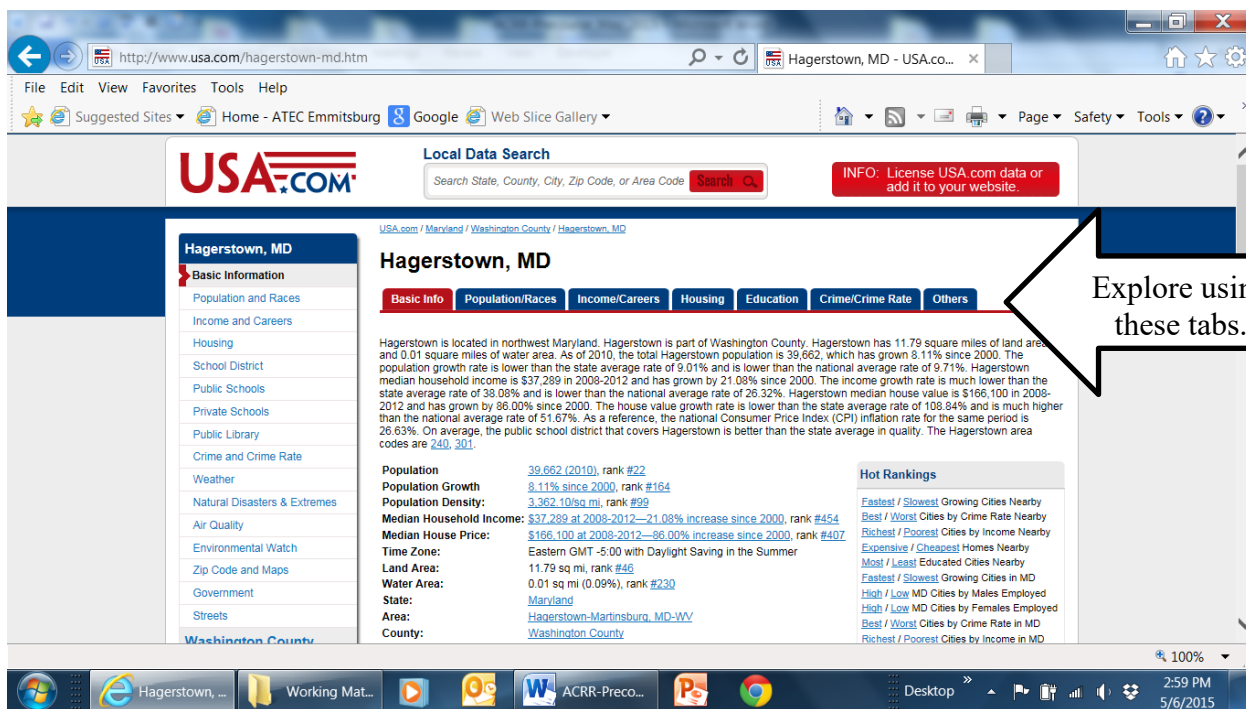
- Natural environment: includes the geography (landscape) of your service area, such as hills, valleys, vegetation, bodies of water, climate, weather, wildland interface, etc.
- Built environment: includes everything put in place by man. Includes the buildings, types of occupancies, housing density, construction types, etc. It also includes other critical infrastructure, such as highway systems, utilities, communication networks, etc.
- Social environment: includes everything relating to people, such as population distributions, ages, race, gender, culture, ethnicity, languages spoken, education levels, socioeconomics, etc.
- Response environment: the Standards of Cover currently in place to provide response services. This includes station locations, equipment, staffing, training levels, response times, etc.

When exploring the social environment, a good web-based tool to help you build a brief but informative demographic profile of your community can be found at www.usa.com. This site provides up-to-date demographic information from the U.S. Census Bureau. Data for the Decennial Census is collected by the Bureau every 10 years and is used to determine congressional districts. The Decennial Census seeks to determine the number of people who live in a community.

Let us look at an example of how to get demographical information for a city (or community) as a whole.

You simply go to the website, search for your city and click on the basic information tab. Next, explore what is available under categories, such as population/race, income/careers, etc. An example screenshot featuring Hagerstown, Maryland, is displayed below.

Note: When initiating the search, please use your city's name followed by the abbreviation for your state, such as "MD," "PA," etc.



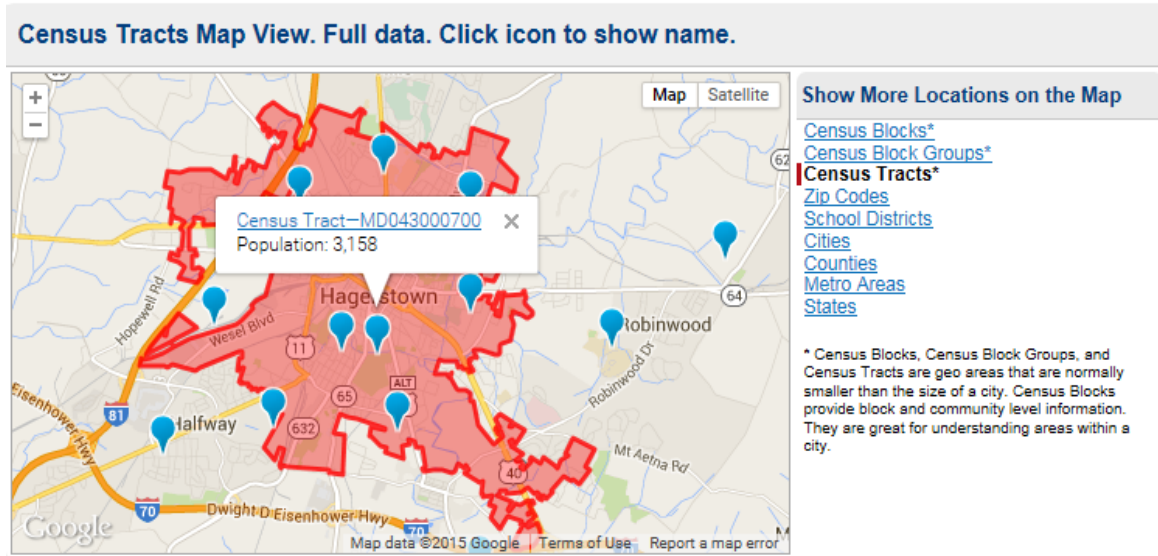
Stop and explore your city or community demographics, as a whole, to gain practice using the tool.

Let us continue with the next step. A second type of census, the American Community Survey (ACS), is as an on-going task of the Bureau. The ACS is mailed to over three million U.S. residents annually. The Bureau's goal is to survey each U.S. resident every seven years to create demographic profiles of local communities. ACS data is important to risk-reduction specialists because it provides information about where and how people live.

Data from the ACS allows us to explore demographic data both communitywide and by census tracts. Census tracts are defined geographical areas within a city, town, county or village.

Census tracts generally have a population size between 1,200 and 8,000 people, with an optimal size of 4,000 people. Each tract carries a numerical identification. The number of census tracts in a community is based upon its size and population. The size of the tract is related to the number of people living there. You may be from a geographical area that has anywhere from a few census tracts (rural area) to hundreds of census tracts (urban city).

To drill down on smaller parts of specific geographical areas, census tracts can be divided further into census block groups and then into individual blocks. A census block group is a geographical unit that's between the size of a census tract and a census block. A block group is the smallest geographical unit for which the bureau publishes sample data (i.e., data which is only collected from a fraction of all households). Typically, block groups have a population of 600 to 3,000 people. A census block is the smallest geographic unit used by the bureau for tabulation of 100 percent data (data collected from all houses rather than a sample of houses). In an urban city, census blocks are often as small as one or two city blocks. Let us look at an example:



Recall the first screenshot example from Hagerstown, Maryland. What you see above is a screenshot displaying the bottom of the basic information page. We have clicked on the census tract field shown on the right side of the screen. The example is displaying the number of census tracts in Hagerstown. The red shaded area represents the corporate boundary of the city. Each blue balloon represents a census tract.

The only way to become proficient at using this tool is to practice with it. While it may appear a little intimidating as you begin practicing, this tool is very user friendly. You should now take some time to explore your city or community in a magnified scale.

Begin by searching for your city. (Remember to use the state abbreviation, such as “MD” or “PA.”) A map will be displayed showing the outline of your city. Go to the right side of the screen, locate the “Cities” tab and click on it. On the map, there should be a blue balloon identifying your city and the incorporated towns around it. There will also be a red dash beside the city category on the right side of the screen.

Next, locate the census tract feature and click on it. You should see a display similar to what is displayed on the Hagerstown screenshot above. Note: If you are searching an urban city, do not panic when you see a huge amount of blue balloons. Hagerstown has a population of 39,000. The larger the city, the more census tracts there are. Simply drill down on the area you wish to explore by clicking on it or using the zoom feature.

Find the census tract or tracts that represent the area you wish to explore. Click on the blue balloon for the census tract, and then click on the underlined link. You will notice the census tract area is highlighted, and there is an option to click on the purple balloons for census block groups. **Do not click on the block groups yet.** Stop and explore the demographics of the census tract first. Clicking on the map will give you a larger view of the area, including street names.

Next, click on one of the purple block group balloons. The area will enlarge on the screen and then give you balloons for block groups. Use the same process as listed above to explore the block

group you want to look at. **Caution: Do not click on the green balloons yet, as they will take you to individual blocks.**

Once you have explored the block group, click on one of the green balloons, and start exploring at the individual block level.

Note to our friends representing a Fire Protection District: In addition to census tracts, you may wish to explore data by ZIP code because of the size and geographical layout of your district.

Part 3 — Action Item:

This is not a major writing activity. Simply create notes so you can articulate the demographic characteristics of your city/community **and** your particular service area. You can either make your notes as bulleted points or in paragraph format.

Please build, and be prepared to present, a brief profile that includes:

1. Natural environment.
2. Built environment.
3. Social environment.
4. Response environment.

As part of the social environment, please be sure to include:

1. Total population of your city, community or district.
2. The geographical and population size of your service area.
3. Presence and distribution of races, cultures, age groups, etc., present in your service area.
4. Economic drivers that support the community's tax base, such as key businesses, industries, sports complexes, etc., located in your service area.
5. Social issues that challenge your service area, such as poverty, educational levels, crime/violence, gangs, substance abuse, etc.
6. The presence and distribution of high-risk populations in your service area, such as young children under age five, older adults age 65 and over, people with disabilities, people impacted by poverty, and those who speak limited or no English.
7. Other high-risk conditions, such as aging buildings, high-density housing, absentee landlords, building construction types and key target hazards.
8. Any other demographic that is unique to your service area.

PART 4: ANALYZE SERVICE DEMAND DATA

Accurate risk assessment is essential to a strategic and successful risk-reduction process. As part of the NFA experience, you will be graded on how well you define and prioritize the risk issues facing your service area and its people. You will also be graded on how well you **justify** your decisions.

A key first step is creating an accurate profile of the risk issues that are impacting the **city or community as a whole**. Risk issues are generally explored in two categories.

- Man-made incidents, such as fires, preventable injuries and intentional acts of violence.
- Naturally occurring events, such as violent weather and its associated impacts.

As a CO candidate, the NFA wants you to have background information about the risk issues impacting your city/community as a whole **and** at the service area level. In addition, if your jurisdiction provides emergency medical services (EMS), you should also explore data so your fire problems can be compared with medical response. The same holds true if your city is in an area that is impacted by severe weather and there is a history of major (or very frequent) events.

Building an accurate and objective risk profile of a community takes time and effort. Accurate means that you need good data; objective means you need enough of it. Before you begin searching for data, a logical first step is to find out if your department has ever completed a communitywide risk assessment.

Part 4 — Action Item:

1. Check with your organization’s senior leadership to find out if your department has ever conducted a community risk assessment. Please indicate whether the answer is yes or no.
2. If yes, what specific risk issues were identified, and what is your department doing to address them? Also, how does your station fit into the overall process of community risk reduction?

Unfortunately, many fire departments have limited or even no experience with community risk assessment. Whether your department has or has not done a risk assessment, the following section is critical, as you will be prioritizing a risk, population(s) and service area to address as part of the SARR course.

Part of the NFA learning experience is for you to discover the abilities, strengths and weaknesses of your data-collection systems. Without good data, it can be very hard to objectively drill down to the nitty-gritty and prioritize risk issues that deserve attention. This is particularly true when an incident type is slowly rising over time.

Please do your best on this next action item, as you may find that obtaining what is being asked of you turns into a challenging process. You will need to come to the NFA with an objective profile of **at least four risk issues/service demands** that **could be considered** a potential priority to address. You will make a decision during class on what issue to focus on for your final course project.

To determine the risk issues/service demands that are worthy of priority consideration, you should explore the following:

- How often the incident(s) occurs.
- Are the numbers of incidents rising, falling or remaining steady?
- Where the incidents are happening and who they are impacting.
- The cost of the incidents in terms of deaths, injuries and property damage.
- The impact on the quality of life and vitality of the city and service area.
- The impact/cost to your department for providing service caused by the incidents.

Gathering a broad spectrum of evidence on the issues you explore will make it easier to select a specific type of incident to focus on during the SARR course. Please note: You do not have to (and should not) build this profile alone. **Seek help from others within your department who have the data.** Also, to help you create this profile, talk with those who respond to and/or investigate incidents.

Part 4 — Action Item:

The next two action items will begin with exploration of residential structure fire response data.

To support this assignment, the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) will provide you with (or direct you on how to get) five years of residential structure fire data that your department has reported to the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). However, the NFIRS will only be able to show you the response data pertinent to your department, not your specific station/service area.

Examine the residential structure fire data that has been reported to the NFIRS by your department.

Next, because NFIRS data only reflects the incidents handled by your department as a whole, it is important to seek information from your department's Records Management System (RMS) so you can drill down to what is happening in your station's response area. Most departments use a third party's RMS software like Firehouse, FIRE RMS or others.

Part 4 — Action Item:

Ask your data collection supervisor to provide data from your department's RMS (if you have one) so you can explore data pertinent to your service area. Note: There is no writing involved until you reach the bolded directive at the end of this Action Item.

1. Examine the residential structure fire incidents your department responds to and compare the responses with those that your specific station is making. As with the NFIRS data, collect one-year summaries for a five-year period so you have a data set to work with.
2. Compare this set of data with NFIRS data to explore if any gaps or discrepancies in reporting are identified. If you discover any issues (and you well may), be prepared to discuss your challenges when you come to the NFA.
3. Next, using your RMS data, attempt to get specific on the types and causes of residential structure fires that your department responds to and those that your specific station is handling. Try to build a profile that will show the number of incidents, injuries, deaths and property loss per type of structure fire, such as cooking, heating, smoking, arson, etc.
4. Next, if your department provides (or supports) EMS, please generate a data set that will allow you to explore the types and frequency of EMS calls your department responds to and those handled by your specific station. As with fire data, try to get specific so you can track motor vehicle collisions, falls, cardiac-related incidents, overdoses, poisonings, etc. Local hospital and state health department data can help build a profile of preventable injury events, such as falls, motor vehicle collisions, poisonings, assaults, etc.

Caution: Try to avoid putting your data into huge categories like building fires, preventable injuries, weather-related, etc. Attempt to get specific and identify the types of fire incidents, such as unattended cooking fires, portable heater fires, smoking-related, youth firesetting, arson, etc. Do the same for injuries, such as ground-level falls, car crashes, pedestrians struck, overdose, poisoning, etc.

5. This is a part in the assignment where you may encounter frustration and discover weaknesses in how your department is reporting/tracking incidents. Consider this question for discussion at NFA: How can you drill down and identify incidents, such as cooking, heater and smoking-related fires, if these causes are only tracked as building or structure fires? The same holds true for EMS incidents.

6. Do not give up here. **Do your best with the data you have to work with.** What the NFA expects is that you come to class being able to show that you have worked to identify/justify several risk issues that deserve attention.
7. Next, explore the number of nonemergency issues your department and your station are responding to. Reducing the number of false alarms due to some sort of malfunction or cutting the number of calls for lift assists involving uninjured people are also components of risk reduction. These types of incidents may be costing your department a lot of money and tying up resources, making them unavailable for emergencies. They also may be contributing to continuous wear and tear on your emergency equipment and staff. Sleep deprivation is a contributing cause of work-related mistakes and depression.
8. While the majority of human-created risks are preventable, naturally occurring events are not. Examples include severe weather, earthquakes, extreme cold/heat and drought. Although a community may not be able to prevent such events, loss can be greatly mitigated through a combination of preplanning, resource allocation and citizen preparedness.
9. While not preventable, most naturally occurring risks are predictable. Coastlines are more vulnerable to hurricanes. The South and Midwest regularly experience tornados. More snow falls in the northern portion of the country than in the southern. Lightning-initiated wildland fires often occur in forests. Flash flooding can happen anywhere.
10. If naturally occurring risk issues are prevalent in your city, please create a profile of what happens, when, how frequently, where, who is impacted, and the overall costs associated with the risk(s) identified.
11. Finally, talk to your fellow officers, firefighters and EMS providers. Ask those who serve with you their opinions of what constitutes the most pressing risk issues facing your department and the service area you cover.

Writing assignment: Identify at least four types of incidents that you deem to be worthy of further investigation. Create bullet point statements under each risk that provide justification of why you believe the type of incident should be considered. If you can, try to build a profile of where incidents occur most frequently in the community and who they impact.

Note: It is a wise strategy to identify a fire incident, an EMS-related issue and a nonemergency service demand as part of your four selections.

While at the NFA, you will select a specific risk and create an action plan to address it.

PART 5: EXPLORING HIGH-RISK SECTIONS OF THE SERVICE AREA

Comparing demographics and service demands can help identify potential high-risk neighborhoods in your service area.

Part 5 — Action Item:

The final step in this pre-course assignment is to select a location that you believe is a high-risk environment in your service area.

This could be a specific response area, neighborhood(s) or even buildings that create a high service demand for your station. Identify the contributing factors, such as poverty, an aging community infrastructure, an aging population, fires, EMS calls, crime, unemployment, older buildings, housing density, population transience, percentage of homeowners versus renters, cultures, language barriers, neglected buildings and systems, etc., that combine to make this a high-risk area.

Equally important: Are there specific buildings or localities (like a college campus or assisted living complex) that create a high service demand for your stations? (Do not forget to consider those nonemergency incidents that tax your time and effort.) If so, explain the factors that are contributing to the situation.

Use the RMS response data you gathered and discussion with your station staff as you process this section.

Please identify any high-risk/high-frequency areas in your service district, and justify your consideration with several bullet point responses.

PART 6: FIRE IS EVERYONE’S FIGHT

Explore USFA’s Fire is Everyone’s Fight. This national effort is led by the USFA to lower the number of home fires and home fire injuries in America. Along with USFA and partner organizations across the country, the fire community is speaking out with a unified message of fire prevention and safety to the public. The goal is to change how people think about fire and fire prevention, using social marketing strategies to address the broadest audience.

Part 6 — Action Item:

Go to: <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/fief/index.html>.

Explore the free resources offered by the USFA through Fire is Everyone’s Fight.

Congratulations! You have completed the pre-course assignment for the SARR course. You, your department and the community you serve will benefit from this effort.

Parts 2 through 5 of this assignment are graded. If you have any problems or questions, please contact:

Mike Weller, Program Manager
Email: michael.weller@fema.dhs.gov
Phone: 301-447-1476

EXAMPLE

**Applications of Community Risk Reduction
Graded Pre-Course Assignment**

Name: Marta Wolfe
Department: Hamilton Fire Department
Position: Lieutenant

Dates of Class: June 20XX
Type of Profile:
 Entire Community
X Station Service Area Only

**ACTION ITEM: HAMILTON FIRE DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT AND
COMMUNITY RISK-REDUCTION PROGRAM**

Mission Statement

The mission of the Hamilton Fire Department is to protect and enhance the quality of life for those who live, work, visit and invest in our community. We will accomplish the mission with proactive community risk-reduction strategies and quality emergency response.

**Community Risk-Reduction Program — Hamilton Fire Department Door-to-Door Safety
Canvassing**

For over two decades, the Hamilton Fire Department (90 career staff/25 volunteers) has conducted comprehensive door-to-door canvassing of the community. The goal of canvassing is to personally discuss fire safety with residents and ensure working smoke alarm protection in all city homes. Departmentwide, firefighters personally visit more than 4,000 homes annually. There are approximately 19,000 residences in the city. Since 1983, Hamilton firefighters have installed close to 27,000 free smoke alarms in more than 12,000 homes.

Fire Station 4, where I am assigned as a lieutenant on the engine, participates in all community risk-reduction programs offered by the Hamilton Fire Department. We are very active with the Home Safety Visit Program because the demographics of our service area are high-risk.

Our station approaches the safety visits very strategically. We proactively visit homes/apartments in our service area during the time period of April through October (roughly during daylight saving time). Our mission is to speak face to face with citizens, educate them about our priority risk issues, evaluate smoke alarms and install them when needed.

A core impact objective of our home safety program is to get working smoke alarm protection that is less than 10 years old on each living level of homes.

Station 4 serves the greater downtown and immediate surrounding area within Hamilton. Our area includes the highest number of rental properties inhabited by financially challenged residents. Ninety percent of Hamilton's structure fires occur in rental units. Assuming that lower-income households are at an increased risk for a fire, the fire department has made a concerted effort to reach out specifically to this vulnerable population.

While going door to door is not the most popular task on our firefighter's list of duties, the majority of our station staff support the strategy because it works. We physically get into places where we should be, impart knowledge and check/install smoke alarms. Our firefighters also get to observe firsthand the layout of buildings and construction features, which enhances fire suppression abilities and firefighter safety.

ACTION ITEM: STATION 4 SERVICE AREA

The City of Hamilton

Hamilton is located in Woodward County in the heart of the beautiful Leighland Valley. Hamilton is home to approximately 41,000 citizens. The population of Woodward County is currently 145,000.

As Woodward County's largest city, Hamilton has a center core where small area specialty shops and restaurants offer a range of entertainment opportunities. The downtown area includes a university center, a stunning theater for the performing arts and one of the most beautiful natural parks in America.

Many restored Victorian-style homes dot the immediate periphery of downtown. The area adjoining downtown to the east and south includes multiple well-established neighborhoods sporting their own unique cultural flair. Several neighborhood markets serve as gathering points for residents.

The outside circumference of Hamilton includes areas of residential, commercial and retail development. These additions have boosted the city's tax base and permitted a modest expansion of public services prior to the great recession.

Station 4 Response Area

Station 4 is located just west of the immediate downtown periphery of Hamilton. The station houses an engine, tiller-ladder and medic unit. The fire units are staffed by an operator, lieutenant (or senior firefighter) and a line firefighter. The EMS unit is staffed by an emergency medical technician (EMT) and a paramedic. Our engine makes approximately five fire runs a day, and the truck averages two calls. The medic unit is busy and sees about 10 calls per shift.

Station 4's response district is the smallest in geographical size but serves one of the oldest and most densely populated areas. Housing stock is comprised mostly of old wood-frame homes that have been converted into duplexes and apartments. Eighty-four percent of homes are inhabited by renters.

Census Bureau data/maps show that the Station 4 area covers roughly two of the 14 census tracts in Hamilton. There are approximately 2,800 residential "units" in the response district. A "unit" counts as a residence. Hence, a 10-unit apartment counts as 10 homes. A little over 8,000 people reside in Station 4's response area.

While the majority of Hamilton is inhabited by Caucasians, Station 4 serves the most diverse population. Fifty-nine percent of residents are Caucasian, 26 percent are African American, 9 percent are Hispanic and the remainder are defined as “other.” Census data indicates the number of Hispanic residents to be rising. Discussion with firefighters supports this finding as well. Several dialects of Spanish are spoken in our district. There are no Hispanics in the fire department.

Census data indicates the number of older adults (age 65 and older) to be increasing in Station 4’s service area. Again, response data and discussion with firefighters support this trend. While there are no notable economic drivers that support the community’s tax base, such as key businesses, industries, sports complexes, etc., located in Station 4’s service area, there are a very high number of rental occupancies. Of course, the owners of these occupancies pay taxes on their investments.

In addition, there are two elementary schools and a Head Start center in Station 4’s area, along with several child care facilities. There are two public housing complexes, and each has a community center. There is a chain grocery store, several neighborhood convenience stores, two fast-food restaurants and multiple pizza establishments. There are several liquor stores, and the convenience stores are permitted to sell wine and beer.

There are a number of social issues that challenge the quality of life in Station 4’s area. Poverty is disproportionately higher in our response area as compared to other districts in the city. There are two public housing complexes and a high number of Section 8 homes. The unemployment is high, and many residents do not work. Very few residents in the service area have greater than a high school education. While organized gangs are relatively nonexistent, delinquent adolescents are an issue. The area is also plagued by a significant substance abuse problem, most specifically alcohol and heroin. In turn, this has created domestic violence issues, assaults and petty-level crime.

There are several high-risk populations/demographics in the Station 4 service area:

1. Nearly 90 percent of the households are low to moderate income.
2. Many households are led by a single mother with several young children under age 5. Supervision of small children is often an issue in the homes.
3. People who display an overall “lack of personal responsibility” are frequent users of Station 4’s emergency services. Our personnel get very frustrated when they visit a home where a free smoke alarm had been installed by the fire department, only to be removed by an occupant. These properties often have other issues as well, such as occupants who are substance abusers.
4. The working poor are a concern to our staff. In some homes, the adults work so many hours that they are not at home often. This, in turn, creates issues with unsupervised children and teens. It also leaves little time for adults to receive or focus on safety information.

5. The number of older adults who are attempting to age in-place within their home, but lack an organized support system, is a rapidly growing high-risk population. Physical disability challenges many of these residents. Hoarding is an issue in some homes. In general, the older adult population in Station 4's area is staunchly independent and wary of accepting assistance from anyone.
6. Last decade's recession brought with it an unexpected challenge to Hamilton: an increasing number of non-English-speaking citizens. Desperate to find work in the fruit orchards within Woodward County, many Hispanic families moved to the lower-rent housing which is located in Station 4's area. The Hispanic population is comprised of large families with many households being multigenerational. Hoarding is an issue, as the population seldom discards possessions. This group also requires multiple sleeping areas. Language barriers are an issue for city staff (including the fire department) who attempt to serve this population. Those who live here are working hard but struggling to make ends meet. In general, this population keeps to themselves and does not trust public officials. While Station 4 does not make many fire runs to Hispanics households, we struggle to communicate with residents who summon EMS care.
7. The construction and density of the housing stock is a huge concern to Station 4 personnel. Other than the public housing complexes, most of the residential housing stock is old wood-frame buildings that were built prior to 1940. Many are Victorian-style homes that were formerly grand, single-family homes when the railroad supported the bulk of commerce in Hamilton from the 1920s to the 1960s. When the railroad industry faltered, homes were sold to investors who transformed them into multioccupancy rental properties. There are multiple blocks of these balloon-frame buildings standing just a few feet apart in our service area. Many are inhabited by various high-risk populations. Absentee landlords, many of whom neglect their obligations as property owners, are a major problem in this area. Property owners have vehemently resisted efforts on behalf of the City of Hamilton to address the substandard housing issues.

ACTION ITEM: RISK ASSESSMENT AND COMMUNITY RISK-REDUCTION PROGRAMS

The Hamilton Fire Department has a community risk-reduction unit. It includes four personnel who are cross-trained as fire scene investigators, building inspectors and community risk-reduction specialists. One of the staff members has extensive training/experience in leading strategic community risk reduction. He is the team leader of the unit.

The Hamilton Fire Department conducted their first communitywide risk assessment over 20 years ago. Fire department personnel were not surprised to learn that risks, such as unattended cooking fires in rental properties, electrical issues in old buildings, vehicle crashes and pedestrians struck, occurred very frequently.

The community risk-reduction unit developed programs to address the issues listed above. While the unit led the overall community risk-reduction process, the actual program delivery has always been a co-responsibility of the line firefighting staff (including officers).

Over time, most of the community risk-reduction programs have proved to be effective. The leader of the community risk-reduction unit advised that cooking fires have been reduced by nearly 20 percent over a long-term period. While vehicle collisions are still a significant issue, the occurrence of vehicle versus pedestrian incidents has reduced steadily through the years. He attributes the success to a task force that has been addressing the issue over the long-term. Electrical issues in the old buildings are still a problem. We see that at the station response level as well.

ACTION ITEM: NATIONAL FIRE INCIDENT REPORTING SYSTEM DATA REVIEW

The Hamilton Fire Department NFIRS coordinator is the community risk-reduction team leader. He was able to run me 10 years of Tally by Incident Sheet reports so I could look at the overall run experience of our department as a whole. I have the tally sheets on my computer and a thumb drive for review.

We looked at the data together, and he pointed out what a mess our data reporting system was when he became the community risk-reduction team leader 20 years ago. He further explained how the senior leadership and station officers worked together to create a “cheat sheet” (per se) so those entering reports into NFIRS would do so in a more objective manner. Seeing the data in “big picture format” made me understand even better why our department has such a strict reporting protocol.

The community risk-reduction team leader next pointed out some trends that are concerning him and other senior officers:

1. The Hamilton Fire Department, as a whole, is seeing a steady increase in smoke alarm malfunction calls. He believes it is due to aging electrical units that are simply outdated and need to be upgraded.
2. The department is seeing a slow but steady rise in the number of electrical fires in older commercial structures and aging apartment buildings. This is an expensive issue.
3. The number of EMS calls in general is increasing. He believes a lot of that has to do with the number of established residents who are either aging in-place in their home or moving to nursing care facilities in our city.

ACTION ITEM: HAMILTON RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM DATA REVIEW

The community risk-reduction team leader provided me with 10 years of RMS data for our department (both fire and EMS). We reviewed the data together and compared it with NFIRS data. Overall, the RMS data seemed to match up with that from NFIRS. We both agreed that the

Hamilton Fire Department still reports too many “other” entries to NFIRS. He said the reason our RMS data would likely be more accurate is because it will not let an entry of “other” be made without an exception being noted. I have this RMS data on my computer and thumb drive and will be prepared to display it while at the NFA.

Four Specific Incidents to Consider at the National Fire Academy

The following represents four types of incidents (specific to their occurrence in Station 4’s response area) that I feel are worthy of consideration to address as a project when I attend the NFA:

1. Heroin Overdose — This is the most rapidly rising type of EMS call that our medic unit handles. Further inquiry revealed that nearly 15 percent of the heroin overdose calls we answer end up being fatalities. Most of the incidents involve people between the ages of 19 and 40. There seem to be an equal number of male to female patients. The location of incidents is spread pretty evenly throughout our response area. I spoke with a close friend who is part of the police department’s narcotic unit, and she indicated the heroin problem is “way out of control.”
2. Falls Among Older Adults — This incident type has been steadily rising for the past several years. The typical incident involves an aging person who lives alone in their home. He or she (usually female) slips, trips or experiences a balance or dizziness issue causing them to fall. Sometimes the person simply cannot get up and call for help. More times than not, the patient experiences a significant injury. Sometimes the patient lies injured for hours or days before they are discovered. Many of these patients are not able to return home. These incidents occur throughout our response area. Our firehouse staff is very passionate about this issue. Everyone wants to help our aging population because everyone has parents or grandparents.
3. Youth Firesetting and Adolescent Fire/Explosive Device Use — This incident type is rising (albeit slowly).

First, we experience our share of unsupervised young children playing with lighters in their homes. This type of incident is typically brought to our station’s attention when a parent brings their child to the station seeking help with an on-going situation. Thankfully, we do not respond to many fires caused by this type of behavior. These types of incidents occur throughout our response area.

Second, we are responding to injuries involving adolescents who are experimenting with fire and explosive devices (including bottle bombs). These are injuries caused by adolescents who have obtained information about fire and explosives on the internet and are experimenting with various products. The experimentation gets out of control, and an injury occurs. Fortunately, no serious fires, major traumatic injuries or deaths have happened yet. These types of incidents occur throughout our response area.

4. Significant Residential Structure Fires — This incident type is tricky to explain, but expensive and potentially deadly. Station 4 is experiencing a steady increase of working residential structure fires. The fires are occurring in rental properties (not public housing) across our response area. While we cannot pin down one (or even three) specific fire causes, the root behaviors surrounding the fire incidents involve some type of irresponsible action, such as unattended cooking, portable heater use near a bed, unsupervised children, unsafe smoking practices, overloaded extension cord, etc. This type of incident/scenario (albeit generic) is one that frustrates, and frankly scares, our firefighters, as they are the ones who have to risk their lives to extinguish fires in these occupied homes. The location of incidents is spread area-wide with the exception of our public housing complexes. The population most impacted seems to be low-income, large families who reside in rental occupancies that are in some state of disrepair.

Note: I have not assigned a priority to any specific type of incident. I will do so as part of the NFA experience.

ACTION ITEM: HIGH-RISK ENVIRONMENT

Without question, I had to further explore the locations of the multiple working structure fires that I outlined in the last section (Number 4). The Red Cross Mapping Tool helped me further define a specific “neighborhood” where a higher frequency of the working fires is occurring. That area is Franklinton.

Franklinton is roughly an eight-block area located just two blocks north of our station. I used the USA.com website and explored the demographical data at the census block group and individual census block level. It showed me that we are looking at only about 250 homes but a population of about 1,500 people.

People in this neighborhood are challenged by low education levels, very low income and a high rate of unemployment. This neighborhood is right in the middle of the multiple-block area where the wood-frame homes stand very close to one another. Buildings are in poor condition. Residents and landlords do little or nothing to make them better.

I next looked at our RMS response data for this particular neighborhood. To no surprise, we run more fire and EMS calls to this neighborhood than in others. My colleagues echoed this opinion, and so did the police officers who frequent our station. The police also said that population transience is extremely high in Franklinton with families moving in and out regularly for a multitude of reasons.

If pressed to proclaim a leading type of fire cause in this area, it would have to be unattended cooking. We run a lot of fires that cause significant damage after people put oil in a pan late at night to fry food, turn the stove on high and then leave the kitchen for whatever reason. With regard to EMS incidents, it would have to be drugs, alcohol and domestic violence.

Franklinton does not have a neighborhood association. The primary gathering points for people during warm weather months are in front of homes and in back yards.



A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action

FDOC 104-008-1 / December 2011



FEMA

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Introduction

The effects of natural and manmade disasters have become more frequent, far-reaching, and widespread. As a result, preserving the safety, security, and prosperity of all parts of our society is becoming more challenging. Our Nation's traditional approach to managing the risks associated with these disasters relies heavily on the government. However, today's changing reality is affecting all levels of government in their efforts to improve our Nation's resilience while grappling with the limitations of their capabilities.¹ Even in small- and medium-sized disasters, which the government is generally effective at managing, significant access and service gaps still exist. In large-scale disasters or catastrophes, government resources and capabilities can be overwhelmed.

The scale and severity of disasters are growing and will likely pose systemic threats.² Accelerating changes in demographic trends and technology are making the effects of disasters more complex to manage. One future trend affecting emergency needs is continued population shifts into vulnerable areas (e.g., hurricane-prone coastlines). The economic development that accompanies these shifts also intensifies the pressure on coastal floodplains, barrier islands, and the ecosystems that support food production, the tourism industry, and suburban housing growth. Other demographic changes will affect disaster management activities, such as a growing population of people with disabilities living in communities instead of institutions, as well as people living with chronic conditions (e.g., obesity and asthma). Also, communities are facing a growing senior population due to the Baby Boom generation entering this demographic group. Consequently, changes in transportation systems and even housing styles may follow to accommodate the lifestyles of these residents. If immigration trends continue as predicted, cities and suburbs will be more diverse ethnically and linguistically. Employment trends, when combined with new technologies, will shift the ways in which local residents plan their home-to-work commuting patterns as well as their leisure time. All of these trends will affect the ways in which residents organize and identify with community-based associations and will influence how they prepare for and respond to emergencies.³



Figure 1: Joplin, Missouri, May 24, 2011—Homes were leveled with the force of 200 mph winds as an F5 tornado struck the city on May 22, 2011. This scene is representative of the growing impacts of disasters. Jace Anderson/FEMA

¹ Resilience refers to the ability to adapt to changing conditions and withstand and rapidly recover from disruption due to emergencies. White House, "Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8)," March 30, 2011.

² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation," November 2011.

³ Strategic Foresight Initiative, "U.S. Demographic Shifts: Long-term Trends and Drivers and Their Implications for Emergency Management," May 2011.

Strategic Foresight Initiative, "Government Budgets: Long-term Trends and Drivers and Their Implications for Emergency Management," May 2011.

This document presents a foundation for increasing individual preparedness and engaging with members of the community as vital partners in enhancing the resiliency and security of our Nation through a Whole Community approach. It is intended to promote greater understanding of the approach and to provide a strategic framework to guide all members of the emergency management community as they determine how to integrate Whole Community concepts into their daily practices. This document is not intended to be all-encompassing or focused on any specific phase of emergency management or level of government, nor does it offer specific, prescriptive actions that require communities or emergency managers to adopt certain protocols. Rather, it provides an overview of core principles, key themes, and pathways for action that have been synthesized from a year-long national dialogue around practices already used in the field. While this is not a guide or a “how-to” document, it provides a starting point for those learning about the approach or looking for ways to expand existing practices and to begin more operational-based discussions on further implementation of Whole Community principles.

National Dialogue on a Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management

In a congressional testimony, the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Craig Fugate, described today’s reality as follows: “Government can and will continue to serve disaster survivors. However, we fully recognize that a government-centric approach to disaster management will not be enough to meet the challenges posed by a catastrophic incident. That is why we must fully engage our entire societal capacity....”⁴ To that end, FEMA initiated a national dialogue on a Whole Community approach to emergency management, an approach that many communities have used for years with great success, and one which has been gathering strength in jurisdictions across the Nation.

The national dialogue was designed to foster collective learning from communities’ experiences across the country. It occurred in various settings, such as organized conference sessions, research seminars, professional association meetings, practitioner gatherings, and official government meetings. The various settings created opportunities to listen to those who work in local neighborhoods, have survived disasters, and are actively engaged in community development. Participants in this dialogue included a broad range of emergency management partners, including representatives from the private and nonprofit sectors, academia, local residents, and government leaders. The conversations with the various stakeholders focused on how communities are motivated and engaged, how they understand risk, and what their experiences are with resilience following a disaster. In addition, international and historical resiliency efforts, such as FEMA’s Project Impact, were explored to gather lessons learned and best practices.⁵

FEMA also brought together diverse members from across the country to comprise a core working group. The working group reviewed and validated emerging Whole Community principles and themes, gathered examples of the Whole Community approach from the field, and

⁴ Administrator Craig Fugate, Federal Emergency Management Agency, before the United States House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management at the Rayburn House Office Building, March 30, 2011.

⁵ FEMA introduced Project Impact in 1997 as a national initiative designed to challenge the country to undertake actions that protect families, businesses, and communities by reducing the effects of natural disasters. The efforts focused on creating active public-private partnerships to build disaster-resistant communities.

identified people, organizations, and communities with promising local experiences. They participated in various meetings and conferences and, in some cases, provided the examples included in this document.

In addition to the national dialogue, this document was created concurrently with a larger effort to build an integrated, layered, all-of-Nation approach to preparedness, as called for by Presidential Policy Directive (PPD-8): National Preparedness.⁶ As such, the Whole Community approach is being incorporated into all PPD-8 deliverables, including the National Preparedness Goal, National Preparedness System description, National Planning Frameworks, and the campaign to build and sustain preparedness nationwide, as well as leverage the approach in their development.⁷ In support of these efforts, FEMA seeks to spark exploration into community engagement strategies to promote further discussion on approaches that position local residents for leadership roles in planning, organizing, and sharing accountability for the success of local disaster management efforts, and which enhance our Nation's security and resilience.

Whole Community Defined

As a concept, Whole Community is a means by which residents, emergency management practitioners, organizational and community leaders, and government officials can collectively understand and assess the needs of their respective communities and determine the best ways to organize and strengthen their assets, capacities, and interests. By doing so, a more effective path to societal security and resilience is built. In a sense, Whole Community is a philosophical approach on how to think about conducting emergency management.

There are many different kinds of communities, including communities of place, interest, belief, and circumstance, which can exist both geographically and virtually (e.g., online forums). A Whole Community approach attempts to engage the full capacity of the private and nonprofit sectors, including businesses, faith-based and disability organizations, and the general public, in conjunction with the participation of local, tribal, state, territorial, and Federal governmental partners. This engagement means different things to different groups. In an all-hazards environment, individuals and institutions will make different decisions on how to prepare for and respond to threats and hazards; therefore, a community's level of preparedness will vary. The challenge for those engaged in emergency management is to understand how to work with the diversity of groups and organizations and the policies and practices that emerge from them in an effort to improve the ability of local residents to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from any type of threat or hazard effectively.

Whole Community is a philosophical approach in how to conduct the business of emergency management.

Benefits include:

- Shared understanding of community needs and capabilities
- Greater empowerment and integration of resources from across the community
- Stronger social infrastructure
- Establishment of relationships that facilitate more effective prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery activities
- Increased individual and collective preparedness
- Greater resiliency at both the community and national levels

⁶ President Barack Obama, "Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8): National Preparedness," March 30, 2011.

⁷ FEMA, "National Preparedness Goal," September 2011. (Formally released on October 7, 2011.)

The benefits of Whole Community include a more informed, shared understanding of community risks, needs, and capabilities; an increase in resources through the empowerment of community members; and, in the end, more resilient communities. A more sophisticated understanding of a community's needs and capabilities also leads to a more efficient use of existing resources regardless of the size of the incident or community constraints. In times of resource and economic constraints, the pooling of efforts and resources across the whole community is a way to compensate for budgetary pressures, not only for government agencies but also for many private and nonprofit sector organizations. The task of cultivating and sustaining relationships to incorporate the whole community can be challenging; however, the investment yields many dividends. The process is as useful as the product. In building relationships and learning more about the complexity of a community, interdependencies that may be sources of hidden vulnerabilities are revealed. Steps taken to incorporate Whole Community concepts before an incident occurs will lighten the load during response and recovery efforts through the identification of partners with existing processes and resources who are available to be part of the emergency management team. The Whole Community approach produces more effective outcomes for all types and sizes of threats and hazards, thereby improving security and resiliency nationwide.



Figure 2: Madison, Tennessee, May 29, 2010—Gary Lima, Tennessee Emergency Management Agency Community Relations Coordinator, leads Boy Scout troop #460 in a Memorial Day project to place flags on graves. The picture reflects emergency managers becoming involved in the day-to-day activities of community groups. David Fine/FEMA

Whole Community Principles and Strategic Themes

Numerous factors contribute to the resilience of communities and effective emergency management outcomes. However, three principles that represent the foundation for establishing a Whole Community approach to emergency management emerged during the national dialogue.

Whole Community Principles:

- **Understand and meet the actual needs of the whole community.** Community engagement can lead to a deeper understanding of the unique and diverse needs of a population, including its demographics, values, norms, community structures, networks, and relationships. The more we know about our communities, the better we can understand their real-life safety and sustaining needs and their motivations to participate in emergency management-related activities prior to an event.
- **Engage and empower all parts of the community.** Engaging the whole community and empowering local action will better position stakeholders to plan for and meet the actual needs of a community and strengthen the local capacity to deal with the consequences of all threats and hazards. This requires all members of the community to be part of the emergency management team, which should include diverse community members, social and community service groups and institutions, faith-based and disability groups, academia,

professional associations, and the private and nonprofit sectors, while including government agencies who may not traditionally have been directly involved in emergency management. When the community is engaged in an authentic dialogue, it becomes empowered to identify its needs and the existing resources that may be used to address them.

- **Strengthen what works well in communities on a daily basis.** A Whole Community approach to building community resilience requires finding ways to support and strengthen the institutions, assets, and networks that already work well in communities and are working to address issues that are important to community members on a daily basis. Existing structures and relationships that are present in the daily lives of individuals, families, businesses, and organizations before an incident occurs can be leveraged and empowered to act effectively during and after a disaster strikes.

In addition to the three Whole Community principles, six strategic themes were identified through research, discussions, and examples provided by emergency management practitioners. These themes speak to the ways the Whole Community approach can be effectively employed in emergency management and, as such, represent pathways for action to implement the principles.

Whole Community Strategic Themes:

- Understand community complexity.
- Recognize community capabilities and needs.
- Foster relationships with community leaders.
- Build and maintain partnerships.
- Empower local action.
- Leverage and strengthen social infrastructure, networks, and assets.

In the *Strategic Themes in Practice* section of this document, the Whole Community concept is explored through real-world examples that highlight the key principles and themes of the Whole Community approach. In order to provide an illustration of how the principles and themes can be applied, examples for each of the five mission areas—Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery (as outlined in the National Preparedness Goal)—are included. In addition, examples from other community development and public safety efforts have been included—most notably, community policing. While the focus and outcomes may differ, such efforts have proven effective in advancing public health and safety and offer a model for emergency management personnel to consider. The *Pathways for Action* section provides a list of reflective questions and ideas for emergency management practitioners to refer to when they are beginning to think about how to incorporate the Whole Community concepts into their security and resilience efforts.

As a field of practice, our collective understanding of how to effectively apply Whole Community as a concept to the daily business of emergency management will continue to evolve. It is hoped that this document will assist emergency managers, as members of their communities, in that evolution—prompting new actions and soliciting new ideas and strategies. FEMA is committed to continued engagement in ongoing discussions with its partners in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to further develop and refine strategies to deliver more effective emergency management outcomes and enhance the security and resilience of our communities and our Nation.

Strategic Themes in Practice

The strategic themes presented in this section speak to the various ways the Whole Community approach can be effectively employed in emergency management and, as such, represent pathways for action by members of the emergency management community at all levels. These themes and pathways are explored through the presentation of real-world examples that highlight how Whole Community concepts are being applied in communities across the country.

Understand Community Complexity

Communities are unique, multi-dimensional, and complex. They are affected by many factors and interdependencies, including demographics, geography, access to resources, experience with government, crime, political activity, economic prosperity, and forms of social capital such as social networks, social cohesion between different groups, and institutions. Developing a better understanding of a community involves looking at its members to learn how social activity is organized on a normal basis (e.g., social patterns, community leaders, points of collective organization and action, and decision-making processes), which will reveal potential sources (e.g., individuals and organizations) of new collective action. A realistic understanding of the complexity of a community's daily life will help emergency managers determine how they can best collaborate with and support the community to meet its true needs.



Figure 3: New Orleans, Louisiana, September 5, 2008—A bilingual volunteer helps non-English speaking evacuees, guiding them in the right direction to board the correct buses to their parishes. Understanding the complexity of communities (e.g., non-English speakers) helps emergency management practitioners to meet the residents' needs. Jacinta Quesada/FEMA

Understanding the complexities of local communities helps with tailoring engagement strategies and shaping programs to meet various needs. Numerous examples that involve local initiatives to identify, map, and communicate with a wide range of local groups exist nationwide. For example, the Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS) has been actively identifying ways to better communicate and plan with linguistically isolated populations (LIP) and limited-English proficient (LEP) populations within the city. HDHHS is working with about 20 community organizations that serve and represent LIP/LEP communities, along with Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston, four refugee resettlement agencies that work with these populations, and several apartment complexes in southwest Houston (where many refugee and some immigrant populations live), in an effort to develop trusted relationships and ways to provide current preparedness, response, and recovery information. Because of this outreach, significant unmet needs (e.g., transportation) for these specific populations have been identified. The City of Houston is using this information to fulfill unmet needs for these populations and continues to work with these community organizations and private sector partners to improve outreach materials, methods of communication, and preparedness programs.

The full diversity of communities is better understood when communication and engagement efforts move beyond easy, typical approaches to looking at the real needs and issues a community faces. In one California city, the police noticed a high level of violent crime in a particular neighborhood. In a typical policing model, the police would have assigned additional officers to patrol the neighborhood, approached the community to provide them with information about the criminal activity, and informed residents of what they might do to avoid being affected by the crime. However, as part of an operational shift, the police took a proactive approach by first engaging with the community to

obtain information about the nature and frequency of the local crimes. At the initial meeting, the police learned from the local residents that a number of problems contributed to the unsafe conditions of the neighborhood—problems that police response alone could not correct. Cars speeding through the neighborhood; the presence of abandoned cars, couches, and other litter in front yards; rundown conditions of apartment buildings; few safe walkways for neighborhood children; and a lack of lighting on street corners all contributed to the crime situation.

At the next community meeting, the police brought together a number of government departments, including fire, public works, and the housing authority, to address the residents' concerns. Government representatives agreed to provide dumpsters for the litter and the residents agreed to fill them. The community agreed to tow the abandoned cars and identified street repaving as a high priority. Together, the community and city officials approached the apartment owners, who agreed to paint the exteriors of the buildings. The public works department fixed the street lighting. Building upon the cooperation and the demonstrated responsiveness to the community's needs, several residents provided the police with information that led to the arrests of several individuals involved in the area's drug-related activities. In a relatively short period of time, police worked with local residents to transform what had been perceived to be a narrow crime issue into a broad-based community revitalization effort. Crime decreased, residents became involved, and the neighborhood was significantly improved. Emergency management practitioners can take a similar approach by understanding the underlying and core community concerns in order to build relationships and identify opportunities to work together to develop solutions that meet everyone's needs.

Numerous approaches exist to identify and better understand the complexities of local populations, how they interact, what resources are available, and the gaps between needs and solutions. For example, community mapping is a way to identify community capabilities and needs by visually illustrating data to reveal patterns. Examples of patterns may take into account the location of critical infrastructure, demographics, reliance on public transportation, available assets and resources (e.g., warehouses that can be used as distribution centers), and businesses that can continue to supply food or water during and after emergencies. Understanding communities is a dynamic process as patterns may change. Emergency managers and local groups often use community mapping to gather empirical data on local patterns. Revealing patterns can help emergency managers to better engage communities and understand and meet the needs of individuals by illustrating the dynamics of populations, how they interact, and available resources.

Understand Community “DNA”

Learn how communities' social activity is organized and how needs are met under normal conditions.

A better understanding of how segments of the community resolve issues and make decisions—both with and without government as a player—helps uncover ways to better meet the actual needs of the whole community in times of crisis.

One community mapping program that the Washington State Emergency Management Division developed (“Map Your Neighborhood”) won FEMA’s 2011 Challenge.gov award for addressing community preparedness. This program helps citizens identify the most important steps they need to take to secure their homes and neighborhoods following a disaster. In addition, it helps to identify the special skills and equipment that neighbors possess, the locations of natural gas and propane tanks, and a comprehensive contact list of neighbors who may need assistance, such as older residents, children, and people with disabilities and other access and functional needs.

Recognize Community Capabilities and Needs

Appreciating the actual capabilities and needs of a community is essential to supporting and enabling local actions. For example, in response to past disasters, meals ready-to-eat (MREs) have been used to feed survivors because these resources were readily available. However, for a large portion of the population, such as children, seniors, or individuals with dietary or health considerations, MREs are not a suitable food source for various reasons, as MREs tend to contain high levels of fat and sodium and low levels of fiber.

A community’s needs should be defined on the basis of what the community requires without being limited to what traditional emergency management capabilities can address. By engaging in open discussions, emergency management practitioners can begin to identify the actual needs of the community and the collective capabilities (private, public, and civic) that exist to address them, as the role of government and private and nonprofit sector organizations may vary for each community. The community should also be encouraged to define what it believes its needs and capabilities are in order to fully participate in planning and actions.

Based on a shared understanding of actual needs, the community can then collectively plan to find ways to address those needs. Following the devastating tornadoes in Alabama during the spring of 2011, various agencies, organizations, and volunteers united to locate recovery resources in the community and communicate information about those resources to the public. Two days after the tornadoes, they formed the Alabama Interagency Emergency Response Coordinating Committee. The committee was led by representatives from Independent Living Resources of Greater Birmingham, United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Birmingham, and the Alabama Governor’s Office on Disability. The committee also included representatives from FEMA and the American Red Cross.



Figure 4: Fargo, North Dakota, March 23, 2009—Thousands of students and community members work together with the National Guard at the Fargo Dome to make sand bags during a 24-hour operation. Community members have the capabilities to help meet their own emergency needs. Michael Reiger/FEMA

Recognize Community Capabilities and Broaden the Team

Recognize communities’ private and civic capabilities, identify how they can contribute to improve pre- and post-event outcomes, and actively engage them in all aspects of the emergency management process.

A daily conference call was attended by as many as 60 individuals representing agencies that serve individuals with disabilities and chronic illnesses. In addition, volunteers with disabilities continuously scanned broadcast media and printed and electronic newspapers and called agency contacts to obtain the latest information on resources for disaster recovery. For instance, volunteers placed calls to local hospitals and clinics, faith-based organizations, and organizations representing clinical professionals to request help with crisis counseling. Recovery resource information was compiled in an extensive database with entries grouped within the following categories: Red Cross, FEMA, emergency shelters/housing assistance, medication assistance, health care services, mental health support, food assistance, eyewear, communications, computers/Internet, hiring contractors for home repairs, insurance claims, legal aid, vital documents, older adult care, childcare, blood donations, animal shelter and services, and emergency preparation. The Disaster Recovery Resource Database was updated twice daily and information was disseminated in multiple formats (e.g., email attachment, website, hard copy, and telephone).

The committee used local media outlets, state agencies (e.g., health, education, rehabilitation, aging, and mental health), city and county governments, the United Way's 2-1-1 Information & Referral Search website, and nonprofit organizations to disseminate the database to community residents. Independent Living Resources of Greater Birmingham hosted a website with recovery resources presented by category. This collaboration greatly enhanced the delivery of services to individuals with disabilities, as well as older residents.

As a protection effort, some communities have developed self-assessment tools to evaluate how prepared they are for all threats and hazards. One example is a Community Resilience Index (CRI), which was developed by the Gulf of Mexico Alliance's Coastal Community Resilience Priority Issue Team, the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium, and the Louisiana Sea Grant College

Program in collaboration with 18 communities along the Gulf Coast, from Texas to Florida. It is a self-assessment tool and provides communities with a method of determining if an acceptable level of functionality may be maintained after a disaster. The self-assessment tool can be used to evaluate the following areas to provide a preliminary assessment of a community's disaster resilience: critical infrastructure and facilities, transportation issues, community plans and agreements, mitigation measures, business plans, and social systems. Gaps are identified through this analysis. The CRI helps to identify weaknesses that a community may want to address prior to the next hazard event and stimulates discussion among emergency responders within a community, thus increasing its resilience to disasters. As a result of the initial implementation of the Community Resilience Index (CRI), additional grant funding is being provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Storms Program to continue to build capacity in the region so facilitators can assist communities in taking the next steps. Under this new grant, facilitators will continue their work by helping communities identify issues and needs in connection with becoming more resilient, create a shared community understanding of the potential extent of future losses, apply strategies to serve near- and long-term mitigation needs, and take the first steps toward adapting to a rise in sea level. This support will be in the form of follow-up training and/or technical assistance.

Plan for the Real

Plan for what communities will really need should a severe event occur and not just for the existing resources on hand.

Foster Relationships with Community Leaders

Within every community, there are many different formal and informal leaders, such as community organizers, local council members and other government leaders, nonprofit or business leaders, volunteer or faith leaders, and long-term residents, all of whom have valuable knowledge and can provide a comprehensive understanding of the communities in which they live. These leaders can help identify activities in which the community is already interested and involved as people might be more receptive to preparedness campaigns and more likely to understand the relevancy of emergency management to their lives.

The Colorado Emergency Preparedness Partnership (CEPP) exemplifies the benefits of fostering relationships with community leaders. According to its website, “CEPP is a collaborative enterprise created by the Denver Police Foundation, Business Executives for National Security, and the Philanthropy Roundtable. It is a broad coalition to implement a voluntary, all-hazards partnership between business and government and, to date, is the product of many Colorado partners including leaders of the philanthropic community, Federal, state and local agencies, business, academia, and US Northern Command.” CEPP has built these trusted relationships since its inception in 2008. When not responding to a disaster, Colorado Emergency Preparedness Partnership (CEPP) partners remain connected with their network through information bulletins and tap into their capabilities for smaller emergencies and other needs. For example, the police recently needed a helicopter for a murder investigation and they contacted CEPP, a trusted partner, to see if there was one available. Within 30 minutes, three helicopters were offered by three different member organizations.

As suggested previously, disaster-resilient communities are, first and foremost, communities that function and solve problems well under normal conditions. By matching existing capabilities to needs and working to strengthen these resources, communities are able to improve their disaster resiliency. Community leaders and partners can help emergency managers in identifying the changing needs and capabilities that exist in the community.

Community leaders can also rally their members to join community emergency management efforts and to take personal preparedness measures for themselves and their families. The inclusion of community leaders in emergency management training opportunities is a way to reach individuals, as these leaders can pass preparedness information to their members. They can be a critical link between emergency managers and the individuals they represent. Many emergency management agencies, such as the New York City Office of Emergency Management, include their private sector partners in regular exercises, sustaining and strengthening their relationships in the process.

For example, central Ohio is home to the country’s second-largest Somali population. The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission has been working to gather information about this group’s preferred communication methods, traditions, behaviors, and customs in order to appropriately plan for its needs in the event of an emergency. The Somali population requested that planners include the Somali community leaders in emergency preparedness and response efforts because they were the foremost sources of trustworthy communication. Both emergency managers and the community benefit from developing these trusted relationships.

Meet People Where They Are
Engage communities through the relationships that exist in everyday settings and around issues that already have their attention and drive their interactions. Connect the social, economic, and political structures that make up daily life to emergency management programs.

Trust is a recurring theme that underpins healthy and strong communities. It acts as the glue that holds different groups together, strengthens and sustains solidarity, and supports the means for collective action. It is crucial that partnerships are based on trust and not on fear or competition to ensure the success of the Whole Community approach. Building social trust requires more than conventional outreach focused on “trust issues”; it requires collaborating with communities in joint activities designed to address specific local problems. As emergency managers and community leaders work together to solve problems, trusted relationships are formed as they learn to support and rely on one another. Fostering relationships and collaborating with community leaders is a way to build trust within the broader community as they are the links to individual community members. To this end, it is important that the government and its partners are transparent about information sharing, planning processes, and capabilities to deal with all threats and hazards.

Build Trust through Participation

Successfully collaborating with community leaders to solve problems for non-emergency activities builds relationships and trust over time.

As trust is built, community leaders can provide insight into the needs and capabilities of a community and help to ramp up interest about emergency management programs that support resiliency.

Build and Maintain Partnerships

While certainly not a new concept, building relationships with multi-organizational partnerships and coalitions is an exemplary organizing technique to ensure the involvement of a wide range of local community members. The collective effort brings greater capabilities to the initiatives and provides greater opportunities to reach agreement throughout the community and influence others to participate and support activities. The critical step in building these partnerships is to find the overlapping and shared interests around which groups and organizations are brought together. Equally important is to sustain the motivations and incentives to collaborate over a long period of time while improving resilience through increased public-private partnership. As FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate stated at the first *National Conference on Building Resilience Through Public-Private Partnerships*, “We cannot separate out and segment one sector in isolation; the interdependencies are too great.... We want the private sector to be part of the team and we want to be in the situation where we work as a team and not compete with each other.”⁸



Figure 5: Tuscaloosa, Alabama, June 9, 2011—The Japanese International Cooperation Agency made a donation of several pallets of blankets to representatives from several faith-based and volunteer organizations. The donation came in the wake of the April tornados that hit the southeast. Tim Burkitt /FEMA

⁸ Administrator Craig Fugate, Federal Emergency Management Agency, First National Conference on Building Resilience through Public-Private Partnerships, August 2011.

Businesses play a key role in building resilient communities. As businesses consider what they need to do to survive a disaster or emergency, as outlined in their business continuity plans, it is equally important that they also consider what their customers will need in order to survive. Without customers and employees, businesses will fail. The ongoing involvement of businesses in preparedness activities paves the way to economic and social resiliency within their communities.

An example of a public-private partnership that successfully negotiated difficult community political and economic dynamics comes from Medina County, just southwest of Cleveland, Ohio. Like so many urban areas, expansion into rural areas placed new demands on water supplies. Some homebuilders initially wanted to develop large plots that would require filling in existing wetlands and natural floodplains. The building plans also required firefighting services to truck in large amounts of water in the event of an incident.

A broad-based coalition that included the local government, county floodplain manager, planning commission, homebuilders association, and emergency manager came together to spearhead a process to promote development in the county while protecting water supplies and preserving wetlands and ponds. The partnership achieved a building standard that allowed builders to develop their desired housing design but also required them to build ponds and wetlands within each housing subdivision in an effort to sustain water supplies and allow for improved fire protection and floodplain management. The zoning and land use mitigation efforts promoted and protected the health, safety, and welfare of the residents by making the community less susceptible to flood and fire damage.

Working as a public-private partnership enabled the participants to reach an agreement and institutionalize it through cooperative legal processes. Mutual interests and priorities brought this otherwise disparate group together to form a productive partnership.

Partnerships are attractive when all parties benefit from the relationship. The State of Florida established a team dedicated to business and industry. This dedicated private sector team is

Partners to Consider Engaging

- Community councils
- Volunteer organizations (e.g., local Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, Community Emergency Response Team programs, volunteer centers, State and County Animal Response Teams, etc.)
- Faith-based organizations
- Individual citizens
- Community leaders (e.g., representatives from specific segments of the community, including seniors, minority populations, and non-English speakers)
- Disability services
- School boards
- Higher education institutions
- Local Cooperative Extension System offices
- Animal control agencies and animal welfare organizations
- Surplus stores
- Hardware stores
- Big-box stores
- Small, local retailers
- Supply chain components, such as manufacturers, distributors, suppliers, and logistics providers
- Home care services
- Medical facilities
- Government agencies (all levels and disciplines)
- Embassies
- Local Planning Councils (e.g., Citizen Corps Councils, Local Emergency Planning Committees)
- Chambers of commerce
- Nonprofit organizations
- Advocacy groups
- Media outlets
- Airports
- Public transportation systems
- Utility providers
- And many others...

composed of various state agencies/organizations and business support organizations. The purpose of this team is to coordinate with local, tribal, state, territorial, and Federal agencies to provide immediate and short-term assistance for the needs of business, industry, and economic stabilization, as well as long-term business recovery assistance. The private sector team's preparedness and response assistance may include accessing financial, workforce, technical, and community resources. Local jurisdictions in the state are also incorporating this concept into their planning processes. Such partnerships help get businesses back up and running quickly after a disaster so they can then assist with the response and recovery efforts.

Create Space at the Table

Open up the planning table and engage in the processes of negotiation, discussion, and decision making that govern local residents under normal conditions.

Encourage community members to identify additional resources and capabilities. Promote broader community participation in planning and empower local action to facilitate buy-in.

Throughout 2011, the Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management, in partnership with Communities United Coalition of Churches, the American Red Cross--South Florida Region, FEMA, Islamic Schools of South Florida and many others, conducted a pilot effort to identify what works and what does not work in engaging the whole community in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. The following seven target population groups were chosen: low-income and disadvantaged residents, seniors, immigrants and those with limited English-speaking abilities, those of minority faith traditions, disabled people, youth, and the homeless. Given the size, diversity (e.g., ethnicity, religion, and age), and breadth of experience of Miami-Dade County Emergency Management, many lessons could be learned by focusing Whole Community efforts on this geographic area. Most notably, the pilot identified previously unknown assets that the target population groups could bring to an emergency situation, which resulted in the following developments:

- A network of 25 newly affiliated groups now partnering with emergency management and the Red Cross;
- Identification of 65 houses of worship, community groups, and religious broadcasters who can support disaster communications and language translation;
- New capacity to serve 8,000 survivors;
- Nine facilities already in the community identified as potential new sites for feeding and sheltering; and
- Five existing facilities identified as new points of distribution for commodities.

Following the pilot and despite significant budget cuts, Miami-Dade emergency management officials established a team of people to work over the next two years to institutionalize Whole Community into the way the department thinks, plans, and acts.

Once partnerships have been established, relationships like the ones created in Miami-Dade can be sustained through regular activities. Community ownership of projects will help ensure continued involvement and progress in the future. Furthermore, engaging community members through routine resilience-building activities, such as business continuity-related exercises, will ensure they can be activated and sustained during emergencies.

Including partners such as representatives from for-profit and nonprofit private sector organizations and individuals from the community in preparedness activities (e.g., emergency management exercises) is a way to maintain momentum. One key aspect of maintaining partnerships is to set up regular means of communication with community groups and local leaders, such as through newsletters, meetings, or participating volunteers, to ensure that they stay informed about and engaged in emergency management activities. The Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians sends out a monthly outreach newsletter that includes emergency preparedness updates. Contact information is provided in the newsletter to encourage community members to provide feedback on emergency management programs. The tribe also uses social media applications like Twitter and Facebook to update the community on emergency management issues and programs.

Emergency managers can continue to build and maintain partnerships that emerge during the response phase, enabling a better response when another disaster strikes. For example, Support Alliance for Emergency Readiness Santa Rosa (SAFER) is a network of organizations committed to serving actively during disasters. It was developed to bring together local businesses and faith-based and nonprofit organizations to provide more efficient service to disaster survivors after Hurricane Ivan devastated northwest Florida. The network's coordinating efforts were aimed specifically at eliminating unnecessary duplication of effort.

During non-emergency periods, SAFER works closely with other agencies to address the needs of the county's impoverished and vulnerable populations. In connection with this, SAFER helps families who lose their homes to fire, replenishes local food pantries, and provides cold weather shelters to the homeless. The relationships it forms while serving community residents daily provides the foundation for collective action when disaster strikes.

Empower Local Action

Recognition that government at all levels cannot manage disasters alone means that communities need the opportunity to draw on their full potential to operate effectively. Empowering local action requires allowing members of the communities to lead—not follow—in identifying priorities, organizing support, implementing programs, and evaluating outcomes. The emergency manager promotes and coordinates, but does not direct, these conversations and efforts. Lasting impacts of long-term capacity building can be evident in an evolving set of civic practices and habits among leaders and the public that become embedded in the life of the community. In this regard, the issue of social capital becomes an important part of encouraging communities to own and lead their own resilience activities.⁹ Furthermore, community ownership of projects provides a powerful incentive for sustaining action and involvement.

In May 2011, a devastating tornado struck Joplin, Missouri, leading to the development of the Citizens Advisory Recovery Team (CART). CART is composed of city officials, business leaders, community leaders, and residents whose shared purposes are to engage residents to determine their recovery vision and share that vision with the community; provide a systematic way to address recovery through a planning process; and bring all segments of the community

⁹ “By analogy with notions of physical capital and human capital—tools and training that enhance individual productivity—‘social capital’ refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.” Putnam, Robert D., “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital,” *Journal of Democracy* 6:1, Jan 1995, 65-78, p. 67.

together to share information and work together.¹⁰ Shortly after the tornado, CART, with support from FEMA's Long-Term Recovery Task Force, Housing and Urban Development, Environmental Protection Agency, and the American Institute of Architects, conducted extensive public input and community sessions to discuss: housing and neighborhoods, schools and community facilities, infrastructure and environment, and economic development. All of the ideas and comments from these meetings were used to draft a recovery vision as well as goals and project concepts. Recommendations were then presented to the City Council in November 2011.

Similarly, following the 2008 flood in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the city came together to identify the capabilities of agencies and organizations that could assist with the recovery. Representatives from state, county, and city governments, the chamber of commerce, schools, businesses, faith-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and neighborhood associations, many of which were involved in the response to the flood, formed the Recovery and Reinvestment Coordinating Team (RRCT). They explicitly forged the partnership to help create a framework for recovery that would include the broad interests of the entire area.

The RRCT organized open houses and general public meetings for hundreds of residents and business owners in an effort to develop a community-wide discussion on the priorities for long-term revitalization and investment in the city. They also focused the public discussions on the need to integrate the revitalization plan with a flood protection plan. Out of these efforts, the RRCT established the Neighborhood Planning Process to oversee the city's post-flood Reinvestment and Revitalization Plan. The Reinvestment and Revitalization Plan included area action plans, goals, timelines, and redevelopment strategies for all ten affected neighborhoods, ultimately turning the recovery effort into an opportunity for redesigning and revitalizing the city.

Let Public Participation Lead

Enable the public to lead, not follow, in identifying priorities, organizing support, implementing programs, and evaluating outcomes. Empower them to draw on their full potential in developing collective actions and solutions.

Strengthening the government's relationship with communities should be based on support and empowerment of local collective action, with open discussion of the roles and responsibilities of each party. This vision should be clearly conveyed so that participating organizations can commit adequate resources over the long term and have a clear understanding of what the desired outcomes will be. Engaging members of communities as partners in emergency planning is critical to developing collective actions and solutions.

Two consecutive tragedies involving youth in a city in Colorado caused community members to recognize a need to better educate their youth on emergencies. A local fire department battalion chief helped form a small group of volunteers from the fire and police departments, enlisted support from a local television station's meteorologist, and began offering clinics and classes. Other agencies joined the effort and the group also began offering a Youth Disaster Training program for teenagers, hoping to engage the younger population in a broader, more meaningful experience through which emergency management skills and knowledge could easily be learned. The organizers found that when the teen participants became involved, the program's learning

¹⁰ Citizens Advisory Recovery Team. Listening to Joplin: Report of the Citizens Advisory Recovery Team, Nov. 2011.

objectives and training approach were transformed from what had initially been envisioned. The teens rejected the program's original logo and redesigned it to be more meaningful to their peers. The teens also pressed for a different type of instruction. They wanted to hear from people who had actually survived a disaster and learn what the experience was like and how the survivors and relatives of victims felt afterward.

The Youth Disaster Training program became such a success that requests to participate quickly outstripped the available and planned resources. Other organizations, including public school leaders, state agencies, and other organizations, joined in. The teenagers brought their parents, informed their friends, and participated in activities such as a career development session during which they met emergency managers from the health, fire, and police departments, as well as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and FEMA. As a result of the summer program, the teenagers became empowered to voice their needs and interests and design and implement the best ways to fulfill them.

Empowering local action is especially important in rural communities where there tends to be less infrastructure (e.g., telecommunications, public transportation, and health services) and where emergency managers are often part-time employees who are also responsible for areas outside of emergency management. Rural communities understand that the social capital found in local volunteer organizations and individuals is necessary for preparing for and responding to unique rural threats such as agroterrorism. The Agrosecurity Committee of the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) has established the Strengthening Community Agrosecurity Planning (S-CAP) workshop series to address challenges concerning the protection of agriculture and the food supply. Workshop participants include a wide range of community representatives (e.g., local emergency management and public health personnel, first responders, veterinarians, producers/commodity representatives, and agribusinesses). They come together to address the issues relevant to their specific agricultural vulnerabilities. The workshops help guide local Extension personnel and other community partners in developing the agricultural component of their local emergency operations plan to help safeguard the community's agriculture, food, natural resources, and pets. The workshops empower communities to build on their capacity to handle agricultural incidents through improved networking and team building.

Leverage and Strengthen Social Infrastructure, Networks, and Assets

Leveraging and strengthening existing social infrastructure, networks, and assets means investing in the social, economic, and political structures that make up daily life and connecting them to emergency management programs. A community in general consists of an array of groups, institutions, associations, and networks that organize and control a wide variety of assets and structure social behaviors. Local communities have their own ways of organizing and managing this social infrastructure. Understanding how communities operate under normal conditions (i.e., before a disaster) is critical to both immediate response and long-term recovery after a disaster. Emergency managers can strengthen existing capabilities by participating in discussions and decision-making processes that govern local residents under normal conditions and aligning emergency management activities to support community partnerships and efforts. Emergency managers can engage with non-traditional partners within their communities to build upon these day-to-day functions and determine how they can be leveraged and empowered during a disaster.

Communities are extremely resourceful in using what is available—in terms of funding, physical materials, or human resources—to meet a range of day-to-day needs. Whether relying on donations and volunteers to stock a local food bank or mobilizing neighbors to form “watch groups” to safeguard children playing in public parks, communities have a great capacity for dealing with everyday challenges. There are opportunities for government to support and strengthen these pathways, such as providing planning spaces where people can meet and connect, providing resources to support local activities, and creating new partnerships to expand shared resources. Enhancing the successful, everyday activities in communities will empower local populations to define and communicate their needs, mediate challenges and disagreements, and participate in local organizational decision making. As a result, a culture of shared responsibility and decision making emerges, linking communities and leaders in tackling problems of common concern.



Figure 6: Margaretville, New York, September 4, 2011—Volunteers came to help residents remove mud and salvage belongings from homes ruined by floodwaters on “Labor for Your Neighbor” weekend events following Hurricane Irene. Elissa Jun/FEMA

For example, the protection and resilience of the Nation’s critical infrastructure is a shared responsibility involving all levels of government and critical infrastructure owners and operators. Prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts relating to the Nation’s infrastructure are most effective when there is full participation of government and industry partners. The mission suffers (i.e., full benefits are not realized) without the robust participation of a wide array of partners.

Following September 11, 2001, communities discovered that partnerships with local rail enthusiasts can help strengthen the security of the Nation’s rail network. Across the United States, thousands of rail enthusiasts, or “rail fans,” enjoy a hobby that takes them to public spots alongside rail yards where they watch and photograph trains. Rail fans are drawn from across a community’s social and demographic landscape. However, the heightened security measures that followed the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, resulted in law enforcement and rail security police becoming suspicious of rail fans photographing busy locations where commuter and freight trains clustered.

After two rail fans were detained by local police for taking pictures of trains, a public outcry arose from rail fans online and their national associations. Across the country, rail fans insisted that they were far from being a threat to security and were actually one of the rail network’s best security assets because they were routinely in a position to observe suspicious behavior. A coalition of senior police officers, rail fans, and local elected leaders convened to review and resolve the conflict. The controversy subsided as police acknowledged the rights of rail fans to

photograph trains from public locations and the rail fans publicly embraced the need for greater security around rail yards. Rail fans offered to help keep America's rail network safe from vandalism, terrorism, and other incidents by reporting situations that appeared to be out of the ordinary.

BNSF Railway, one of the largest freight rail companies in North America, developed a community-based rail fan reporting program called Citizens for Rail Security. This program includes a web-based reporting system in which rail fans can enter a minimal amount of their personal information, generate an official identification card, and receive guidelines on how to report any suspicious activities or potential security breaches.

Experiences in Haiti after the catastrophic earthquake in 2010 also underscore the value of leveraging existing social infrastructure. A research team that had worked for months after the disaster identified two different types of social and organizational networks providing aid to earthquake survivors.¹¹ One network consisted of large relief agencies that focused on transporting a large volume of humanitarian aid from outside the country and into the disaster area. The second type of network involved pre-existing social groups that routinely worked with and inside local Haitian neighborhoods to provide basic social services.

The network of large relief agencies had to create systems and gather manpower and equipment to distribute the aid, whereas the second group that used pre-existing social groups already had systems, manpower, and equipment in place. The unfamiliar network of large relief agencies was also plagued by aggression and theft by the locals, which the familiar pre-existing social groups did not experience. Since the network of pre-existing social groups routinely worked with and inside local Haitian neighborhoods to provide basic social services, they were trusted and had detailed knowledge of local conditions, which allowed them to anticipate local needs accurately and provide the aid required. Since they knew the actual amount of resources needed, they did not rely on large convoys that would be tempting to vandals.

Strengthen Social Infrastructure

Align emergency management activities to support the institutions, assets, and networks that people turn to in order to solve problems on a daily basis.

Many of the problems encountered in providing aid to Haiti resemble difficulties faced in other large-scale emergency response operations. Problems did not occur because of an absolute shortage of supplies or slow responses. Rather, they resulted from failures to connect with and benefit from the strengths of existing, familiar patterns of community interaction and assistance.

One reason why local community organizations are effective during emergencies is that they are rooted in a broad-based set of activities that address the core needs of a community. They are of, by, and with the community. They may be, for instance, involved in feeding and sheltering the homeless or working with children in after-school programs. They also remain visible in the community, communicating regularly with local residents about issues of immediate concern, as well as more distant emergency management interests.

¹¹ Holguín-Veras, José, Ph.D., et al., "Field Investigation on the Comparative Performance of Alternative Humanitarian Logistic Structures after the Port au Prince Earthquake: Preliminary Findings and Suggestions," March 2, 2011.

Pathways for Action

While there are many similarities that most communities share, communities are ultimately complex and unique. Ideas that work well in one community may not be feasible for another due to local regulations, available funding, demographics, geography, or community culture, for example. Some communities have fully integrated Whole Community concepts into their operations. For other communities, this is a new concept that they are hearing about for the first time. If this concept is familiar to you, think about what you can teach and share with others. On the other hand, if you are looking to begin a Whole Community approach or expand existing programs, the following questions and bullets may help get you started.

What follows are ideas and recommendations that were collected as part of the national dialogue during facilitated group discussions with emergency management practitioners from nonprofit organizations, academia, private sector organizations, and all levels of government. These recommendations are by no means exhaustive, but are intended to help you think about ways in which you can establish or broaden a Whole Community practice of emergency management within your community.

How can we better understand the actual needs of the communities we serve?

- Educate your emergency management staff on the diversity of the community and implement cultural competence interventions, such as establishing a relationship with a multi-lingual volunteer to help interact with the various groups.¹²
- Learn the demographics of your community. Develop strategies to reach community members and engage them in issues that are important to them.
- Know the languages and communication methods/traditions in the community—not only what languages people speak and understand, but how they actually exchange new information and which information sources they trust.
- Know where the real conversations and decisions are made. They are not always made at the council level, but at venues such as the community center, neighborhood block parties, social clubs, or places of worship. Tap into these opportunities to listen and learn more about the community. For example, homeowner association quarterly meetings (social or formal) may serve as opportunities to identify current community issues and concerns and to disseminate important public information.

What partnerships might we need in order to develop an understanding of the community's needs?

- Identify a broad base of stakeholders, including scout troops, sports clubs, home school organizations, and faith-based and disability communities to identify where relationships can be built and where information about the community's needs can be shared. Partner with groups that interact with a given population on a daily basis, such as first responders, places of worship, niche media outlets, and other community organizations. These

¹² For more information on cultural competence interventions, see Betancourt, J., et al., "Defining Cultural Competence: A Practical Framework for Addressing Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Health and Health Care," Public Health Reports, 2003, Vol. 118.

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Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action***

groups/organizations have already established trust within the community and can act as liaisons to open up communication channels.

- Every year, foreign-born residents and visitors are among those affected by disasters in our country. Reach out to local foreign country representatives through consulates or embassies to incorporate international partners in a Whole Community approach to domestic disasters.

How do we effectively engage the whole community in emergency management to include a wide breadth of community members?

- Reach out and interact with your Citizen Corps Council (or similar organization) to inquire about groups that are currently involved in emergency planning, as well as groups that are not involved but should be. Citizen Corps Councils facilitate partnerships among government and nongovernmental entities, including those not traditionally involved in emergency planning and preparedness. Additionally, Councils involve community members in order to increase coordination and collaboration between emergency management and key stakeholders while increasing the public's awareness of disasters.
- Strive to hire a diverse staff that is representative of the community.
- Maintain ongoing, clear, and consistent communication with all segments of the community by using vocabulary that is understood and known by those members.
- Discuss how organizations can have a formal role in the community's emergency plan and, when feasible, include them in training activities and exercises.
- Use the power of social media applications (e.g., Facebook and Twitter) to disseminate messages, create two-way information exchanges, and understand and follow up on communication that is already happening within the community.
- Involve children and youth through educational programs and activities centered on individual, family, and community preparedness.
- Develop recovery plans with full participation and partnership within the full fabric of the community.
- Incorporate emergency planning discussions into the existing format of community meetings. Multi-purpose meetings help increase participation, especially in communities where residents must travel long distances to attend such meetings.
- Identify barriers to participation in emergency management meetings (e.g., lack of childcare or access to transportation, and time of the meeting) and provide solutions where feasible (e.g., provide childcare, arrange for the meeting to be held in a location accessible by public transportation, and schedule for after-work hours).
- Consider physical, programmatic, and communication access needs of community members with disabilities when organizing community meetings.

How do we generate public interest in disaster preparedness to get a seat at the table with community organizations?

- Integrate the public and community institutions into the planning process by hosting town hall meetings and by participating in non-emergency management community meetings. Listen to the public's needs and discuss how individuals can play a role in the planning process.
- Make yourself available for local radio call-in programs to answer questions that callers have about emergency management and solicit input from the listeners on what they see as the top priorities for community resilience.
- Have an open house at your emergency operations center (EOC) and invite the public. Invite schools for field trips. Explain the equipment, organization, and coordination that are used to help protect the community.

How can we tap into what communities are interested in to engage in discussions about increasing resilience?

- Find local heroes and opinion leaders and learn what they are interested or involved in and tailor emergency management materials and information to meet their interests.
- Find out what issues or challenges various groups in your community are currently confronting, how they are organizing, and how emergency management might help them address pressing needs.

What activities can emergency managers change or create to help strengthen what already works well in communities?

- Understand how you can share and augment resources with partners within your community during emergencies. For example, providing a power generator to a store that has all the supplies the community needs but no power to stay open would be an example of a way in which to share and augment resources.
- Work with your partner organizations to better understand the various ways they will be able to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from threats and hazards and supplement their activities and resources rather than compete with them.
- Identify organizations that already provide support to the community and determine how you can supplement their efforts during times of disaster when there might be a greater need. For example, if food banks distribute food on a regular basis, emergency managers can deliver additional food to the food banks to help them meet a greater demand during a disaster.
- Leverage existing programs, such as the local Parent Teacher Association (PTA), to strengthen emergency management skills in the community. Offer Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training to PTA members.

How can communities and emergency management support each other?

- Provide adequate information to organizations ahead of time so they can better prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from threats and hazards. In return, organizations will provide you with information on their status and ability to assist when you need them. For this reason, ongoing multi-directional information sharing is one of the most important aspects of maintaining your partnerships. Have regular meetings with formal and informal community leaders and partners to maintain momentum.
- Provide support to for-profit private sector organizations in the development of business continuity plans. Keeping businesses up and running after an event helps to stabilize a community's economy and promotes resiliency.

When reflecting on the previous questions and ideas, it is important to remember that one size does not fit all. The definition of success will vary by community. Just as certain Whole Community efforts are appropriate for some communities and not for others, every jurisdiction has a different idea of what success means to them. Periodically assessing progress facilitates an ongoing dialogue and helps determine if the needs of the community are being met. Whole Community implementation requires flexibility and refinement through routine evaluation as lessons are learned. Communities should define metrics that are meaningful to them to track progress in the actions they choose to take toward meeting the communities' needs.

Regardless of what stage you are at in practicing Whole Community principles, think about how you can start or continue incorporating Whole Community principles and themes into what you do today. Test out your ideas and discuss them with your colleagues to learn and continue the national dialogue.

Conclusion

FEMA began its national dialogue with a proposition: A community-centric approach for emergency management that focuses on strengthening and leveraging what works well in communities on a daily basis offers a more effective path to building societal security and resilience. By focusing on core elements of successful, connected, and committed communities, emergency management can collectively achieve better outcomes in times of crisis, while enhancing the resilience of our communities and the Nation. The three core principles of Whole Community—understanding and meeting the actual needs of the whole community, engaging and empowering all parts of the community, and strengthening what works well in communities on a daily basis—provide a foundation for pursuing a Whole Community approach to emergency management through which security and resiliency can be attained.

Truly enhancing our Nation’s resilience to all threats and hazards will require the emergency management community to transform the way the emergency management team thinks about, plans for, and responds to incidents in such a way to support community resilience. It takes all aspects of a community to effectively prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from threats and hazards. It is critical that individuals take responsibility for their own self-preparedness efforts and that the community members work together to develop the collective capacity needed to enhance their community’s security and resilience.

Building community resilience in this manner requires emergency management practitioners to effectively engage with and holistically plan for the needs of the whole community. This includes but is not limited to accommodating people who speak languages other than English, those from diverse cultures or economic backgrounds, people of all ages (i.e., from children and youth to seniors), people with disabilities and other access and functional needs, and populations traditionally underrepresented in civic governance. At the same time, it is important to realign emergency management practices to support local needs and work to strengthen the institutions, assets, and networks that work well in communities on a daily basis.

To that end, FEMA will continue its national dialogue to exchange ideas, recommendations, and success stories. FEMA also intends to develop additional materials for emergency managers that will support the adoption of the Whole Community concept at the local level. As part of this ongoing dialogue, reactions and feedback to the Whole Community concept presented in this document can be sent to FEMA-Community-Engagement@fema.gov.

This document is just a start. It will take time to transform the way the Nation thinks about, prepares for, and responds to disasters. FEMA recognizes that the challenges faced by the communities it serves are constantly evolving; as an Agency, it will always need to adapt, often at a moment’s notice. This shift in the Nation’s approach to addressing the needs of survivors is vital in keeping people and communities safe and in preventing the loss of life and property from all threats and hazards. The Whole Community themes described in this document provide a starting point to help emergency managers, as members of their communities, address the challenge. However, it will require the commitment of members of the entire community—from government agencies to local residents—to continue learning together.

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