

## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITIES IN CALIFORNIA AFTER THE 1989 LOMA PRIETA EARTHQUAKE

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### ABSTRACT

The American Red Cross received donations from all over the United States for the victims of the October 17, 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. After assisting earthquake victims with their immediate needs, the American Red Cross set up the Northern California Earthquake Relief and Preparedness Project to administer a special fund of these donor-designated contributions for further earthquake preparedness measures and to strengthen response capabilities of American Red Cross chapters in northern California.

After the initial distribution of relief assistance, the American Red Cross and the United Way of the San Francisco Bay Area then jointly established the Northern California Disaster Preparedness Network to use some of the remaining American Red Cross funds to implement a five-year plan called the Greater Bay Area Vision for Disaster Preparedness which had been developed by the United Way.

Three committees were established to award disaster preparedness grants to community-based organizations in northern California counties. These were the San Francisco Bay Area, Santa Clara County, and the Tri-County (Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz counties) Community Disaster Preparedness Committees.

There were 47 grants awarded during the first three years of this five year program. Some typical grants were: translate community response team training materials into Cantonese, Tagalog, and Spanish; outfit earthquake and fire safety training trailer scaled to the size of a six-year old child for teaching school children earthquake preparedness; develop culturally relevant materials and dissemination methods to train low income Spanish-speaking

families in disaster preparedness; and adapt training in disaster preparedness and first aid for the visually impaired and distribute materials in cassette, large print, and Braille.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The American Red Cross received 74 million dollars in designated donations to help earthquake victims in northern California after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. As it turned out, these funds were more than enough for the immediate disaster relief efforts. Therefore, it was determined that any money left over should remain in northern California and be used for earthquake preparedness activities.

## **NORTHERN CALIFORNIA EARTHQUAKE PREPAREDNESS PROJECT**

Initially, two million dollars were used to establish a two-year American Red Cross unit called Northern California Earthquake Preparedness Project to build greater American Red Cross earthquake response capacity throughout the region. This was the first fully funded risk area-specific Red Cross unit created to evaluate current levels of preparedness and to invest in planning, preparedness and education. This two year project prepared risk analyses of natural disasters, developed a disaster response plan for American Red Cross units in northern California, and assembled an extensive resource directory of American Red Cross human and material disaster response resources.

## **NORTHERN CALIFORNIA DISASTER PREPAREDNESS NETWORK**

However, it became evident that the American Red Cross alone cannot provide all the services a community would need after a large disaster. It was then decided that the Red Cross should take the lead in organizing the coordination and cooperation of other community-based organizations and businesses to assist local governments in coping with preparedness activities for a big disaster, perhaps of the magnitude of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. The United Way of the San Francisco Bay Area had independently studied these large scale disaster response problems. United Way had held a series of town meetings with 600 participants and engaged a consulting firm to develop a vision of community education for disaster preparedness. From thousands of comments and multiple needs identified by the participants, six themes were distilled:

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- ¥ Prevention and self sufficiency
- ¥ Coordinated response
- ¥ Assessing needs
- ¥ Raising and deploying resources
- ¥ Learning from experience
- ¥ Sustaining and improving preparedness

The American Red Cross and the United Way therefore jointly decided in 1992 that the American Red Cross would provide funding of five million dollars for a new five-year project called the Northern California Disaster Preparedness Network to implement this vision of community education.

### **COMMUNITY DISASTER PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEES**

The Northern California Disaster Preparedness Network established Community Disaster Preparedness Committees in San Francisco, Santa Clara County, and the tri-county area of San Benito, Santa Cruz and Monterey counties. The mission of these committees was basically to review applications for grants from local organizations and to recommend distribution of funds (approximately a million dollars each year). Examples of the types of projects which have been supported are shown in the Appendix.

### **SANTA CLARA COUNTY DISASTER PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE**

Each committee began its work by preparing a risk analysis study of its area to determine if there were unique problems or considerations which should be taken into account for preparedness for a large scale earthquake. For example, the Santa Clara County Committee is responsible for a total population of 1,455,828. The county includes the cities of San Jose (population 782,248), Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, Palo Alto, Milpitas, and Mountain View. Twenty-one percent of the total county population is Mexican with 2.4 percent speaking only Spanish. In three areas, over 40 percent of the population is of Mexican ancestry: East Foothills (41.8 percent), Gilroy (self-proclaimed "Garlic Capitol of the World" 47.3 percent), and San Martin (55.6 percent). Other populations at risk are Asian and Pacific Islander residents, especially for 3.7 percent of the population who speak only their native language.

Based on its analysis, the Committee identified three local special programs for future assistance:

**Multicultural programs:** target isolated populations who have not received earthquake preparedness education, and provide instruction in first aid and earthquake preparedness in appropriate languages.

**Communications:** provide communications in multiple languages, and encourage communications planning among local governments, schools, businesses, and non-profit organizations for the diverse populations.

**Collaboration/Resources:** Develop a service plan for coordinating resource delivery to the various diverse populations of the community.

The initial projects of the Santa Clara Committee listed in the Appendix illustrate the emphasis placed on these three themes.

### **TRI-COUNTY DISASTER PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE**

The Tri-County Committee found a dozen gaps in disaster preparedness in Monterey, San Benito and Santa Cruz counties:

- ¥ Lack of adequate planning for sufficient emergency shelters.
- ¥ Lack of disaster personnel to run shelters and provide assistance (numbers, training, and multi-lingual/multi-cultural skills).
- ¥ Lack of planning for temporary homes (foundations and utilities for FEMA-supplied mobile homes).
- ¥ No coordination of organizations (Red Cross, Salvation Army, National Guard, schools, and churches).
- ¥ No training, no exercising and no participation in the State of California's annual earthquake exercise.
- ¥ Offers of assistance from amateur radio operators to provide emergency communications had sometimes been rejected.
- ¥ Lack of neighborhood self-help response groups.
- ¥ Gaps in planning for disabled and elderly populations.
- ¥ No planning for utilization of convergent volunteers.
- ¥ No planning for pet shelters with food and veterinarians (Red Cross will not allow earthquake victims to bring their pets with them into shelters).

- ¥ No planning for donations (requirements, receipt, inspection, sorting, cleaning, repair, storage, transport, and distribution).
- ¥ Lack of mutual aid agreements for cooperation and coordination.

The criteria for prioritization of projects to address these gaps in disaster preparedness given to the organizations who were preparing applications for grants included three aspects: cost effectiveness, transferability, and coordination of organizations. For cost effectiveness, projects were reviewed to determine if they provided maximum impact with minimum funding, and if they used human and material resources in a cost-effective manner. For transferability, projects were reviewed to see if they had a broad impact and could be transferred for use by other groups inside and outside the Tri-County area. For the coordination issue, projects were reviewed to see if they had appropriate operational interfaces with local government and other groups, if they benefited populations at special risks, and if they provided knowledge of preparedness back to the community.

### **DISASTER PREPAREDNESS SYMPOSIUM**

On October 17, 1994, the fifth anniversary of the Loma Prieta earthquake the Northern California Disaster Preparedness Network presented a disaster symposium and recognition event- Beyond Loma Prieta: Pioneering Preparedness - at Millbrae, California. An exhibit of disaster preparedness materials and services developed by the 133 organizations supported by the Network had been prepared for the participants. The symposium's program included a keynote address "The Lessons of Loma Prieta" by Sylvia Panetta and a variety of workshops:

- Preparing for special needs of elderly, disabled, and lower income populations.
- FEMA, Red Cross, California Emergency Services: Heeding the lessons of Loma Prieta.
- Coordinating Community-based disaster services.
- Coordinating disaster health & mental health services.
- Strategies for serving non-English speaking individuals and immigrants.
- Business pioneers disaster preparedness.
- Preparing for special urban needs.
- Resources for preparedness (grants information workshop).
- Our preparedness report card: Priorities, gaps, recommendations.

Moving on toward our vision for disaster preparedness.

## CONCLUSION

The American Red Cross and United Way established a five-year program in 1992 to implement a vision of community outreach and education for disaster preparedness in northern California. The basic approach was a grass-roots effort to get local people and local organizations to examine problems which had been encountered in the Loma Prieta earthquake. After gaps in disaster preparedness had been identified, local organizations were encouraged to submit applications for grants to address these problems. This paper is a progress report on the grants awarded by the three committees.

**APPENDIX:  
Initial Grants Awarded By Community Disaster  
Preparedness Committees**

American Red Cross (Bay Area):

Survey community based organizations and develop a plan for comprehensive community preparedness. Develop partnerships.

University of San Francisco:

Conduct two seminars to promote collaboration among community based organizations and local governments, Design an emergency management curriculum.

The Volunteerism Project:

Prepare Volunteer Centers to survive an earthquake, and collaboratively manage emergent volunteers in a five county area.

St. Vincent de Paul Society:

Organize social service auxiliary of San Francisco Archdiocese (San Francisco, San Mateo, and Marin counties) for disaster relief.

City of Oakland:

Translate community response team training materials into Cantonese, Tagalog, and Spanish.

City of Pleasanton:

Prepare for disaster-caused needs of special education students, especially transportation.

Berkeley-Oakland Support Services:

Organize county wide coalition of community-based organizations to prepare for disaster response and relief, and integrate into the Standardized Emergency Response System plan.

Santa Cruz Westside Community Health Center:

Purchase equipment and supplies needed to qualify as a designated disaster response clinic during a declared disaster.

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### Oakland Fire Department:

Provide search and rescue training for teams of public and private sector people selected for their level of special skills and commitment to respond regionally and nationally.

### Marin County Volunteer Center:

purchase emergency power and communications equipment as part of a county wide plan to manage volunteer resources in disasters.

### Marin Fire Prevention Officers:

Outfit fire and life safety training trailer for use at schools and fairs, staffed by trained volunteers.

### Nicasio Disaster Council:

Train, equip, and provide coordination for neighborhood emergency response teams. Provide model of training and outreach to Marin County.

### Fire Safe Marin:

Augment county wide fire safety awareness and outreach program as a coalition of public, private, and community agencies.

### San Francisco Chinese Health Coalition:

Educate and recruit volunteers for preparedness activities. Conduct disaster response drill.

### San Francisco Fire Department:

Train Chinese and Spanish-speaking neighborhood emergency response teams, using culturally relevant adaptations of the Neighborhood Emergency Response Team training program.

### San Francisco Food Bank:

Plan to provide post-disaster food distribution to low income areas through predesignated and prepared sites.

### San Francisco Chinese Health Coalition/The Salvation Army:

Adapt and deliver personal and neighborhood preparedness programs to homebound populations in Chinatown.

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Santa Clara County Community Agency Disaster Relief Effort:

Develop and maintain the capacity of the county's nonprofit agencies to respond to disaster resource and service needs in conjunction with government, business, and other response agencies.

Alviso Family Health Foundation:

Develop culturally relevant materials and dissemination methods to train low-income Spanish-speaking families in disaster preparedness and first aid. Increase collaboration between the Mexican community and the American Red Cross.

Alum Rock Union Elementary School District:

Provide students and parents with disaster preparedness and First Aid skills in English and Spanish.

Santa Clara County Emergency Managers Association:

Translate earthquake education materials into Asian languages, and develop multi-lingual educational tools for media dissemination.

Peninsula Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired:

Adapt training in disaster preparedness and first aid for visually impaired people. Distribute materials in cassette, large print, and Braille.

San Benito Health Foundation:

Conduct preparedness outreach and education for low-income rural isolated populations.

Monterey County Area Agency on Aging:

Create an emergency "Just-in-Case" three day food package for Meals on Wheels recipients for disaster periods such as earthquakes when transportation of daily meals may be impossible.

San Benito County Salud Para la Gente:

Train community-based clinics in effective strategies for immediate disaster response and develop plans to maintain primary health care services during disasters.

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American Red Cross (Santa Cruz County Chapter):

Adapt the In-kind Donations System developed by the American Red Cross to the needs of Tri-County organizations. Develop a community-based coalition to solicit in-kind donations and manage their flow during disaster response operations.

Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties:

Complete Food Bank disaster response plan for maintaining operations and service in the event of community-wide disasters.

Santa Cruz Westside Community Health Center:

Purchase equipment and supplies needed for disaster response during a declared disaster.

Pacific Grove Fire Department:

Purchase and equip an earthquake preparedness and fire safety trailer (two story house built to the scale of the size of a six-year old child) for use at schools throughout Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties.

San Benito County Community Pantry:

Complete, implement, and test the Community Pantry disaster plan to assure distribution of food during a disaster. Develop outreach and training materials in Spanish.

Davenport Fire Department:

Purchase an emergency power generator and develop an evacuation center for this isolated coastal region.

City of Watsonville:

Create training materials and distribute the Watsonville community disaster plan to Spanish-speaking rural areas of Hollister, San Juan Batista, Salinas, Gonzales, Soledad and King City in Monterey and San Benito counties.

San Lorenzo Valley Disaster Planning Committee:

Prepare an outreach disaster calendar using art prepared by school children to increase community awareness of disaster preparedness for 28 organizations in this isolated valley near the epicenter of the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake