

## EMERGENCY MANAGERS MUTUAL AID IN CALIFORNIA

*Russell C. Coile, Ph.D., CEM  
Pacific Grove Fire Department  
Pacific Grove, California*

### INTRODUCTION

The Fire Departments and Police Departments of many cities in California have agreements for mutual aid in case of events which might overwhelm the local capabilities to cope with the event. Public Works departments are also taking action to sign similar mutual aid agreements. Prior to the Northridge earthquake in January, 1994, there was no statewide system for formal mutual aid for emergency managers. The State of California now has a mutual aid system for emergency managers.

The Governor of California has an Office of Emergency Services. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services in Sacramento has three regional offices - Southern, Coastal and Inland. The emergency managers of the Coastal Region were attending a quarterly meeting in San Francisco on Friday, January 21, when Richard Eisner, Coastal Region Administrator received a telephone call from Dr. Richard Andrews, Director of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services. Dr. Andrews was the State Coordinating Officer and was at the OES/FEMA Disaster Field Office in Pasadena with the Federal Coordinating Officer and James Lee Witt, FEMA Director. Dr. Andrews asked if Rich Eisner could send some Coastal Region emergency managers to Los Angeles as soon as possible to help provide mutual aid to Southern Region managers.

Henry Renteria, City of Oakland's emergency manager, and Raelene Wong, Sunnyvale's emergency manager were asked to go to Los Angeles and establish an Emergency Managers Mutual Aid (EMMA) office. Henry, Raelene and some of the others of the advance party went to Pasadena the next day, Saturday, January 22 and set up a temporary staging office in a suite at the Pasadena Hilton Hotel, across the street from the Disaster Field Office.

I drove the 350 miles from Pacific Grove to Los Angeles on Saturday, arriving in the evening. I and the others of the initial group of nine reported in to the EMMA staging office in the Pasadena Hilton on Sunday morning. We received our initial orientation briefing and our State OES photo identification badges, and then were issued a cellular telephone, pager, charger, spare battery, etc. That afternoon, EMMA was assigned office space on the fourth floor of the Disaster Field Office and we closed down the staging office and moved from the hotel to the DFO. Dr. Andrews came around to our new office about 7 p.m. to welcome us.

## REGIONAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

On Monday morning, most of us received assignments to go out in the field. I paid my bill and checked out of the Pasadena Hilton Hotel and drove about 40 miles south to Los Alamitos, the location of the Southern Region's Emergency Operations Center. When I reported in I was assigned to the Planning Section, and more specifically to the Situation Unit. The Planning Section's Situation Unit had experienced difficulties in getting accurate and timely information as to what was happening during the first five days after the earthquake. Consequently, the incident commander had decided to use some of the unique capabilities of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) there at the Regional Emergency Operations Center REOC) to get up to date information.

The 200 or so CDF personnel there were already providing all of the logistic support for the expanded REOC. They had established a Fire Camp, with kitchen trailers, tents, refueling sites, staging areas, the whole works. The CDF had taken over a Ramada motel about a mile away for sleeping accommodations. The CDF has a number of "observers". These are firefighters trained for intelligence collection who are sent out in a wildland fire, for example, to collect timely information on the accurate locations of the fire, the local weather, the local terrain, condition of the roads or trails, if any, and all the other pertinent facts so that the Planning Section can generate the best feasible plan for all operations during the next period.

It was decided to establish 13 two-person observer teams to visit the 13 different areas in the Los Angeles with severe earthquake damage to gather information each day to help the Planning Section prepare its plan that night for the following day's operations. I was assigned to a different observer team each day for the next four days. I sent a report of my activities each day to the Emergency Manager Mutual Aid office at the Disaster Field Office each day. Extracts from my log for a typical day, 28 January (11 days after the quake) are as follows:

- 0700 Attended daily morning briefing at Regional Emergency Operations Center, Los Alamitos, Assigned to CDF Observer team #1. Faxed Coile memo "Errors in January 24, 1994 Summary Report of DAC Managers' Report" to EMMA office at DFO, Pasadena.
- 0815 Departed Los Alamitos
- 0945 Arrived Disaster Application Center #1, Northridge (50 miles). Met DAC manager and obtained a copy of DAC #1 Manager's Report.
- 1205 Visited Salvation Army Tent Shelter, Lanark Park and Mobile DAC #4.
- 1315 Visited Red Cross Service Center, Epiphany Luthern Church,

Canoga Park.

- 1340 Visited Salvation Army Tent Shelter, Canoga Park.
- 1600 Observer team noticed damaged trailers while driving by trailer park. Stopped to investigate. President of Homeowners Association reported that they had conducted their own preliminary damage assessment and found that 136 of 190 trailers had been knocked off foundation supports. They had turned the gas off so that there were no fires. (Two other nearby trailer parks had numerous fires.) Homeowners had pooled food, organized communal cooking, and had bought water. They expressed a need for six porta-potties for some elderly folks who had trouble walking to their neighbors' trailers.
- 1830 Arrived back at Regional EOC in time for debriefing of observer teams (1800-1900).
- 1900 Attended night briefing at REOC.

I felt that my assignment had been an educational one for me. I was glad that I was able to provide a small amount of assistance with the collection of statistical data.

## **EMERGENCY MANAGERS MUTUAL AID**

The manager of the first Emergency Managers Mutual Aid group, Henry Renteria, prepared this mission statement and objectives for us:

### Mission Statement

To provide professional Emergency Management services at the request of State Office of Emergency Services in the form of Mutual Aid to the impacted area and support Disaster Operations and Recovery.

### Objectives

- Provide Emergency Managers to work in Disaster Application Center management positions
- Provide Emergency Managers to support Disaster Field Office operations
- Provide Emergency Managers to support local Emergency Operations Center operations
- Coordinate reception, assignment, and training of assigned personnel
- Manage Emergency Managers Mutual Aid
- Develop Emergency Managers Mutual Aid Procedures

A total of 107 emergency managers were eventually assigned to assist the OES Southern Region's managers, usually on 7 day assignments. The mutual aid managers were given a variety of assignments, and the overall evaluation was that these assignments had been worthwhile and cost-effective. The Regional EOC has several other ways to augment its core staff during disasters, including bringing back reservists and arranging for temporary hires.

Steps have already been taken by the Governor's Office of Emergency Services to formalize this mutual aid system for emergency management (See Appendix). The details of mutual aid are spelled out, such as the provision that each individual's salary and benefits continued to be paid by his or her local government while disaster assignment expenses such as travel, per diem, and overtime beyond 40 hours per week will be reimbursed by the emergency activity to which the person is temporarily assigned.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Assistance Agreement for all Federal Fiscal Year 1994 Emergency Management Assistance Program Applicants**

(Letter dated March 9, 1994, State of California,  
Office of Emergency Services, 2800 Meadowview Road,  
Sacramento, California 95832)

#### **Article VIII Emergency Use of Resources**

- A. In accordance with the objectives of this Agreement, and in order to enhance state and local emergency management, including emergency response capability, any personnel, supplies, equipment, and facilities funded in whole or in part within this Agreement may be employed in emergency operations in connection with natural or technological disasters, without change in funding among programs, subject the following conditions:
1. Such use shall not detract from, nor be allowed to prevent, accomplishment of the objectives set forth in the statement of work for the program activity under which these resources are funded.
  2. The primary use of any resources funded under this Agreement shall be to accomplish the objectives of the program activity under which it is funded.
  3. The temporary reassignment of personnel otherwise authorized by this Agreement must be justifiable because of an urgent need for staff or due to the occurrence of a natural disaster as defined in

Section 3 (Definitions) of the Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950, as amended.

4. Expenses above the ordinary salary or normal program expense to support the resource (e.g. travel, per diem, etc.) must be paid by the emergency activity to which the resource is temporarily assigned.
  5. No individual shall be hired or other resource acquired under this Agreement for the sole or principal purpose of use in this emergency or disaster.
  6. Personnel supported under the Act in whole or in part through contributions may be assigned to emergency response operations for up to 30 consecutive days at the discretion of state officials, with extensions to longer periods upon request.
    - a. The FEMA Regional Director may grant an extension up to 90 consecutive days.
    - b. The FEMA Associate Director for State and Local Programs and Support may grant an extension of longer than 90 days (to the end of the fiscal year).
    - c. Disaster response work during such an extension period should be documented by amendment to the CCA as contributing to the comprehensive emergency management state of preparedness.
    - d. For programs whose personnel are supported in whole under the Act, when work or objectives are altered due to such extension, the FEMA and State Signatory officials may decrease the scope of work by amendment to the CCA.
  7. An accounting audit trail must be maintained for any such use of resources.
  8. In the event the recipient fails to comply with paragraphs 1 through 7, the FEMA Regional Director shall have the right to require that use of those resources be compensated by non-FEMA sources or to disallow such use of funds.
- B. Personnel funded through the Comprehensive Cooperative Agreement (CCA) may be used as part of interstate support in disaster operations.
1. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) endorses the concept that state and local emergency management personnel funded through programs included in the State's Comprehensive Cooperative Agreement (CCA) may work in disaster operations for up to 30 consecutive days in another state where a Presidential Disaster Declaration has been issued.
  2. This support may be initiated when the affected state requests disaster operations help and the donor state offers support in accordance with pre-arranged agreements. Work assignments for

donor state personnel should contribute to their home state's expertise to contend with a large-scale disaster of its own.

3. Salaries and benefits paid in whole or in part will continue to be paid through the CCA, with per diem, overtime, transportation, and other extraordinary expenses to be paid through the recipient state's administrative allowance for the Public Assistance and/or Individual and Family Grant programs.

**Russell C. Coile, Ph.D., CEM**  
Pacific Grove Fire Department  
970 Egan Avenue  
Pacific Grove, California 93950-2406  
(408)649-8946

Mr Coile has been the Disaster Coordinator for Pacific Grove Fire Department, Pacific Grove, California since 1990. Earlier he was involved with research experience on earthquakes, training exercises, chemical and nuclear preparedness, design of emergency operations centers, and radio propagation in the ionosphere. He is a Colonel, USAF (Ret.); Registered Professional Engineer: District of Columbia and Pennsylvania. Education: S.B., S.M., E.E., Ph.D.