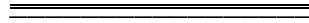
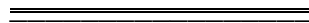


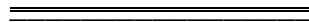
**The Bill Blackwood  
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**



**Emergency Preparedness: Prepared for Disaster**



**A Leadership White Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Required for Graduation from the  
Leadership Command College**



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## **ABSTRACT**

Due to the recent disasters, such as hurricanes and other events over the last several years, it has become imperative that law enforcement agencies be prepared to handle any disasters that may occur in their jurisdictions. If a law enforcement agency is not prepared to deal with these events, it can be detrimental to the agency and the community as a whole. It is the researcher's belief that most agencies are ready to handle disasters, but it is unknown what they do to prepare. The researcher reviewed articles, Internet sites, journals, and periodicals to determine how law enforcement agencies and their communities can better prepare themselves to respond to emergencies or disasters which occur. The researcher discovered that by doing three basic steps, law enforcement agencies can greatly improve their response to a disaster. The three steps are the following: preparing a plan of action, training their personnel on the plan, and conduct training exercises to test their plan.

The method of inquiry used by the researcher was a survey of law enforcement personnel attending Module I of the Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT) in September 2005. The survey asked if the law enforcement agencies believed their agencies were prepared and what steps their agency had taken to prepare for disasters. The research showed that most agencies do take the necessary steps to prepare themselves to respond to a disaster, but there are few who have not taken the necessary precautions to be ready. It is recommended that all law enforcement agencies in Texas make disaster readiness a priority and evaluate their response procedures to ensure they are prepared for disaster.

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## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of this nation, communities have had to respond to broad range of disasters or emergencies. For the most part, communities did not have any formal plans of action but only the citizens joining together to handle the situation to the best of their capabilities. Today, there are numerous things that can constitute an emergency for a community. Healy (1969) described an emergency as, “a situation characterized by one of the following conditions: shortage of time, personnel, material resources, and is significant if it represents a hazard to life or material, or it contributes to human suffering” (p. 2). Within the last several years, the concepts of emergency planning and preparedness have come to the forefront due to natural disasters like Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and especially the terrorist attacks of the World Trade Center. Waugh and Tierny (2007) stated, “The biggest lesson of the 2005 hurricanes was the nation’s management system is broken, and officials need to rebuild local, state, and regional capacities to reduce hazards and respond to disasters” (p. 4).

There are those, as with any event, who believe that more could have been done to prepare for such emergencies and that the events would not have been as devastating to those affected had the government on all levels acted more promptly. Not every community is as prepared as others, and this is usually due to monetary constraints, manpower shortage, or a lack of vision on the part of its leaders. Most communities have a plan of action and conduct training for emergencies but rarely implement their plans in a real life emergency. Communities should be able to deal with an emergency when it first occurs since most communities have the resources available to respond to the basic needs required for the emergency. If the emergency exhausts the capabilities of the community, then additional aid or help should be summoned.

Since the time of becoming a state, Texas communities have had to respond to disasters or emergencies whether they were prepared for them or not. Even in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Texas was still experiencing many disasters including those that were natural and industrial accidents. Texas has had 84 declared major disasters, which leads the nation (FEMA, 2011). This total includes a wide variety of disasters ranging from natural disasters, including hurricanes, flooding, and tornadoes to industrial accidents. Emergency preparedness has come to the forefront the last few years especially due to several previously noted disasters. There were instances of poor planning and response by local, state, and the federal government in dealing with these disasters or emergencies, and the loss of life and liability that ensued has made it imperative that local communities take the appropriate measures to ensure they are prepared. Each Texas community faced with a disaster or emergency must be able to handle any emergency that arises until other help arrives, be it local, state or federal assistance. The purpose of this research is to provide information and awareness to those responsible for emergency preparedness and response in Texas communities and evaluate the first responders of their jurisdiction to determine if the responders are indeed ready for a disaster. Texas communities can better prepare themselves by ensuring that an emergency plan is in place, personnel are trained, and the implementation of the plan by the assigned personnel in dealing with an emergency is practiced. By becoming aware of any noted deficiencies, hopefully Texas communities can begin working on correcting problems before a disaster strikes.

It is believed that the research will bear out that Texas communities are prepared for disaster. It is also hypothesized that most law enforcement agencies have somewhat prepared for disasters by planning and conducting simulated exercises while

others have done nothing to prepare. Due to the recent events the latter is not acceptable. It is the duty of the law enforcement agency to be prepared in the event of an emergency as the citizens of the community will hold the agency accountable. In conclusion, law enforcement agencies must remember that it is not if a disaster is going to occur but when a disaster is going to occur, and the agency must be ready to respond.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Law enforcement agencies have been asking for the last several years how to respond to disasters or emergencies. The answer is by being prepared. Mileti (1999) stated, "Preparedness involves building an emergency response and manages capability before a disaster occurs to facilitate an effective response when needed" (p. 22). Many agree that the most critical way that a law enforcement agency can be prepared for disaster is to start planning how the agency is going to respond. According to Perry and Lindell (2006), "Emergency Planning is the central path to Community preparedness. It is a process achieved through consultation, equipping, training, exercises, and critiques" (p. 34).

One should consider the issues that need to be addressed when a community wants to develop a plan of action for a disaster preparation. Planning is an essential part for preparing for a disaster. Certain steps need to be taken in the planning process to ensure that the law enforcement agency responds to a disaster appropriately. Gordon (2002) listed six points for emergency planning, which are "identify the issue, evaluate the issue, develop a plan, analyze the plan, implement the plan, maintain the plan" (p. 8).

A community must identify what possible hazards that are going to occur to effectively deal with emergencies or disasters. This is commonly referred to as mitigation. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA, 2011) described mitigation as “any cost-effective measure that will reduce the potential for damage to a facility from a disaster event” (para. 10). This could be anything from building structures to withstand hurricanes to noting possible potential terrorist targets in the community. It would also be beneficial to categorize the hazards and rank them by which ones are more likely to be affected to those least likely to be affected. A community should look at the different hazards which may affect the community. The community must evaluate and determine which hazards are similar and which are unique. Those hazards which are similar should use the same basic plan of action while those that are unique should have a specific plan tailored toward that hazard. This will help the first responders when dealing with the hazard (Waugh & Tierney, 2007).

After identifying and evaluating the hazards, a law enforcement agency will need to develop a plan of contingency to follow should a hazard/disaster occur. According to Schneid and Collins (2001), “The goal of the plan is for every employee to be able to determine what to do and where to go in an emergency” (p. 59). The plan should entail how an agency will respond to an emergency and with what resources should be deployed. It would be a good idea to include other governmental entities and non-profit organizations in the plan and signing inter-local agreements or mutual aid agreements with them so their duties and responsibilities are known before an emergency arises. Canton (2007) stated, “Mutual aid resources are made available from other jurisdictions under pre-existing agreements. These agreements resolve issues that can hinder response such as insurance coverage, payment for services, etc.” (p. 110-111). The

plans should be well thought out and encompass all agencies of the community. The role of each agencies response and responsibilities should be noted. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security advised in the National Response Framework in January 2008 that “These plans should have clearly defined leadership roles and responsibilities, and they should clearly articulate the decisions that need to be made, who will make them, and when” (p. 28).

It would also be very beneficial to determine what agency has the lead and have a chain of command involving numerous persons from the main agencies or departments’ involved outlined. Brief descriptions of what each city department’s involvement in dealing with the disaster or emergency would greatly enhance the effectiveness of the community’s response. This would stop unnecessary in-fighting over job responsibilities and hold each department accountable. An agency should then step back and take a good look at the plan, making sure it covers all responses to all potential hazards or disasters that may occur in the jurisdiction. By developing a plan of action, a law enforcement agency is better prepared to respond to an emergency and show that it is proactive and looking out for the citizens of the community.

The law enforcement agency should then implement the plan short of an actual disaster or emergency. There are several ways this can be done. The first is to have each supervisor be informed about the plan and then review the plan with their respective employees. The supervisors need to ensure that each employee knows about the plan and the employees’ responsibilities should the plan be implemented. Another way is to have tabletop or roundtable exercises. This would be personnel that would be involved in the implementation of the plan in an actual emergency meeting together and working out a simulated emergency or scenario. This helps those involved



to better understand those that they would be working with in an actual emergency and can be beneficial as new approaches and ideas may arise. Erickson (2006) believes if an agency wants to respond appropriately, the agency must train on the plan at all levels of the agency, including the ranking members. Mock exercises or drills are probably the best way to determine if a community or agency is prepared for an emergency without having a real emergency. This would be a very life-like simulation of an emergency that an agency or community would probably face. The exercises can be as simple or complex as needed to determine the effectiveness of the law enforcement agency or community. It would be wise to bring in other agencies and other organizations that normally respond to disasters to participate in the mock exercise. This will give a good overall view of how prepared an agency is in dealing with a disaster. Alexander (2002) stated, "Timing, coordination, communication, roles, and procedures can all be taught. More ever poor performance on the part of the trainees can be evaluated and measures taken to rectify it in the exercise" (p. 289).

An agency will need to realistically review what issues arise from the exercises that they chose to use and to place the corrective measures into their plan, so the mistakes will not be repeated again. One way to gather helpful information is to get feedback from those individuals who were participating in the exercises. These individuals will usually be the ones who are directly involved in the hands on part of the plan and will have a better grasp of what problems occurred and how to better handle the response in the future and what resources will be needed. Feedback given by the participants should not be overlooked, no matter how minor or trivial, as it could save time, effort, or lives in the event of a real emergency.

The reviewed literature had very similar conclusions. Emergencies or disasters are going to occur. If a community or law enforcement agency wants to respond to emergencies appropriately and in a timely manner, they must be prepared. Hadow and Bullock (2006) stated, "Preparedness consists of three basic elements: preparing a plan, training to the plan, and exercising the plan. Preparedness planning at the community level is critical to reducing the effects of disaster events" (p.179). If a community or law enforcement agency wants to be realistically prepared for disaster, the community or agency must develop an emergency plan, identify the potential hazards, and conduct exercises to evaluate their agencies response.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this paper is to determine if the law enforcement agencies and communities of the state of Texas are prepared for disasters. The information obtained from the survey instruments will be analyzed by the author to determine if the law enforcement agencies in Texas are prepared for disaster. The author seeks to answer whether or not law enforcement agencies of various sizes in the state of Texas can identify what types of disasters or emergencies they could possibly face, whether their law enforcement agency is prepared for a disaster or emergency, whether the agency has a plan of action dealing with a disaster or emergency, and whether the agency trains personnel in the implementation of the plan of action.

It is anticipated that the research will show that most law enforcement agencies plan and inform their personnel on the agencies plan of action, but the agencies have not implemented the plans or trained in a real life situation. It is also anticipated that, for the most part, they will be prepared to handle a disaster if one occurs. The law enforcement agencies will benefit from this information by reviewing the current plans,

training, and implementation process in place and determine if these items need to be reviewed or corrected to better serve the citizens of their respective communities and give their personnel who respond the confidence needed to perform. The citizens of the community will benefit, as it will give them a sense of personal safety and, hopefully, more faith in their civic leaders and law enforcement in dealing with disasters which occur.

The primary method of inquiry for this research will be surveys of a sample of 23 law enforcement officers from various communities in Texas and one officer from Alaska who attended Module I class of the Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT) in September 2005. The data collected from these surveys will be used to determine what percentages of departments are prepared for disasters. A total of 24 questionnaire surveys were handed out with a total of 21 surveys being completed for a return rate of 87.5%. A search will also be conducted to review information advising what agencies can do to plan and prepare for emergencies or disasters, which will include books, articles, academic papers, and internet resources.

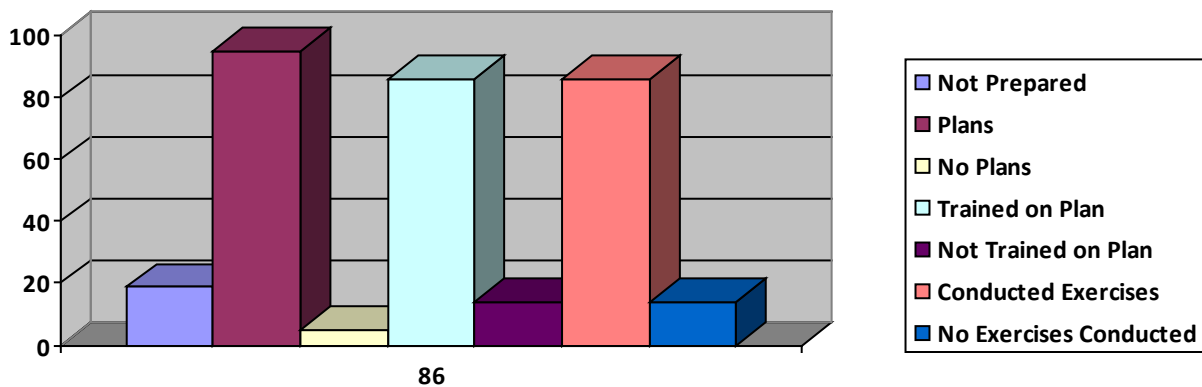
## **FINDINGS**

A total of 24 questionnaire surveys were handed out, with a total of 21 surveys being completed for a return rate of 87.5%. The survey instruments that were returned were analyzed to determine the preparedness of the law enforcement agencies of the officers that were surveyed. A large portion of the officers, 48%, who responded to the survey were from agencies that had less than 50 officers; 28% of those who responded were from agencies between 50 and 100 officers, while the final 24% were from agencies greater than 100 officers.

Most of the officers who responded to the surveys worked for either local or

county law enforcement agencies, while none were from state agencies. The survey asked the respondents to list what emergencies their agency was likely to encounter. Ninety percent advised that they believed their agency would encounter a natural disaster (flood, hurricane, tornado, and fire), while 24% advised they believed they would encounter an industrial accident. Only 33% percent of those surveyed believed that their agencies would likely have a terrorist attack in their community. Most of those who responded, 81%, felt their agencies were prepared to respond to disasters whether natural/man-made, while 19% indicated they did not believe their agency was prepared. Almost all of the agencies, 95%, surveyed advised their agencies had plans in place to handle disasters, while 5% of those surveyed did not.

Eighty-six percent of those surveyed advised they had been trained on their agency's plan to respond to disasters, while the rest advised they had not. Eighty-six percent responded that they knew how to respond to a disaster according to the plans implemented by their agency and advised that their agencies had implemented the plan in numerous ways, either by tabletop exercises or mock/simulated drills or actual emergencies. These figures are shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Emergency Planning Survey Results.

## **DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS**

Disasters and emergencies occur in communities in the state of Texas every year and will continue to do so. Due to recent unfavorable responses by various entities of government to major disasters across the United States, the issue of disaster preparation has to come to the forefront. The purpose of this research was to provide information and awareness to those responsible for emergency preparedness and response in Texas communities and to show that they are prepared for disaster.

It was the author's belief that Texas communities are somewhat prepared but need to continue to be ready for emergencies and disasters by planning, training, and evaluating their disaster response procedures to ensure their responders are prepared. When the author first began this research, Hurricane Katrina had just occurred a month before, the author was in Module I at Texas A&M when Hurricane Rita approached the Texas coast. The local communities and state agencies worked together to protect the public and limit the effects of this natural disaster. Research showed that in order for a community to be prepared for a disaster, three basic things must happen. The community must develop a plan of action for dealing with a disaster or emergency. The community must inform the personnel on the plan, and the community must train personnel to implement the plan by having exercises or using the plan in an actual emergency.

The survey of various law enforcement agencies from across the state of Texas indicated that a majority of the representatives of the law enforcement agencies that were surveyed believed their agencies were prepared to handle disasters or emergencies. The surveys indicated that most agencies had taken the necessary precautions to prepare for any disaster or emergency that could possibly occur in their

community. The majority of the agencies had a plan of action for responding to a disaster. Many agencies have informed the personnel of the plan of action, and the personnel have implemented the plan in tabletop exercises, mock drills, or in a real life emergency. This supports the author's belief that Texas communities are prepared for disaster.

The author was surprised by the fact that although the majority of the officers surveyed answered their agencies had a plan and trained on it, 19% of those surveyed believed their agencies were not prepared for disaster, and they did not expound on why in the survey instrument. Based on the review of available literature and the surveys, it is the author's conclusion that a majority of the law enforcement agencies in Texas are prepared for handling disasters, but they must continue to review their plans of action and continue training to ensure that they will be prepared. It is hoped this research information will encourage those who are responsible for governing Texas communities and first responders to ensure they have done everything possible to protect the citizens of Texas by preparing for disaster.

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**APPENDIX**

## Emergency Planning Survey

Doug Barrentine

1. How many sworn officers are in your agency?

A. < 50      B. 50-100      C. 100-200      D. > 200

2. Describe your agency type below.

A. City      B. County      C. State      D. Other-specify \_\_\_\_\_

3. What type of emergency or disaster is your agency more likely to encounter? Please specify below.

---

4. Do you feel your agency is prepared to respond to the above listed emergency or disaster?

A. Yes      B. No      C. Unknown

5. Does your agency have a plan/plans to handle emergencies or disasters?

A. Yes      B. No      C. Unknown

6. Have you and the other personnel of your agency been trained to implement your agency's emergency plan?

A. Yes      B. No      C. Unknown

7. Do you know how to respond to an emergency or disaster according to your agency's plan?

A. Yes      B. No

8. Has your agency implemented its plan into action? If so, how?



- A. Table-top exercises
- B. Mock disaster drills
- C. Real life emergencies or disasters
- D. Other-please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Optional: Name-\_\_\_\_\_

Agency-\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone #-( )

Thank you for your participation in this survey. When completed please return to Doug Barrentine.