

Washington State Adopts Crisis Management System With Far-Reaching Implications for Other States

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In an emergency, police, fire and emergency managers know that the more information they have, the better the chances they can save lives and mitigate property damage. This was the thought behind Washington State's First Responder Public Building Mapping program. The system was created in 2003 by State Representative John Lovick, a former Washington State Patrol trooper, who proposed a statewide system to assist law enforcement and other first responders during emergencies. Washington's system is administered by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, and is accessible by all first responders in the state, as well as outside agencies who may provide mutual assistance in the event of a major disaster.

Immediate Access To Key Intelligence

The program, also known more generically as a crisis management system (CMS), gives facility managers and first responders immediate access to key intelligence about buildings and other critical infrastructure, including police/fire tactical plans, satellite and geospatial imagery, interior and exterior photos, floor plans, hazardous materials locations, utility shut-offs, evacuation routes, and more. The program runs on laptop computers, via the Internet or plug-in USB devices, and can be learned by first responders after about 20 minutes of training.

The program already proved to be an effective tool for law enforcement when a distraught student with a gun entered a Spokane high school during the crowded lunch hour. Detailed information about the school building in the state's CMS system

allowed police to isolate the gunman in just 12 minutes, evacuate more than 2,000 students to a pre-established reunification center, and immobilize the gunman. The students were spared the trauma of having to witness the incident and were able to return to their school the very next day. In another incident, a broken sprinkler pipe was quickly shut off by school safety officers who used the program to locate the shut-off valve, saving the school more than \$80,000 in potential repairs.

Technology Behind the System

The technology behind the CMS system comes from a Seattle-based company – Prepared Response, Inc. (PRI). The company, made up of former first responders, disaster response professionals and software developers, enhanced a program developed by law enforcement professionals following the Columbine High School incident. The program, called Rapid Responder™, is a sophisticated crisis management system that is currently used by more than 350 public safety agencies across the United States, and protects more than 1,050 sites and 3,806 individual buildings.

The core value of the Rapid Responder system is its ability to help build collaboration between public and private entities, to serve as a single source for emergency information for an entire region or state, and to provide access to other agencies during major emergencies. As former first responders, the Prepared Response team understands the value of interagency cooperation, coordination and preplanning. As such, the first step of implementation of the Rapid Responder

system is a series of preplanning meetings with all stakeholders. Facility managers meet with their local police and fire representatives to discuss how each agency will respond to various emergency scenarios. Aerial photos of buildings are projected on a wall, and each agency discusses the best locations for the command center, observation posts, triage areas and helicopter landing zones. Special icons are added to the aerial images denoting these locations, and the images are added to the master database. Agencies also review their preplans, talk about their interdependencies, and discuss how they can work together more effectively.

Once the pre-plans are established, a data collection team from Prepared Response digitally maps each venue, cataloguing more than 300 data points per building at a typical location. These include tactical plans, satellite imagery, interior and exterior photos, floor plans, command posts, observation posts, staging areas, triage areas, hazardous materials locations, utility shut-offs, as well as coordinates of helicopter landing zones, evacuation routes, relocation centers, and more.

The pre-plans, along with all other relevant data, then go through a stringent quality control process and are loaded into a master database and distributed electronically to the various stakeholders. If any key information changes at a facility, a local program administrator inputs the changes to a master database via the Internet. The updated information is then downloaded to all stakeholders, ensuring that all parties have access to the most current data. The system has been very well received by facility

(continued on page 18)

Hurricane Charley

(continued from page 13)

ongoing recovery efforts and collaborates with community leaders and local officials to identify the community's long-term vision. Public meetings and forums are held to solicit public input and build consensus of long-term visions, values and priorities of the community as a whole. A long-term recovery plan is developed and supported by local, state and federal governments. Finally, a federal-state task force is initiated to work with local officials and recovery managers to match projects with potential resources.

Long-Term Recovery From Hurricane Charley

Hurricane Charley caused \$14 billion in damage across a tri-county area. Despite this destruction, Charlotte, DeSoto and Hardee Counties saw a unique opportunity to capitalize on the damages to prevent destruction from future hurricanes, improve infrastructure,

develop adequate housing, and create jobs. The federal and state governments, as well as a team of engineers and planners, implanted themselves into these communities to work with local officials, leaders and the public to identify their needs and long-term vision. A regional newspaper ran periodic articles and inserts on the progress of long-term recovery efforts. This regional newspaper also motivated the public to participate in the process.

Implementing Long-Term Vision

Today, local officials, community leaders and the public work cohesively with state and federal officials to implement this long-term vision. Although these communities were vastly different, they now have one similar motive: to develop a sustainable recovery and future from the destructive forces of Hurricane Charley.

To view the long-term recovery plans for Charlotte, DeSoto and Hardee counties, www.dca.state.fl.us/recovery/index.cfm.

EM Conferences

(continued from page 16)

■ **The International Conference on Energy, Environment and Disasters**, sponsored by the Global Alliance for Disaster Reduction, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and UNESCO, met in July in Charlotte, N.C. Abstracts from 469 international participants from 53 countries were submitted for presentations at the conference and are available at www.iseg.giees.uncc.edu/inceed2005.

■ **APCO International's 71st Annual Conference & Exposition** was held in July in Denver. Innovative and participatory combinations of informative

sessions, instructional workshops and progressive presentations by industry professionals are the traditional format.

This year, former Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge opened the conference by saying, "You can't secure the country from inside the Beltway." His message emphasized the critical role that public safety telecommunications plays in keeping the United States safe and secure. Secretary Ridge called APCO an "all-hazards group" whose mission includes homeland security, emergency management, and response on all levels, from natural disasters to large-scale incidents to the everyday emergencies in our communities.

Washington State

(continued from page 14)

owners because, for the first time, they have the opportunity to meet with their local police and fire personnel and discuss how those agencies would respond to a wide variety of emergency incidents at their facility.

The impact of what Washington state has done has far-reaching implications for other states. Through a relatively modest investment, the state of Washington has provided its first responders with state-of-the-art technology, allowing them to respond to a wide variety of emergencies quicker, safer, and more effectively. Other states across the nation have begun reviewing their disaster preparedness programs and are starting to introduce legislation that could prove invaluable to securing their critical infrastructure from natural disasters, acts of terrorism and other emergencies.

To help expedite acquisition of the Rapid Responder system by first responders, the system was recently listed on the Department of Homeland Security's Authorized Equipment List (AEL), which facilitates funding for the program through DHS grants.

About Prepared Response, Inc.

Prepared Response develops and maintains security applications for public and private sector use designed to help save lives and mitigate property damage. The Rapid Responder application allows emergency response personnel and others to act quickly, decisively and safely during any facility-related emergency incident. The privately held company, headquartered in Seattle, was formed in September 2000.

For more information on how Prepared Response and its Rapid Response technology, please visit www.preparedresponse.com.