

19th Annual Pinal County Town Hall



Residential Emergency Preparedness

Summary Report Handbook

August 15, 2006

"Prepare and prevent instead of repair and repent."

August 15, 2006

MEMORANDUM

TO: Town Hall Participants
RE: 2006 Town Hall
FR: K. Peterson

Our 19th annual Pinal County Town Hall was unique in a number of ways. Attendance was lower than in past years. Comments were shared suggesting that since the topic wasn't "controversial" it didn't generate as much interest as previous topics.

Also, it seems many felt a major disaster such as those discussed at Town Hall is highly unlikely in Pinal County. One individual, who did not attend, stated: "Since such an event is not likely in Pinal County, all this planning is not necessary."

The format for the sessions was different. There were fewer discussion group sessions and more presentations by those knowledgeable of the topics being researched.

Of most interest, however, is the fact that more follow-up activities have been generated by this Town Hall than typically in the past. Several businesses and organizations have developed emergency preparedness plans. Groups are still actively discussing the information received. Numerous families have prepared 72-hour emergency kits. Our upcoming follow-up sessions will expand these applications.

The following is intended to be more of a HANDBOOK than merely a report. The Town Hall Advisory Committee hopes it will be a valuable resource for you.

Pinal County Town Hall – Mission Statement

Pinal County Town Hall is an assembly of delegates annually convened that identifies critical issues facing Pinal County, creates the forum for education/exploration of the topic and fosters networking/collaboration among its participants. By drawing upon Pinal County's diversity of citizens the Town Hall process promotes public consideration of these issues, builds consensus and supports implementation of the resulting outcomes.

“Opportunity has the uncanny habit of favoring those who have paid the price of years of preparation.”

Summary Report Handbook

"Today's preparation determines tomorrow's achievement."

“Safe At Home” – Residential Emergency Preparedness Taking Responsibility

Captain Curt Holiday – Chandler Fire Department
Curt.Holiday@ci.chandler.az.us

Individual citizens can become involved in emergency preparedness for their home, neighborhood and community through involvement in a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
BERT	Business Emergency Response Team
MERT	Monsoon Emergency Response Team

The Chandler Fire Department’s CERT training is a very successful model. More than thirty classes have been held. There are 300 individuals trained to assist with an emergency; 400 additional are on a waiting list for CERT classes. A thirteen-member council, made up of CERT graduates, manages the program.

The curriculum for the nine-week program is delivered from 6:30 – 9:30 PM one night a week. The topics of the sessions are:

- Disaster Preparedness
- Team Building
- Fire Suppression
- Medical Operations (I)
- Medical Operations (II)
- Search and Rescue
- Incident Management
- Disaster Exercise
- Post Mortem Review/Summary

The second session, Team Building, focuses on residential preparedness:

- exit drills for the home
- utilities (location, shut off valves)
- out of state calls/contacts (emergency calling planning)
- knowing your neighborhood
- the common elements of a disaster
- knowing how to respond
- building a team for effectiveness

ACTION STEP:

Inquire if there is a CERT opportunity in your community. If not, join with several others and your local Fire Department to organize a CERT opportunity.

“Safe At Home” – Residential Emergency Preparedness Identifying Resources

Jennifer Velitchkov, Safety Consultant – American Red Cross
jvelitchkov@arizonaredcross.org

In a time of emergency/disaster each citizen/household should be self-sustaining for at least 72 hours. In advance of an emergency, families should prepare in the following ways:

- ✓ Develop an evacuation plan (from your home, from your neighborhood/ community) and practice it once a year.
- ✓ Keep an easily accessible listing of family members' contact information.
- ✓ Provide CPR and Basic First Aid training for all family members.
- ✓ Maintain a well-stocked first aid kit in home and vehicle(s).

The 72 Hour Self Sustainability Plan/Resources (Update/refresh every six months)

Water	Can Opener
Food (Power Bars, etc.)	Extra Batteries
Communications Plan	Flashlight
Change of Clothing/Shoes	Radio/Media
Blankets	Personal Hygiene Items
Chocolate	A Good Book
First Aid Kit	Family Games
Medical Information/Prescriptions	Cash
Pet Food/Care Items	
Important Documents (insurance, passport, will and the like)	

ACTION STEPS:

- Investigate the services of the Pinal County Red Cross Chapter.
- Purchase a starter emergency readiness or first aid kit from the Red Cross (www.arizonaredcross.org).
- Request training for your business/employees (contact Jennifer Velitchkov at jvelitchkov@arizonaredcross.org).
- Invite a Red Cross spokesperson to speak at your civic, religious or neighborhood meetings.

“Safe At Home” – Residential Emergency Preparedness

Rescuing Animals and Pets

Chip Wilson, President – Superstition Horsemen’s Association
Mickie Leach, Chairperson – Pinal County Hooved Evacuation Team
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It is an animal/pet owner’s responsibility to plan for the emergency care of their animals and pets. Animals’ stress is very high in these situations. Being approached by strangers, even those wanting to help, is dangerous for both the rescuer and the animal/pet.

Emergency Situation Options:

Turn Animals Loose

Not a wise choice. The animal is very endangered and also may endanger emergency personnel (e.g. panicked horse colliding with fire truck). Also animals will return to their “comfort zone,” even running back into a burning building. Do not, however, tie animals up limiting their mobility.

Evacuate Animals

To the extent possible, have travel cages/trailers and other means of transport available. Some organizations such as the Humane Society and Pinal County Hooved Evacuation team may be able to help if time allows.

Leave Animals “At Home”

If this is the necessary choice, especially if time is short, consider the following:

- Large sign on front door/gate area listing what types of animals are present and where they are in the home/on the property.
- Provide a listing of contact numbers for emergency personnel.
- Detail animals’ names and medical records/information.
- Place food and water for 48 hours in animal’s area (use separate rooms for each animal/pet as possible).
- Collars, ID tags, leashes, food dishes, carriers and the like for smaller animals are very important (chip implants very helpful).
- Practice evacuation plans.

ACTION STEPS:

- Invite a representative of a group such as the Superstition Horsemen’s Association to speak to your organization.
- Develop an action plan for caring for your animals/pets when there is advance warning and/or when evacuation must be immediate.

Family Emergency Plan Template

(For families with pets and/or livestock)

Family Name: _____

Family Phone Numbers:

<input type="radio"/>	_____	Work: _____	Cell: _____
<input type="radio"/>	_____	Work: _____	Cell: _____
<input type="radio"/>	_____	Work: _____	Cell: _____
<input type="radio"/>	_____	Work: _____	Cell: _____
<input type="radio"/>	_____	Work: _____	Cell: _____

Friends and Neighbors:

<input type="radio"/>	_____	Phone: _____
<input type="radio"/>	_____	Phone: _____
<input type="radio"/>	_____	Phone: _____
<input type="radio"/>	_____	Phone: _____

Local and out of the area contacts for our family include one over 150 miles away:

- Address: _____
 - Phone: _____ Cell: _____
- Address: _____
 - Phone: _____ Cell: _____
- Address: _____
 - Phone: _____ Cell: _____

Other emergency numbers:

- Sheriff/police: _____
- Fire: _____
- Medical: _____
- Veterinarian _____
- Animal Control _____
- Emergency Management County/State _____
- _____

Other important numbers

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Fire evacuation plan for our household:

- Exit plan (list for each room):

- Outside meeting location:

- Outbuilding/livestock plan:

Evacuation plan summary:

- People/critical personal items

- Pets

- Livestock

Shelter in place plan summary:

- People/critical support resources

- Pets

- Livestock

Preparedness resources:

- American Red Cross (Arizona)
- US Department of Homeland Security: www.ready.gov

Evacuation Checklist (prioritized list of items to evacuate):

Evacuation "go kit" for 72 hour family support:

- Water
- Snack foods and emergency non-perishable food
- Cooler for ice and food
- Sunscreen, first aid kit, prescription medications, hand sanitizer
- Raincoats, coats, leather gloves, boots, hats, coveralls
- Cards, entertainment for children, books (evacuation can involve a lot of waiting)
- Portable radio, NOAA radio, flashlights, extra-batteries
- Long distance phone card
- Blankets or sleeping bags, cots or air mattresses
- Copy of household emergency plan
- CASH (if electricity and phone are down, credit cards may be useless)
- Cellular phone chargers (AC and car)
- Camera + battery charger

Personal items and important papers:

- Tax and financial records
- Real estate information
- Birth certificates, passports, social security cards
- Insurance information
- Household insurance inventory (written and/or video)
- Items of great sentimental value: pictures, keepsakes, etc.

Evacuation supplies for pets:

- Cat carriers/airline kennels (one per cat)
 - o Note: pillow cases may be used to transport cats in emergencies!
- Dog crates or airline kennels (one per dog)
- Collars (with tags), leashes, cat harnesses
- Bowls (food + larger water dishes)
- Blankets or bedding
- Paper towels, spray cleaner, trash bags
- Litter box, cat litter
- Pet photos, pet records, microchip records
- Water, dry cat food, dry dog food, canned cat food
- Treats, toys and miscellaneous pet supplies

Evacuation supplies for livestock

- Halters & lead ropes
- Registration, brand inspection papers, photos and medical records
- Medications, first aid kit
- Saddles, pads, bridles, hoof pick, hoof knives, rasp, brushes, rope, lunge line
- Water buckets, grain pans, hay and grain as needed for 1-2 weeks
- WATER SOURCE** (5 gallons minimum per horse per day)

Shelter in place checklist 7 days supplies, general family and pets:

- Water!
- Flashlights/lantern, extra batteries
- Non-perishable food reserves (1 week)
- Prescription medications for people and pets (1 week minimum)
- Keep cars/trucks at least 50% full of gas whenever possible; ensure gas tanks are full before major storms.
- Pet food (minimum 1 week supply)
- For aquariums (battery operated air pump with extra batteries)
- Cold weather gear where appropriate

Shelter in place checklist, livestock:

- Camp stove and 2 or more gallons Coleman fuel or a generator and fuel to provide power.
- Lantern (Coleman)
- Where appropriate winter gear (boots, coats, coveralls, gloves)
- Maintain 1-2 weeks supply of hay at all times

Posting of information for emergency personnel on your property: checklist

- Emergency contact information (daytime phone, other emergency contacts)
- Number of pets (and basic description)
- Number of livestock (and basic description)
- Location of animal emergency supplies
- Possibly include permission to evacuate your animals in time of emergency

Car kit:

- Water, snack food
- Gloves, boots, coveralls, coat, hat, rain gear
- Shovel, tool kit, fire extinguisher, tow rope, jumper cables, tire chains
- First aid kit, blanket
- Cell phone charger, marker and paper (emergency signs)

This template is meant to provide ideas concerning personal preparedness for people with pets and livestock. Emergency preparedness starts at home and people need to be prepared to take care of themselves, their families, their pets and livestock for a minimum of 72 hours. This includes sheltering in place and evacuating safely and efficiently. In addition, you should be prepared to help your neighbors when needed, especially the elderly or those with disabilities.

In addition, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and government agencies should have well developed emergency contingency plans that protect people, animals, and essential business or community services.

For questions about emergency preparedness plans and animal issues, please contact your local County or City Animal Control and/or Pinal County Emergency Management.

“Safe At Home” – Residential Emergency Preparedness **Keeping Connected**

Judy Kioski, Gregory Roybal
Judy.Kioski@azdema.gov

Each presenter emphasized the importance of having a plan to keep informed and connected at the time of any emergency. The Arizona Department of Emergency Management later this year will activate Arizona 2-1-1, a vital tool for information and connectedness.

The most common natural disaster in Arizona is flooding. Others are identified as monsoon storms, drought, fire, power outages, incidents involving the Palo Verde nuclear facility and hazardous materials. Arizona has experienced 252 emergencies which have escalated to state level emergencies (150 flood scenarios). Pinal County has experienced thirty-one state level crises.

Emergency Information

The proposed Arizona 2-1-1 and personal communication planning will be key for individuals and families. The system will take pressure off 9-1-1 leaving it available for calls to emergency responders.

In emergency situations Arizona 2-1-1 will report evacuation routes, shelters available, road closure, where various types of assistance are available and who the people are who are in charge of the event.

In non-emergency times Arizona 2-1-1 will convey public information about preparedness, health bulletins (e.g. Asian Flu), general, health and human service announcements.

It is expected that Arizona 2-1-1 will be available by late 2006 with “one-stop” call centers located throughout the state.

ACTION STEPS:

- Research Arizona 2-1-1 at www.az211.gov.
- Develop a “Family Emergency Plan” within the next three months with a goal of keeping family members connected in a crisis situation.

“Safe At Home” – Residential Emergency Preparedness

Katrina: Lessons Learned About Personal Responsibility

David Strayer, Division Chief – City of Casa Grande Fire Department
Tony LaFalce, Firefighter – City of Casa Grande Fire Department

The tragedy of Hurricane Katrina powerfully demonstrated the importance of individual responsibility and preparedness. Firefighters from Avondale, Casa Grande and Flagstaff, along with 2,000, traveled to the stricken area to provide assistance. It was clear that most had relied too heavily on “next level” assistance rather than preparing to sustain themselves and their families for several days. Both from observation as well as discussions with residents, many lessons were learned.

- The FEMA response was not consistently covered by the media (the focus was on New Orleans). Media may not be your best information source.
- The National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS) had not been institutionalized and were less effective than they might have been.
- Distribution sites need to be planned, implemented and monitored.
- Intergovernmental relationships and partnerships are critical.
- The role of the local, county, regional and national governments in a crisis was largely misunderstood.
- A 72-hour plan is a must for individuals/families.
- Assisting agencies may need to provide help for up to ninety days.
- Be Smart –Be Prepared!
- Know your local relationship with the Red Cross, Salvation Army, utility companies, church groups – would a consolidated or fragmented response take place?
- Interdependence and cooperation are the key (CERT Teams).
- Don’t risk your life or that of others – properties can be rebuilt.
- Maximize all the resources available.

It is not a matter of will it happen in Pinal County, it is a matter of when it takes place will individuals/families/neighborhoods be ready. Perhaps the key “Lesson Learned” from Katrina was this: “Help will come, but until it does those that prepared the best will most likely survive.”

ACTION STEP:

- Monitor disasters which take place. Would you have been prepared for such an event? What lessons can be learned from the experiences of others?

“Safe At Home” – Residential Emergency Preparedness Could IT Happen In Pinal County?

Discussion Groups

Delegates’ awareness of the potential for disasters in Pinal County was heightened through group discussion. Based on current research, the following are the most likely incidents to affect Pinal County’s residents:

Natural Disasters

- Flood
- Fire
- Drought
- Micro-bursts, dust storms, Monsoon events
- Chemical/Hazardous Materials

Man-made Disasters

- Hazardous Materials
- Nuclear
- Transportation accidents (semi-trucks, trains, planes and so on)
- Pipelines
- Power outages
- Terrorist activities

It was suggested Pinal County could become a refuge for thousands fleeing Maricopa and/or Pima Counties at the time of a disaster. How would our county, cities and towns cope with such a massive influx of individuals?

Concern was raised for those unable to assist themselves in such situations such as the elderly and those with physical disabilities.

Participants indicated that the day’s sessions had heightened their awareness but, unfortunately, it may take a significant local event to motivate most to do the type of residential planning which ought to be done prior to such a situation.

The importance of Neighborhood Watch type of programs was emphasized, as well as being the “eyes and ears” for local law enforcement entities.

The need for a coordinated approach to planning for a disaster as well as coordinated communication and response in a crisis situation was discussed.

“Safe At Home” – Residential Emergency Preparedness

“An Impending Flu Pandemic – Myth Or Reality?”

**Dr. Peter Kelly, Arizona Department of Health Sciences
Thomas Schryer, Pinal County Director of Public Health**

Three Major Influenza Virus Strings

- 1918 – 1919 Spanish Influenza
- 1957-1958 Asian Flu Outbreak
- 1968-1969 Hong Kong Flu (we are still in this string of influenza)

Signs & Symptoms

- One week to ten days duration
- Sudden onset of fever
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Swollen eyes

Pandemic – Very Different from “Ordinary” Influenza

A major shift in the virus takes place resulting in a new virus to which all are susceptible, especially the elderly. The “Bird Flu” has moved from Asia to over 45 countries. In the 200 reported cases, 50 % were fatal. Each fatality had contact with infected chickens.

A flu pandemic WILL occur, however when it will appear cannot be predicted. The key is planning and prevention.

- ✓ 30 – 40% will contract flu in a pandemic
- ✓ 20% of the infected will die (estimate)
- ✓ 1700 or more in Pinal County will die
- ✓ many fatalities will be healthy adults and children
- ✓ everyone in Pinal County will be affected
- ✓ minimal health care services will be available
- ✓ hospitals will be at capacity with non-influenza patients
- ✓ federal and state governments will be UNABLE to help us; we must help ourselves
- ✓ economic and social disruption will be great

Business Considerations

- 40% of all employees will be ill, contagious or caring for others
- “just in time” inventory systems will result in limited inventory; run on supplies
- 40% of delivery/supply chain personnel will be unavailable for work
- local transportation (getting to work) will be disrupted
- Psychological affect on workforce will be extreme

- "social distancing" will dramatically change hours of operation or close businesses temporarily
- economic losses for small businesses will be most dramatic
- in a moderate global pandemic, GDP will be reduced by 2%
- Arizona would see a 1.4% - 5.5% reduction in GDP, a loss of revenue of \$2.4 – \$9.6 billion dollars.

Pinal County Goals

- **Limit death and illness**
- **Preserve continuity of essential government and business functions**
- **Minimize social disruption**
- **Minimize economic losses**
- **Maintain orderly working/communication with cities, towns and tribal governments**
- **Provide consistent, accurate and candid information to residents before, during and after the event**
- **Be prepared to quickly recover from the affects of a pandemic.**

Pinal County's Role

- **Disease tracking and control**
- **Environmental health response**
- **Health system coordination**
- **Mass fatality response process**
- **Communications/public information**
- **Coordination of laboratory services**

What actions will take place?

- **Close schools, theaters and other gathering places**
- **Social distancing will be encouraged**
- **Hand washing, hygiene regulations intensified**
- **Requirement to stay home when ill**
- **Media to pass along up to date, responsible information**
- **Federal government will give emergency powers to state, county and local governments**

Protect Your Family

- ❖ **Have an emergency plan**
- ❖ **Maintain an emergency kit**
- ❖ **Plan for the worst; hope for the best**
- ❖ **Stay away form people if you are ill**
- ❖ **Wash hands regularly**
- ❖ **Discontinue hugging, kissing, cuddling; sleep in separate beds**
- ❖ **Disinfect surfaces around the house**
- ❖ **Be proactive**

“Safe At Home” – Residential Emergency Preparedness “Putting It All Together – Table Top Exercise”

**Pete Weaver, Emergency Coordinator, Pinal County
Thomas Schryer, Pinal County Director of Public Health
Terry Doolittle, County Manager, Pinal County
Jerald Monahan, Chief Deputy, Pinal County Sheriff's Office
Scott Miller, Chief, City of Casa Grande Fire Department
Barbara Schaffer, Pre-Hospital Coordinator, Emergency Management
Casa Grande Regional Medical Center**

Scenario (PowerPoint on Town Hall Web Site)

Over a short period of time, three inches of rain in lower elevations, 12 inches of snow in mid-elevations and 42 inches of snow above 5000-foot elevations. The storm is due in two days, currently moving slowly across California.

What are the concerns of your agency?

- Doolittle:** Assess the storm path, capacity of riverbeds.
- Weaver:** Be sure phone line is up to date.
- Schryer:** Develop profiles of special needs citizens who may need extra care; assess other health concerns, e.g. sewer systems.
- Schaffer:** Check hospital generators.
- Miller:** Check staff locations for the next 72 hours; fuel tanks full; sand bag distribution points ready; request EOC skeleton crew.
- Monahan:** Rescind vacations; evaluate areas which may need evacuation.

What do you want the public to do?

- Doolittle:** Flooding may limit access to their homes.
- Miller:** Listen to the media for announcements; have emergency kit ready.
- Weaver:** Acquire sandbags if you feel you will need them.

The county will communicate with cities, towns and tribal communities indicating action steps for them to pursue. There are no countywide warning systems (e.g. sirens) other than the emergency alert system in the media.

Scenario (Continuation)

The system will linger in Pinal County for 5-6 days with expectation of 5 – 6 inches of rain.

What are your agencies' concerns in light of the expanding storm system?

- Doolittle:** Activate the EOC; serve as chairperson of the executive policy group; authorize commitment of county funds; maintain contact with city, town and tribal leaders.
- Monahan:** Provide staff for EOC; assign Public Information Officer; check evacuation routes; protect from looters.
- Miller:** Full staff at EOC; fuel, water, sand bags ready; contact neighboring fire departments; make sure Public Information Officer does public service announcements.
- Schryer:** Disaster response with EMS and hospitals; activate CERT teams and public health volunteers; all public health staffers called in for service. Be sure that those who have special needs are evacuated into a pre-arranged shelter (assisted living facilities if possible).
- Schaffer:** Hospital administration is in contact with EOC; prepare generators.
- Weaver:** Working on consistent communication systems as well as redundancy systems; HAM radio operators will be very helpful; activating mutual aid system with other counties.
- "Code Black", Level II – emergency management plan at the hospital.

Scenario (Continuation)

Major flood event is taking place.

- Doolittle:** Emergency resolution from chairman and supervisors authorizing overtime, procurements; make sure public information dissemination is consistent; assist with conflict resolution.
- Weaver:** Assessment of bridges and crossings is on-going.
- Schryer:** Sheltering is complete; support other entities and fill the gaps.
- Schaffer:** Administration still in touch with EOC; normal traffic.
- Miller:** Stations operating with generators; recall all personnel; support role.
- Monahan:** Orderly evacuation of Arizona City; concern for life more than property is key; staffing levels elevated and shifts extended.

Public should NOT call 911, use AZ 211 or 511. The 911 system is needed for life threatening emergencies. STAY HOME! If evacuated, don't take more than necessary!

Scenario (Continuation)

The storm has passed, post-flood activities underway.

- Doolittle:** Federal aid, reimbursement filing; assessing assistance needs; determine who is responsible for clean-up actions; retraining building inspectors if unique problems have arisen.
- Schryer:** Transport special needs individuals back to their homes; provide health recommendation for public safety.
- Schaffer:** Emergency management system for communication.
- Miller:** Support role; recoup financial burden of overtime and equipment.
- Monahan:** Orderly return of evacuated citizens.
- Weaver:** Paperwork, preliminary damage assessment for state and FEMA.

Partners In Economic Progress

It is through the collective efforts of the public and private sectors that the Pinal County Town Hall is made possible. The Town Hall Advisory Committee expresses appreciation to the following for their support of the Nineteenth Annual Pinal County Town Hall. Thank you!

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Pyramid Community Developers, LLC
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"Excellence is the result of caring more than others think is wise, risking more than others think is safe, dreaming more than others think is practical, and expecting more than others think is possible."

Partners In Economic Progress

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The Mahoney Group
Town of Kearny
Town of Mammoth
Town of Superior
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Delegate Directory

"When you are thirsty it is too late to think about digging a well."

2006 Directory

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“KATRINA: Lessons Learned About Personal Responsibility”

Presenters: David Strayer, Division Chief, Casa Grande Fire Department
Tony LaFalce, Firefighter, City of Casa Grande Fire Department

The presenters had responded to a call for assistance with cleanup after the Katrina event. Both men had taken time off from the Casa Grande Fire Department to respond to the call for help.

A letter was read from the Sanchez family that the team had assisted in cleaning their home and property after the disaster and on their time off from FEMA. The family was extremely appreciative of their efforts to assist them in the aftermath of Katrina.

Chief Strayer and Firefighter LaFalce were volunteers from Arizona, all firefighters in two person teams that responded on September 1, 2005 to work with FEMA to assist in the south. A power-point presentation of personal pictures shared with those present brought home the tremendous damage done by Katrina and the great effort that was made to assist the residents.

David and Tony, arrived in Atlanta on September 6, 2005 and were trained there through September 9th by FEMA to assist with the clean-up effort. FEMA had requested 2,000 volunteers to become 2-person firefighter teams. Once in Atlanta, David and Tony received an orientation, but they still were not prepared for the devastation they encountered when deployed to Baton Rouge. From Baton Rouge, they continued on to Slidell, LA. The smell from backed-up sewers was horrible and never diminished during their stay. Slidell is near the Big Branch Marsh, a wildlife preserve. There were high temperatures and humidity and air conditioning only worked the day they arrived so fans provided the only relief.

David and Tony were a team and amazed at the boats that ended in homes and yards, as the distance from the ocean was 7 miles. Whole communities were gone. Teams systematically searched buildings and marked the outside with orange paint listing the team's identification, date, time and number of victims alive and dead. People piled debris along the roads and this later caused a problem with removal of such large quantities of trash.

Many residents were angry with FEMA, so the crews did not always wear their FEMA t-shirts, but identified themselves as firemen. They distributed food and water, removed damaged trees that were likely to fall on houses, and helped people in a variety of ways.

In some cases they worked with insurance companies to help people. Many houses were still filled with polluted, filthy water. Furniture, appliances carpeting, tile were often removed by the teams on their off time from FEMA, just to help. What could be saved and cleaned was, but usually that was very little. Often the teams just told residents the

locations of distribution sites. Due to communication systems being down, people didn't know where to go or turn. In many cases the teams just got the word out.

The team then moved on to Waveland, LA that had been hit the worst. High winds had blown houses into a swamp and marshland area near by and many residents had been killed. Bodies are still being discovered in this hard hit area.

There were many assisting agencies. After Hurricane Rita, the second storm hitting the area, the team's job often involved driving dialysis patients to receive treatment in other areas not as hard hit and still able to provide the necessary treatment.

Pictures were shown of an area called Apple Pie Road that had been totally destroyed. Church groups were instrumental in helping with recovery and other necessary vital assistance.

Pictures of New Orleans indicated waterlines on the houses and buildings, many of which were uninhabitable and would have to be destroyed. St. Bernard Parrish was the area most impacted by the levee breaking. There were many survival stories that were difficult to comprehend. People had stayed to "ride out the storm surge" not realizing how bad it would be. Everyone was asked if they had stayed or left. One problem that was identified regarded the custom and necessity of burying people above ground due to the high water table in the area. Bodies found by the workers had to be identified as having died as a result of the storm or buried bodies washing out of graves.

Many people who stayed told of trying to escape to higher ground. They talked of the high winds, followed by pelting rain, the eye of the storm, more wind and rain, the storm surge and then rising water.

Lessons Learned

The team talked about the heartbreaking event covering over 50,000 square miles. FEMA's response had not been consistent, however, FEMA has never had to respond to such a huge disaster. The American public only heard parts of the story that centered on New Orleans and not the entire area hit by the disaster. NIMS and ICS are not fully institutionalized. Disaster Recovery/Distribution Sites were in action. Intergovernmental relationships must be good working relationships to be effective and need to be in place prior to any disaster. These relationships must involve emergency agencies, personnel, and local elected officials. State, federal and local agencies must also be in step during an event of this magnitude.

Government's role is misunderstood. The general public believes the "government" will save the day, take care of them, and that local responders will be immediately on the scene. This is just not true. Local responders are 12 to 24 hours away from being there to help and assist. In the 50,000 square mile area of the Katrina/Rita disaster, body recovery is still going on. The first responders are trained and provide life saving efforts for 1 to 2 weeks. After that, body recovery begins. Recovery of the area will take years.

The media and cameras leave early on but the cleanup and recovery of the area goes on for years.

FEMA has no mechanism to provide these services. They are a coordinating agency. The Red Cross and utility companies from all over the country responded to assist and are the true heroes of the area. They were the ones providing hands-on help and assisting people one-on-one. The strength during a disaster, any disaster, lies with the local capability. Local Red Cross units, local utility companies, and local churches, along with local first responders are critical during a time of disaster. Each individual and family needs to be self-sufficient for at least 72 hours. This is critical and a minimum. Longer is even better.

It has been discussed that if an avian flu pandemic breaks out, families and individuals need a 90-day supply of everything needed. This is not to be an alarmist, but to be practical in an emergency of this nature. It is not about being afraid. It is about being prepared. It is about neighbors helping neighbors.

CERT teams are being trained in Pinal County and the communities in Pinal County and are of real value. They can be depended upon to assist in an emergency and are local volunteers.

Overall

- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) make a huge difference during a disaster such as the Red Cross, church groups and utility companies, to name a few.
- Disaster events take years to recover from and to rebuild the area. The work is ongoing.
- First is to save lives and then property.
- There can be bodies scattered everywhere in a disaster and you need to be prepared for this site. Locating bodies can go on for many months after the disaster.
- This is not about being afraid. It is about being smart.
- Maximize your resources.
- There is always a great group of people in the affected area that pull together.
- Have at least a 72-hour supply of everything you need to survive.

August 1, 2006

Dear Town Hall Participants,

Thank you once again for your participation in the 19th annual Pinal County Town Hall. As this is written, the Maricopa-Casa Grande highway is closed due to flooding. Numerous communities are declaring a state of emergency. Wild fires, monsoon storms and several accidents have occurred since Town Hall which have emphasized the importance of personal preparation and responsibility.

Enclosed is a summary of the primary presentations from Town Hall. Most of the PowerPoint presentations are available at the Town Hall web site which is a link on the county's web site (www.co.pinal.az.us; scroll down to Related Links; Pinal County Town Hall). Also a listing of Town Hall participants is included so networking and collaborative programs can be more easily facilitated.

To extend the information shared in this year's Town Hall, three follow-up sessions will be held. Anyone is welcome to attend whether or not the individual attended Town Hall. These sessions will have three objectives:

- a) To review the 2006 Town Hall topic;
- b) To preview the 2007 Town Hall topic;
- c) To further increase our citizens' awareness of the need for emergency preparedness.

These sessions will be held in February, 2007. The dates will be posted on the Pinal County Town Hall calendar (on this web site).

Your valuable comments and recommendations are assisting the Town Hall Advisory Committee in planning the 20th annual Town Hall. It will be April 25th – 27th at the Francisco Grande Hotel & Golf Resort.

Please contact me with any questions or suggestions. Thank you.

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