

Regional Community Emergency Preparedness Metrics

Purpose: Define a set of metrics to understand emergency preparedness at the community level.

September is National Preparedness Month, and many jurisdictions in the National Capital Region will be using this opportunity to get preparedness messages out to residents and businesses. Unfortunately the effectiveness of these awareness efforts can be complicated to track, and without proper context, being prepared can garner different responses (terrorism vs. natural disaster) from one person to the next.

The perception of and reality of preparedness is an interesting dichotomy in emergency management. In order to better understand the types of commonly held information, some alignment with what people feel (qualitative) and what communities actually have (quantitative) is required:

Perception (Qualitative)

- Community surveys seeking both wide and/or specific focus.
 - Arlington County Communications Office contracts a vendor to conduct a community survey asking general questions about the full range of County services. Preparedness is one such area that is not covered with great depth, but can be used as a baseline for more detailed answers residents and businesses.
- Research studies (FEMA, academia, etc.) currently researching via Internet and communicating with FEMA's Individual and Community Preparedness Division

Reality (Quantitative)

- *Emergency Management / Public Safety* - email/text alerting, reverse 911, AM radio, TV, website, etc.
- *Local Outreach & Programming* – Preparedness and other outreach campaigns
- *AAR research* – Identified gaps where community needs were not met.

Metrics

Arlington County's community survey data collected in 2012, 2008 and 2004 with the same questions.

- My household is prepared with food, water and other supplies for an emergency.
- I know where to get information during an emergency.
- I am aware of efforts by the County to prepare our community for an emergency.
- The County has done a good job educating the public about what to do in an emergency.

Showing a downward trend consistent with the region, Arlington's 2012 numbers are hovering around 40% compared to numbers in the high 50% to 60% range in 2004. New efforts are needed to get the region back to the 60 percent; though a more focused and sustainable effort should be utilized. FEMA's Individual and Community Preparedness Division found that a score in the 60% range is an excellent percentage for communities tracking preparedness. Survey data collected at the national and regional level shows there are parts of the population that are skeptical of preparing, or are unlikely to engage regardless of the type outreach effort.

What we should track:

- **Community surveys** – Continue tracking the same questions as the same interval
- **Demographics** – Understanding populations by zip code helps in crafting outreach efforts
- **Governmental Resources**, Communications and Response Capabilities
- **Community Involvement** - How robust are volunteer groups CERT, Red Cross, MRC, etc.
- **Hazard Mitigation** –Analysis or formal plan

Scorecard

A range of metrics presented at face value does not necessarily project a concrete image of preparedness. One tool that would help emergency managers rank preparedness metrics is a scorecard. The Regional Planners have been working to further develop a scorecard template to address preparedness at the whole community level. These areas were taken into consideration:

Governmental Resources – COOP Plan, resilience & protective measures, mass notification enrollment, building upgrades (fire code), insurance stats, EM budget per capita, vaccination rate, NIMS compliance, robust planning and training & exercises programming, etc..

Community Resources (Business Outreach) – grocery stores/food pantries per capita, clinics & hospitals per capita, schools & childcare facilities per capita, vaccination rate, etc..

Community Involvement (Social Capital) - CERT, Red Cross, Medical Reserve Corps, volunteer & donations management program/plan, etc..

Hazard Mitigation - Local, state or regionally coordinated plans rated according to how thorough each plan is. Top rated plans would include human caused hazards and social vulnerability in addition to natural hazards such as flooding, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc.

Within the draft scorecard, seven specific metrics were incorporated, including: Resident Preparedness; NIMS, Planning, Training & Exercise Program Rating; Alerting System Participation; COOP Plan Rating; Business Outreach Rating; Volunteer Organization Rating; and Haz-Mit (or THIRA Rating).