

Summary

Post Katrina Stakeholder Session on Evacuation and Sheltering

Virginia Department of Emergency Management

**January 31, 2006
Charlottesville, Virginia**

Present

- Participants – Barb Anderson, Bill Armistead, Jonathan Burton, Art Carroll, Elizabeth Chester, Perry Cogburn, Major George L. Daniels, Jr., Emily Flannigan, Susan Frushour, Benjamin Johnson, Kae Livsey, Tammy Karlgaard, Dan Kauanagh, Ron Keys, Mark Marchbank, Lt. Dan Murphy, Tin Htut Myint, Michelle Oblinsky, Sarah Owen, Lynda Price, Judi Riutort, Dr. Rhonda Sturgis, Tricia Snead, Jerry Stump, Pam Wakefield, Hut-Shan Walker
- VDEM staff – Stewart Baker (resource person), Larry Braja, Janet Clements, Michael Cocker, Ted Costin, Joe Coyle, Brookie Crawford, Deborah Mills, Al Pace, Bob Spieldvenner, Suzanne Simmons, Wallace Twigg, Frank Williamson, Gene Wills
- Facilitator – Judy Burtner, Recorder – Tamara Caldwell and Suzanne Simmons

Goal: To strengthen Virginia's plans relative to evacuation and sheltering so the problems raised by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on the Gulf Coast states would not be an issue in the Commonwealth in the event of similar occurrences in or near the Commonwealth.

Objectives:

1. Review current plans relative to evacuation and sheltering in the event of a disaster
 2. Review the list of issues identified by participants prior to the session
 3. Identify any additional issues
 4. Identify how VDEM can address the issues in future planning activities
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Orientation to Session

The facilitator reviewed the session objectives along with the planned process and a list of participation guidelines. Introductions were made. It was noted that VDEM staff with the exception of the person serving as the resource person were present as observers, not

participants. The purpose of the session was to solicit input from stakeholders outside the Department of Emergency Management.

Review of Issues

Prior to the session, stakeholders identified the following issues of concern relative to evacuation and sheltering:

1. Evacuation issues –
 - a. Out of host sheltering
 - b. Mutual aid for shelter staff
 - c. Funding non-declared host locality sheltering
 - d. Special needs sheltering, including mental health, crisis counseling, relocation services, pets
2. Shelters, religious needs, dietary needs, etc. Local sheltering capacity and priorities, including policies for out-of-state shelterees
3. The state role and “Super Shelters” (Town Pickett) and other long-term shelters. Considerations –
 - a. Lead-time decision model review
 - b. Predetermined destinations and population estimates
 - c. Transportation issues – availability, mass transit, private sources
4. Local sources – enroute logistics and law enforcement and first response organizations

Stewart Baker presented an overview of what the existing Virginia plan states relative to evacuation and sheltering. Questions were taken for clarification. The facilitator asked if there were other issues/concerns that needed to be acknowledged.

Additional Concerns/Issues

Participants contributed the following additional concerns/issues. The information is listed in the order shared by participants.

1. Insurance considerations that effect the number of cars on the road during evacuation, e.g., family taking all vehicles because if some left and then damaged, the damage is not covered by insurance policy.
 2. Need for real-time connectivity and communication between localities regarding those being evacuated and those receiving them
 3. Management system in shelters, i.e., information sharing between shelters on location of individuals/families, the recording those being received, etc.
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4. Security checks of staff/volunteers and evacuees
 5. Logistical support for sheltering students and staff at colleges and universities
 6. Convincing people that they need to evacuate when order is given; people assuming ownership for process of evacuating.
 7. Need for wrap-around and ancillary services for long-term shelter/Super Shelters
 8. Need for a better definition of “special needs”
 9. Prescription medications and other medical needs – Power of attorney paperwork or the lack thereof for fragile evacuees
 10. Language considerations
 11. Training of volunteers; increasing the capacity of volunteers to support shelters
 12. Gasoline shortages during evacuation
 13. Law enforcement availability in shelters during evacuation and sheltering
 14. Comprehensive plans for transportation of all people, including those with special needs, those without personal vehicles; the need to exercise the plans
 15. Need to adjust the traffic flow for the amount of population being moved
 16. Need for a definition for a “successful evacuation”
 17. Reentry and long-term recovery
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Stakeholder Input

The above issues, those identified prior to the session and those identified at the session, were addressed in the order listed. In the process of dealing with some, others were discussed and solutions/approaches identified. The goal was not to build consensus but to collect as many solutions, ideas for improving the system as possible.

Responses to the issues are listed in the order contributed. There was no effort made to reduce any duplication of thought or to merge comments out of concern that the richness of the comments would be lost.

Out of Impact Hosting Sheltering, Provision of Staff

- Need for partnership agreements between local governments that involve the sharing of potential staff (mutual aid agreements)
- The need to provide clarity regarding the role of hosts providing shelter
- Train students in Virginia’s colleges and universities on an annual basis to serve as shelter staff.
- Increase training opportunities for potential staff (faith-based institutions) to increase abilities/capacity/numbers available to Red Cross for staffing of centers
- When localities evacuate, the locality evacuating provide their “own” staff (from locality) to serve as staff at shelters people are being evacuated to.
- Job descriptions need to be developed for the various shelter staff roles, including support staff and volunteers. Identify which organizations focus on what type of activity/care, e.g., Brethren Church and childcare.

- Identify communities where people are likely to be evacuated. Within each locality identify host facility locations in order to identify resources (including those from nonprofits and/institutions of faith)
- Identify the need for staff and trained support staff
- Use evacuees as staff (some would enter shelters with skills/time)
- Create and maintain (continually updated) a database of resources from a variety of organizations. Be aware of people who have agreed to be a volunteers/staff in times of disasters for a number of organizations but in the event of a disaster would only be available to one organization
- Within each locality, define which shelters are all-hazard and which are event-specific or both
- Agreements should also be developed with surrounding states to support Virginia's sheltering needs

Funding Non-Declared Host Locality Sheltering; Reimbursement Issues

- Question and major concern: Who will cover the cost?
- Who is going to reimburse the cost at stand-by shelters (e.g., food) if not used?
- Who will reimburse the loss of revenue when facilities are being "held" and/or used and the "owner" cannot conduct the activities that do produce revenue? The state should develop a policy for addressing revenue loss on non-governmental property (example: camps and other facilities). The policy should include considerations for government, nonprofits, universities and the private sector.
- An analysis should be done for all-hazard and event-specific shelters relative to their capacity and capability
- Define the role of "Super Shelters" and the role of government in their creation, management, etc.
- Identify who is running the shelters (nonprofits or government); clarify roles. Possible need for a memorandum of understanding between the sheltering community/nonprofits and state
- Need to streamline, simplify and shorten reimbursement process. "State needs to plead its case to the Federal Government for changes."
- There is currently a need for a short-term solution that will address the upcoming hurricane season.
- There is a need to address the upfront costs for the shelter receiving evacuees as well as funding issues for larger areas.
- There needs to be some consideration given to the effect of a locality choosing not to shelter on other localities.
- The cost of services being delivered to evacuees needs to be addressed because if services are being provided to evacuees they are not being provided to current clients, thus reducing revenue to the organization/agency.
- There is a need to seek federal help for catastrophic events and the associated costs relative to sheltering.

- Consider using the contract system that is currently used by the government with the private sector and use it with the nonprofit sector
- Now may receive partial funds for revenue loss. The state should request more than partial funding from federal government.
- There needs to be a way to capture identifiable, incremental costs. The process should identify whether the shelter is short or long-term
- State needs to consider renting shelters as a means for “owners” (private or other) to recoup their costs.

Special Needs Sheltering

- There needs to be recognition that the designation, “special needs,” needs to be defined more broadly. The following were identified also as special needs populations that may be found in shelters: substance abuse using adults and youth, those that have been defined as “criminals” by court system, minors without caretakers, non-English speaking, those without transportation
- There was broad agreement that the term, “special needs,” needs to be defined and that there is a difference between “special needs” populations and “at-risk” populations.
- There is a need to address the medical needs of evacuees outside of the above designations.
- There is a group that represent an at-risk population relative to services, i.e., the blind, the deaf and others with physical and sensory disabilities.
- The state needs to develop state guidelines on “special needs” populations as well as the “at-risk” populations and their needs. The state also needs to assist with the coordination of resources to address the needs. It was reported a state coordinating body is currently looking at this need.
- The state is encouraged to develop state-local partnerships relative to resources to address these needs.
- The issue of apathy and procrastination needs to be addressed relative to sheltering special needs populations and their need for services so all can be prepared to address their needs.
- Resources that can be provided by the nonprofit community to address needs should be identified prior to an event requiring them.
- Look to the Camp Pickett model to improve long-term versus short-term sheltering and the management of resources.
- There needs to be an analysis of needs for different types of shelters in order to coordinate services from existing available resources. Planning to address needs should start from the individual and move upward.
- Need public education so there is a consistent message of what evacuees can and cannot expect when sheltered. All providers should be using the same message.
- Consideration should be given in the state plan for continued public and individual services required to maintain various populations in a shelter

- Coordination should encourage the movement of resource people from shelter to shelter. Mobilize specific shelter teams, such as medical teams to move from shelter to shelter when there is more than one.
- There is a need to provide appropriate sheltering for pets and possibly, the need for evacuees to have their pets with them.
- There is a need to identify the state resources relative to special needs and at-risk populations that are available to local governments. In addition, guidance needs to be provided to local government on how to identify local needs and what resources they have to address them.
- State government needs to do their own assessment to identify their own capacity in helping local government to address their needs.
- There should be an expectation that state-sponsored shelters would use state resources, e.g., State Police, other forms of security, state health department without drawing on local resources. Concern expressed in the case of the state health department that its state resources are the staff serving the locality.
- The state could assist localities in capacity building to address needs in locality-sponsored shelters.

Local Sheltering and Priorities, including Policies for out-of-state Shelterees

- State does not dictate to localities how to operate shelters. Therefore, there is nothing in the state plan addresses this.
- If the people are state to state evacuees, the state must have a way to get this issue addressed at the federal level
- There is a need for a state policy of in-state and out-of-state evacuees. The state should give resources to localities for sheltering (agreement among participants).
- We need to treat out-of-locality and out-of-state evacuees the same. Consideration should be given to the amount of funds the locality has received from the state to provide service in locality.
- Participants want state to provide funds and other assistance for sheltering people from other localities/states. Concern expressed for using “own” money to provide services for those out of jurisdiction. It was thought by some that there would be an issue of dealing with the people whether they are in shelters or on the streets.
- Question was posed: Is the locality in charge after the state comes in?
- There is a need for shelter evaluation, i.e., cost, capacity, guidelines. Discussion occurs around Red Cross’s shelters standards, which are based on square footage requirements, guidelines based on the amount of time shelter open, etc.
- Localities requested assistance in identifying the numbers of potential evacuees coming to a locality. What’s the demand? Can they meet the demand under existing guidelines? Red Cross’s or others?
- Each locality needs to do capacity planning based on priorities. Issue: What is the issue around priorities? People within locality versus people from the outside. Who should set priorities? Some thought the locality should and that residents within locality should have priority.

- Concern expressed that if the locality sets priorities, discrimination may occur, based on economics, race.
- It was felt that shelters should not turn people away other than the shelter's capacity had been reached.
- Plans must be developed based on capacity both for short-term and long-term sheltering.
- Question: How is the state using its own resources, such as universities and colleges, etc., for sheltering?

The State Role and "Super Shelters"

- We need to start talking about "super shelters" (Fort Pickett). Local and state governments must come to agreement on when and how these are to be used.
- These shelters should be identified for use for evacuees from major events by state and federal governments. Memorandum of agreement and contracts could be prepared with private sector for potential shelters ahead of any event. State government could also develop contracts for services, i.e., security, health care, etc., prior to any event. Lessons should be learned from the Fort Pickett experience even though it was not used.
- The purpose of "super shelters" needs to be clarified. The current purpose is to process people so they can be assimilated back into their communities or move to other communities. The shelters are to be short-term.
- The state should identify all the potential schools, state facilities, etc. that could potentially serve as "super shelters" as well as other facilities within Virginia's borders owned/managed by the private sector/federal government.
- It is important to keep families together and not separate them as was planned at Fort Pickett. They are already under too much stress to be separated. It was noted that the Methodist Conference Center at Blackstone was to have been used for intact families if families had been evacuated to Fort Pickett.
- The impact on local government resources has to be taken into consideration when "super shelters" are located in their jurisdiction(s). There is impact on welfare, law enforcement, security, schools, transportation systems and infrastructure.
- It was suggested that "super shelters" needs to be located at key points near the transportation corridors that cross the state for easy access by evacuees and services.
- There appeared to be general agreement that the State must assist local government with services and resources to deal with the impact when "super shelters" are located in their jurisdiction.

Lead-Time Decision Model Review

- Question: Is 48 hours enough time? Comment: In City of Richmond, I need 72 hours to evacuate 30,000 people (if everything goes well).

- Comment from VDEM resource: the 48 hours is the period of time when state resources are to be mobilized. It is up to the locality to decide when to evacuate. A lot of pre-mobilization work will have to occur in good faith up front. The 48 hours should be followed by 27 hours time period to move folks.
- Guidance to the state: The evacuations/plans need to be incident specific. We tend to be reactive rather than proactive. Just because you muster the resources doesn't mean you will use them. Some meaningful discussion about threat and direction needs to go into conference call capability.
- Comment was made that because of Katrina if people are told to evacuate in the next year, more will take the threats seriously and leave the area. We need public education to tell people who needs to go and in what direction. The public education needs to be constant.
- Prior to an event, public education should be heighten because people won't listen until the event is right on the horizon. All media should be used in the 24/48 hours prior to the event. There should be consistency of message and use of terms. It should be statewide and involve all agencies/resources. State should take the lead in public education so there is consistency of message/best use of resources in getting the word out to public.
- Continue the modeling efforts that VDOT currently is pursuing so decision makers will have something from which to work in the determination of evacuation.

Predetermined Destinations and Population Estimates

- Red Cross indicated the numbers are already available relative to populations to be moved and capacity of their potential shelters.
- The VDEM resource person indicated there are no predetermined destinations. They have not been determined at the state level.
- The comment was made that if the state has set up "super shelters," then there are predetermined shelters.
- The suggestion was made that the state needs to determine predetermined destinations for longer-term housing (setting up trailers) and that they needed to hooked into areas that already have the infrastructure in place to support the evacuees.
- A long-term scenario needs to be developed by the state. The state should take the leadership in mapping long-term sites should they ever be needed. The identification of local sites needs to be coordinated with local government.
- Trailer villages should be temporary and last case scenario. People should be moved out of them and assimilated into as a normal lifestyle as possible. There should be an effort to keep Virginians in Virginia. There needs to be a plan for each family. Trailers should only be the first step. All this should be a part of the reentry and recovery efforts.
- Localities perceive they would be overwhelmed should "super shelters" and trailer villages reside in their jurisdictions and would look to the state for guidance and resources to sustain the effort.

- There was general agreement that the state needs to work with localities to look at capacity, capability relative to predetermined destinations. Plans need to be in writing, be understood and exercised. Available resources also need to be in the plan (in writing).
- It as suggested by one person there is a real need to do citizen drills and education that public education is missing and so there is more confusion when an actual event occurs.
- There was general agreement that regardless of event, the state should do an assessment and identify where the potential shelters are (short-term, long-term, all hazard, event-specific, etc., along with available capacities).
- This was followed by comments by some that local governments should make the decision on where their populations would go. Red Cross representative indicated most state plans prescribe the route of evacuation and there are staggered openings of facilities based on demand.
- There was some variance in viewpoint regarding the issue of “telling people where to go” and whether there was a state role in doing so. Some saw it as an issue of “who” delivers the message as well as what the message is. Several participants mentioned they have received calls in the past asking, “where do I to go?” One person commented that having the sites predetermined is a tool in a toolbox and it enables pre-agreements to be developed prior to an event. It was also suggested that plans should be in place before information is provided with the person being evacuated making the decision as to where.
- There appeared to be some agreement that the state, at the least, could do the following:
 1. Determine some destinations
 2. Do an assessment of capacity/capability and works out agreements, particularly around buildings under state control
 3. Identify possible staging areas where people could go and then be directed to elsewhere. Staging areas could do some processing (registry) so people could be tracked in the event people get “lost.”
- A nonprofit representative indicated there is a need to capture private citizens’ desire/institutions of faith capacity to house individuals/families in private homes or otherwise unoccupied housing provided by them. He felt there is a role for the state to identify potential housing using the state-level faith network (VOAO) and develop a database from which people can draw. The state assures that there is someone available to receive this information so localities can draw on it for housing resources. There is a need to clarify player and roles because a network system already exists.
- It was suggested that the public through public education, need to be trained to turn to the local media to receive information during a time of evacuations.
- It was suggested that consideration needs to be given to seasonal populations (tourists) that may need to be evacuated and their needs. They may swell the

numbers needing shelter and/or need assistance moving toward their home destinations.

Transportation Issues – Availability, Mass Transit, Private Sources

- Definition: What is mass transit? Response: Anything available to be used by public other than personal car or truck.
- A representative from Norfolk stated the city has an agreement with the schools to use 350 school buses for the evacuation of residents. The problem is there are no drivers.
- The representative from Virginia Council of Churches said there are churches with buses and drivers. A cooperative agreement could be developed for use during evacuations.
- It was suggested that the state develop an agreement with the National Guard to provide drivers for school buses and the state, to otherwise, assist local governments with getting drivers.
- The question was raised: How do people without personal vehicles get to mass transit? It was reported that Norfolk is looking at busing residents to train facilities. When asked what they needed from the state, they stated, the state needs to negotiate with Amtrak and CSX to bring in passenger trains on freight tracks. They stated they had looked at cargo planes but had dismissed the idea when it was discovered it would take too many to handle the numbers.
- In addition, it was suggested the state explore ways (legislation, etc.) to address the insurance on cars so people can leave their extra cars at home.
- The question of medical transport was raised. It was asked that the state consider an agreement with Operation Blessing (has air capacity for special needs). It was also suggested that staging areas be set up in localities for special needs populations. In addition, agreements should be developed with hospitals for those with special needs. It was also noted that some/many medically fragile people would have to have support staff with them to address their needs enroute.
- It was suggested the state revisit and develop guidelines for evacuation of hospitals and other health related facilities. It was stated that buses would not be the best way to transport special needs folks and those that are medically fragile.
- The question becomes even if buses are available, who is going to drive them? Norfolk is identifying the number of medically fragile people that would have to be evacuated in order to get a sense of numbers. It was suggested the state explore obtaining commercial licenses on a temporary basis for drivers.
- It was noted that people dependent on government services on a daily basis would increase exponentially in a disaster event.
- It was suggested the state look at best practices/learnings relative to hurricane evacuation during Katrina.
- A higher education representative stated she had concerns regarding student evacuations. There are schools where many students have cars and there are those where students do not have cars.

- It was suggested that a database should be established at the state level with people who have medical licenses and certifications so they can be called upon during a disaster for assistance with medically fragile people during an evacuation and while the patients are in shelters. It was stated some of these registries already exist because of the state's licensing procedures. There is a need to tap into it and develop agreements.
- The issue was raised regarding gas availability along the evacuation route and concern of gas shortages. The VDOT representative reported that plans are being developed to provide gas, water, and ice and portable toilets along evacuation routes.

Enroute Logistics and Law Enforcement and First Response Organizations

- Coordinate with localities to clarify enroute logistics (i.e., reversing lanes of traffic). The plans need to be developed prior to an event so there is clarity in implementation
- Real time coordination and communication between senders of persons being evacuated and the receivers (shelters, jurisdictions) is needed

This concluded the discussion relative to the issues that had been identified prior to the session. The additional issues that were identified at the beginning of the session were reviewed. Some had been dealt with in the process of dealing with the above issues. Comments on others follow:

Security Checks – Evacuees and Staff

- The state should research the legality of doing background checks on staff and evacuees. The issue was raised as to whether resources existed to do security checks, particularly during mass evacuations.
- It was thought that security checks would be an issue in “super shelters” and the state would need to address it.
- It was noted that more law enforcement personnel would be needed in a larger shelter versus a smaller one resulting in more security personnel per number of clients.

Expectations of People

- Participants saw a role for the state in helping the population be more realistic about what the state and local governments can and cannot do in disasters. They would like assistance in “ramping” down expectations relative to the responsibility of government and more about “ramping up” personal responsibility.

Wrap around Services with Long-Term Sheltering

- The state is to explore agreements with state agencies/nonprofit sector on how services can be provided.

Medications – Power of Attorney

- The role of the state was undefined. It was acknowledged this would be challenging to coordinate and that paperwork doesn't always travel with the patient/client.

Adjustment of Traffic for Population

- Public must be off the roads when necessary during a disaster; however, there is a recognition that the host localities will have to have business as usual (services to available to own population when needed while evacuations underway)

Reentry and Long-Term Recovery

- The state should develop a long-term strategy for reentry and recovery.

Parking Lot

During the session, participants were invited to put any comments on a “parking lot” they did not feel they could express openly or the information did not fit into the issues being discussed or if they wanted to provide additional detail on any issue under discussion. The following information was posted.

- Undocumented persons – how to handle
- Consider taking schools off line as shelters to minimize cost and disruption. Locate replacement facilities
- We need to talk about evacuation when there are disasters without any warning. What do we do with something like a terror attack?
- Every jurisdiction needs an all-hazard shelter with generator power to include HVAC. The building could be a recreation center, school, etc., designed to accommodate (converted to) sheltering. It should be subsidized with state funds.
- Re: SMA and sheltering staff. 1) Just need AGO to say current agreement supports initiative. 2) Need to still work out reimbursement issues. 3) Need to pre-identify facilities/staffing.
- Have the state coordinate with the state's Veterinary Medicine Association to plan for staffing/facility needs for shelters that allow pets rather than localities doing this in a “piecemeal” fashion.
- Legislation is required to bring sheltering into a state responsibility needs to be passed. Establish state definitions for shelter terms: evacuation shelter, disaster

shelter, long-term shelter, special needs shelter, “refuge of last resort. Establish local mass care planning groups including nonprofit, government, for profit. State resources should support local shelters. Virginia needs to develop stockpiles of shelter and feeding supplies to be available (mobile trailers) to localities providing evacuation shelters.

Expectations of the State

In summary, the following actions were seen, as ones participants would like the state to pursue in order to support evacuation and sheltering efforts at the state and local level:

- Define terms – special needs, at-risk populations, types of shelters, successful evacuation
 - Bring clarity to roles and responsibilities as well as communication/coordination flow
 - Address the issue of capacity and capability – shelters (different types) and staffing
 - Support identifying sites, destinations cooperatively with local government and other state entities (state owned), etc.
 - Address issues of reimbursement and loss of revenue
 - Develop memorandum of understanding/agreement/contracts with potential service providers/resources, particularly with state agencies/organizations and statewide nonprofit entities delineating roles and responsibilities prior to any event
 - Partner with others to increase capability and capacity at local level to manage the process in the event of a disaster.
 - Develop a statewide public education effort focused on what government can and cannot do in the event of a disaster and ramping up the need for personal responsibility and ownership.
 - Develop and maintain databases of resources that support implementation of evacuation and sheltering functions
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