A CONSEQUENCE MANAGEMENT APPROACH
TO DISASTER MANAGEMENT: WHAT IS PREPAREDNESS? PART 2

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…many calculations lead to victory and few calculations to defeat…

- Sun Tzu, The Art of War

In this series of articles, a consequence management approach to the reactive elements of disaster management is discussed. The basic departure point of the authors is that consequences and the responsibilities for dealing with those consequences forms a logical and useful point of departure and organising framework for dealing with disaster preparedness and response. The first article in this series stated the case for a consequence management approach, while the follow-on articles will unpack the details of a consequence management approach to disaster management.

Although initially planned as an article on response management, the authors have decided to dedicate this second article in the series to the concept of preparedness, which is key to being ready to manage consequences.

Preparedness means to anticipate and prepare for impacts and response to such impacts.

In the context of disaster management, preparedness is a result of the consideration of disaster hazards, options available to avoid or reduce those hazards, a realistic assessment of the possible negative hazard impact remaining and then putting measures in place so that a state of readiness for that hazard impact is achieved. Preparedness in essence means readiness to respond to contingencies and is achieved through the development of possible scenarios that could develop and appropriate actions to deal with those scenarios to protect life, property, critical and essential services, the environment and the functioning of communities.

Preparedness deals with those hazards that cannot be eliminated or sufficiently reduced to totally avoid negative hazard impacts. Preparedness can be achieved at a micro or macro scale, for example having equipment available at a local municipality to contain hazardous spills or having a national heavy urban search and rescue team available to respond at a national or international level.

The contingencies for which preparedness is required will be identified during risk assessment and the consideration of risk reduction options and their effectiveness. Preparedness deals primarily with residual risk, those possible hazard impacts that cannot be prevented or sufficiently mitigated.

Since an incident in a jurisdiction may take place at any time, it is necessary to maintain preparedness plans, implementing procedures and the organisation involved in a constant state of readiness so that an effective response can be rapidly effected if necessary.

Preparedness involves actions to establish and sustain prescribed levels of capability necessary to execute a full range of incident management operations. Preparedness is implemented through a continuous cycle of planning, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating and taking action to correct and mitigate. Preparedness within a holistic system would focus on guidelines, protocols, and standards for planning, training, personnel qualification and certification, equipment certification and publication management.

Those activities undertaken to ensure constant readiness constitute the preparedness programme and include strategies to developed and implemented including the following:

- Early warning systems
- Management and institutional arrangements
- Emergency and contingency planning
- Aid agreements
- Response planning and
- Training, drills, rehearsals and exercises.

Preparedness requires a coordinated approach. A major objective of preparedness is to ensure mission integration and

interoperability in response to developing incidents across functional and jurisdictional lines, as well as between public and private organisations.

Risk reduction activities are important elements of preparedness and provide a critical foundation across the incident management spectrum from prevention through response and recovery.

Preparedness is the responsibility of individual jurisdictions and organisations but is also a collective concern. The responsibility for preparedness entails coordinating various preparedness activities among all appropriate agencies within a jurisdiction, as well as across jurisdictions and with private organisations. This coordination is effected by mechanisms that range from individuals to small committees to large standing organisations; collectively these can be called preparedness organisations, as they serve as ongoing forums for coordinating preparedness activities in advance of an incident. Typically, such preparedness organisations could be subcommittees or working groups of a jurisdiction-level disaster management advisory forum. Preparedness organisations represent a wide variety of committees, planning groups and other organisations that meet regularly and coordinate with one another to ensure an appropriate focus on planning, training, equipping and other preparedness requirements within a jurisdiction and/or across jurisdictions. The needs of the jurisdictions involved will dictate how frequently such organisations must conduct their business, as well as how they are structured. When preparedness activities routinely need to be accomplished across jurisdictions, preparedness organisations should be multijurisdictional.

Preparedness organisations at all jurisdictional levels should:
- Establish and coordinate emergency plans and protocols including public communications and awareness
- Integrate and coordinate the activities of the jurisdictions and functions within their area of responsibility
- Establish the standards, guidelines and protocols necessary to promote interoperability among member jurisdictions and agencies
- Adopt standards, guidelines and protocols for providing resources to requesting organisations, including protocols for incident support organisations
- Set priorities for resources and other requirements and
- Ensure the establishment and maintenance of multi-agency coordination mechanisms, including JOCs, mutual-aid agreements, incident information systems, nongovernmental organisations and private-sector outreach, public awareness and information systems and mechanisms to deal with information and operations security.

Preparedness or contingency planning includes anticipating and planning for a specific occurrence but not yet implementing the plan.

When disaster preparedness is discussed, it should of course be remembered that preparedness is not only required of professional emergency and essential services but also of members of the general public as well as commerce, industry and institutions.

Individuals and households in a community at risk of being impacted upon by any specific hazard cannot be mere spectators; they will need to consider what they will do when impact is imminent or is occurring and they will need to go over to action.

Businesses need to maintain a level of preparedness in order to minimise the business impact of known hazards and ensure their sustainability.

Public services and institutions such as hospitals and schools should be prepared to deal with potential hazards so that they can ensure continuity of their service delivery as well as the safety of their clients.

Preparedness planning should consider corrective actions designed to implement adjustments to resources and/or plans and procedures that are based on lessons learnt from actual incidents or from training and exercises. Preparedness planning should also consider the post-incident transition from pure response to recovery, which addresses actions beyond rapid damage assessment and those necessary to provide immediate life support for victims.

In the next article the authors will discuss preparedness planning and the hierarchy of preparedness plans that enable jurisdictions to conduct effective consequence management.