

The NFPA 1600 Standard on Emergency/Disaster Management: New Edition Expected in 2004

By Gunnar J. Kuepper, CEO, Emergency & Disaster Management, Inc., Los Angeles, California

A new edition of the NFPA 1600 Standard on Emergency/Disaster Management and Business Continuity Programs can be expected in early 2004. In May 2003, the committee met for three days in San Diego, Calif., discussed public comments, considered changes, and finalized the new document.

The NFPA 1600 committee is comprised of a maximum of 30 delegates representing emergency management agencies, fire departments, private businesses and corporations, insurance companies, and individuals with special expertise. While some of the committee members are also members of IAEM, a designated IAEM representative has not attended in years.

The proposed standard revision will come up for a vote at the NFPA fall meeting in Reno, Nev., in November 2003. If accepted by the floor, the new edition is expected to be approved and published as an American National Standard early in 2004.

The fundamental concept of the standard has not changed. It still establishes a common set of criteria for emergency management programs in the public and private sectors. It provides the basic principles to assess, develop, implement and maintain programs designed to mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from any kind of crisis situation resulting from natural occurrences or manmade hazards.

The following are key elements, most of which are substantially unchanged, except as noted below:

- Laws and Authorities.
- Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment and Impact Analysis.
- Hazard Mitigation.
- Resource Management.
- Mutual Aid (new).

- Planning.
- Direction, Control and Coordination.
- Communications and Warning (modified).
- Operations and Procedures (modified).
- Logistics and Facilities (modified).
- Training.
- Exercises, Evaluations and Corrective Actions.

■ Crisis Communications and Public Information (modified).

■ Finance and Administration (modified).

Mutual Aid was formerly a subparagraph within Resource Management. By creating a separate section to address mutual aid, the committee emphasizes the importance of this topic. There were no additions to the previous requirement of establishing mutual aid agreements based on assessment of need. Mutual aid agreements are an effective way to share, obtain and coordinate resources, and should be developed whenever possible within and between private and public sector entities. An explanatory paragraph in Appendix A of the standard recommends that those agreements:

- be in writing,
- be reviewed by legal counsel,
- be signed by senior management, and
- define rules and responsibilities of the participating parties, liability, funding, cost and reimbursement policies.

The **Communications and Warning** section was augmented to cover communication needs and capabilities necessary to execute the components of the response and recovery plan. Additionally, the entity using NFPA 1600 must address the special requirements of communication between multiple

responding organizations and personnel.

The section, **Operations and Procedures**, was also expanded. Particular attention may be paid to life safety; and in addition, incident stabilization, the health, welfare and safety of people, and the protection of property and the environment must be considered.

Logistics and Facilities now encompasses establishing and maintaining an alternate facility capable of supporting continuity, response and recovery operations. The alternate emergency operations center (EOC), required by the new version of the standard, must be equipped and periodically tested, as is the primary facility.

The **Crisis Communications** section will now require the user to improve media management and public information activities. The entity must have the capability to establish and maintain:

- a central contact facility for the media,
- a disaster/emergency information handling system,
- pre-scripted information bulletin,
- a method to coordinate and clear information for release,
- the capability of communicating with special needs populations, and
- protective action guidelines and recommendations (e.g., shelter-in-place or evacuation).

In the final section, **Finance and Administration**, procedures shall be established to ensure that fiscal decisions are expedited and in accordance with established levels of authority and accounting principles. The procedures shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

- establishing and defining responsibilities for the program

(continued on page 7)

The Community and Homeland Security

(continued from page 6)

and local emergency and homeland security officials before, during and after a disaster or terrorist incident.

Customizing

Ana-Marie Jones (Oakland, Calif.) warned that “special needs communities are often isolated from services,” adding that “[programs] must have a trusted leader who either speaks or has access to the languages of all representative groups – you need more than a ‘Spanish press release.’” She suggested that participants “involve special needs communities before the disaster” to be effective.

Servicing diverse and “special needs” populations must be a critical component of any community-based homeland security effort. A number of ideas for addressing these needs were discussed by participants, including:

- Reprogramming Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding targeted for “special needs” populations to include homeland security efforts.

- Establishing language and culture banks in communities to facilitate communications and information flow between public

safety and emergency officials and special needs populations.

- Partnering with national associations and groups that represent the interests of “special needs” populations such as the elderly, veterans, minority populations, children and the disabled.

- Partnering with foundations and other philanthropic organizations, such as the Annie E. Casey Foundation that focuses its efforts and funding in disadvantaged communities.

- Partnering with local emergency management/ homeland security and public health operations to help these groups identify and serve special needs populations in the community.

Conclusion

The securing of America’s homeland will prove impossible without the full participation of each and every community. Local officials and first responders have thus far served well as the front line defense in the war against terror, but they are increasingly finding themselves overextended, under-equipped, and ill-informed. For local communities to continue to progress in this war, the resource, information, programming and customizing needs described in this article must be addressed.

About the Authors: Jane A. Bullock is a member of the Adjunct Faculty, Institute for Crisis, Disaster and Risk Management, The George Washington University, and a Principal of Bullock & Haddow LLC.

Damon P. Coppola is a Consultant for the Institute for Crisis, Disaster and Risk Management, The George Washington University, and a Senior Associate of Bullock & Haddow LLC.

George D. Haddow is a member of the Adjunct Faculty, Institute for Crisis, Disaster and Risk Management, The George Washington University, and a Principal of Bullock & Haddow LLC. You may contact Haddow with any questions at 301-270-5554 or via e-mail at george_haddow@hotmail.com.

NFPA 1600

(continued from page 5)

finance authority, including its reporting relationships to the program coordinator,

- program procurement procedures,
- payroll, and
- accounting systems to track and document costs.

Other Points

Another specific concern for public emergency management agencies is addressed in the new NFPA 1600 version. It directs that the entity establish an advisory committee in accordance with its policies. The role of such a committee is to provide input or otherwise assist in the program coordination.

Mandating such an advisory committee may, in some cases, violate applicable jurisdictional principles or existing legislation. Therefore, an advisory committee may be established only if in accordance with the policies of the entity.

Conclusion

The NFPA 1600 standard has become the accepted foundation for emergency management in the United States and elsewhere. The adoption of this or any other NFPA standard is voluntary; however, NFPA standards are generally accepted as industry standards. In the event that an existing emergency management/business continuity program ends up in litigation, its contents may very well be compared by the court to the requirements of NFPA 1600.

About the Author: Gunnar J. Kuepper is Chief of Operations with Emergency & Disaster Management, Inc. (EDM) in Los Angeles, Calif. He is an appointed principal on the NFPA 1600 committee and serves as the IAEM Region 9 President. He can be reached at gjk@edmus.info.

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