

Regional Law
Safety & Justice
Committee



REGIONAL LAW SAFETY AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Thursday, September 29, 2016

7:15 – 9:00 A.M.

King County Regional Communications and Emergency Coordination Center (RCECC)

Operations Room,

3511 NE 2nd St, Renton, WA 98056

Map: http://www.kingcounty.gov/~media/operations/it/radio/RCB/RCECC_Map_and_directions.ashx?la=en

AGENDA

Theme: Emergency Preparedness and Cascadia Rising

- **Coffee and Networking:** Beginning at 7:15 am *Coffee provided by RCECC*
- **Welcome**
 - Emergency Management Advisory Committee (EMAC) Chair Sean Kelly, Mayor, Maple Valley
- **Introduction to the Regional Communication and Emergency Coordination Center**
 - Jody Miller, Deputy Director, King County Office of Emergency Management
- **Panel Topics: Local Government Collaboration in Emergency Planning and Lessons Learned from Cascadia Rising**
 - Jody Miller, Deputy Director, King County Office of Emergency Management
 - Barb Graff, Director, Seattle Office of Emergency Management
 - Mike Ryan, EM Coordinator, SHS Region 6/Zone One

Mayor Sean Kelly of Maple Valley and the Chair of the Emergency Management Advisory Committee (EMAC) welcomed the group and reflected on his path to public service working in emergency management and education. Mayor Kelly emphasized how lucky King County is to have the RCECC facility as many other counties do not have such resources.

Mayor Kelly has been an EMAC member for three and a half years and currently serves as the chair. The organization performs community outreach, emergency operations and provides training. The theme of 2016 was Cascadia Rising. The exercise led to lessons learned from regional, state, and local perspectives.

Deputy Director of the King County Office of Emergency Management (KCOEM) Jodi Miller then provided background on the RCECC and KCOEM. The facility was built in 2000 and OEM moved in in 2003. The Sheriff's Communications Section occupies one side of the building and OEM occupies the other. While the facility was state of the art when OEM moved in, there are now some outdated components and technologies. They are implementing upgrades to ensure the best possible technology for emergency management partners.

The role of the center is coordination. Whenever another jurisdiction even appears to be overwhelmed or has the possibility of being overwhelmed, Ms. Miller requested they call the duty officer and they will

open the facility to help affected communities. Ms. Miller emphasized that the resource should be utilized whenever there is a chance it could be needed so that mobilization can begin early, even if it turns out its not needed. The facility can be mobilized pre-emptively, even if the affected community is not sure what resources will be necessary. Ms. Miller acknowledged that King County had been slow to provide services in the past, but has shifted to a more responsive model.

Ms. Miller described the goal of the facility as providing information and resources. In an emergency situation, there is a lot going on and giving people the best information enables better decision-making. The team wants to be agile enough to deal with isolated issues, even if they don't affect a large area. At the other end of the spectrum, an exercise like Cascadia Rising prepares for an incident that affects the whole county. In the event that staff cannot travel to work at the center, they may show up in partner communities. The goal is to be in a position where communities don't even need to ask and OEM is able to assist in the decision making process regarding need.

Five staff work at the center on a daily basis and in events such as Cascadia, every seat in the large space is full for days. Each staff member has experienced real events with large mobilizations. The organization is scalable from a few people to a whole room.

The panel then discussed the three positions represented: city (Barb Graff – City of Seattle), county (Jodi Miller), and zone (Mike Ryan). The three panelists described their long history working together, which enables swift and smooth communication between three different entities.

Ms. Graff first described the structure from a City of Seattle perspective:

The Seattle Office of Emergency Managements facilitates three different groups:

- A Disaster Management Committee, which meets monthly to share best practices, train, and discuss issues. The group is tightly connected from their monthly work together.
- The Mayor's Executive Emergency Board, which meets quarterly to practice the policy operations role. That team trains for unusual situations.
- The Strategic Work Group, which meets every other week to practice and improve upon emergency response plans.

Seattle OEM activates six to eight times a year. Ms. Graff described the most recent activation for the Seattle Pride Parade, which occurred just after the mass shooting in Orlando. The largest event activation was the Seattle Seahawks Super Bowl parade, where 700,000 people were concentrated in a small area in the freezing cold. Ms. Graff recounted the challenges of an overwhelmed cell phone network and creative solutions to ensure that emergency situations could be responded to. The group trains to deal with any situation that could occur, such as an explosion or a moving crowd.

City of Seattle activates more frequently than King County and the first thing they do is contact King County and the State. They also incorporate a wide range of other partners, such as Seattle King County Public Health. Ms. Graff gave examples of proactive planning such as coordinating between all assisted living facilities in the area to ensure that during an evacuation, people can be moved to appropriate facilities. Ms. Graff reminded the group that in the Pacific Northwest an 8th of an inch of snow can be a disaster. A task force model developed by King County to rescue people stranded on busses is in place.

Graff emphasized the importance of coordination between jurisdictions, as disasters have no respect for political boundaries. Each organization needs to provide consistent information, training, and public outreach, for example by providing consistent guidance of precautions for H1N1 prevention.

Public education and ensuring individuals have a plan is essential. 11 years ago polls showed only 20% of people in our region were prepared for an emergency situation. Now that is up to about 50%, but 100% preparation is not realistic. However, when a significant portion of the population is prepared, it decreases the calls to 911 seeking outside help.

Mike Ryan opened his section by explaining that legally, small cities and communities have the same responsibility to react to an emergency as the City of Seattle (RCW 38.52). Each community has a designated person to handle emergency preparedness and coordination. While a few have a FTE in that role, the majority have assigned this to a person as additional duties. Mr. Ryan's role as Zone Coordinator is to support these local officials and provide help, subject matter expertise and support during emergencies. The Zone Coordinator has the responsibility of staying in contact with local officials and remain aware of region-wide threats and hazards. Mr. Ryan recounted examples such as the most recent incident of the large fire in downtown Bothell. Bothell opened the EMC and both the Zone Coordinator and KCOEM were ready to offer whatever support was needed.

Mr. Ryan shared information on the three zones in King County. Each has a coordinator who is willing to speak with public officials and others. These zones parallel the fire response Zones.

Jodi Miller then described King County's OEM structure. She described their work as having two functions, the day-to-day work and the emergency work, which are related. Each OEM staff member has a specialty, but all are cross-trained practitioners. Ms. Miller highlighted Walt Hubbard's work in implementing a stable and effective organization and recounted the significant improvements under his leadership. While King County has more resources than many jurisdictions, Ms. Miller emphasized that the organization remains understaffed and under resourced given the large population and geographic area it serves. It is through coordination with others that makes OEM successful. The organization tailors services based on the community – treating people equitably rather than equally.

Ms. Miller gave an example of working with Skykomish during a flood incident last year. The incident work was an opportunity to update plans, purchase a generator, and get emergency supplies. Skykomish has a potential to host stranded travelers if Highway 2 is closed. Ms. Miller described other efforts in Pacific and Auburn. In each instance the County works for the city manager or other authority to fill the gap, rather than taking over.

OEM Staff are in liaison roles with cities to help determine what resources are needed. The RLSJC group expressed interest in meeting these liaisons, which Ms. Miller offered to facilitate.

The group then discussed the challenges of preparedness, as any jurisdiction is "only as prepared as our neighbors are." Ms. Miller emphasized the importance of neighbors helping neighbors and being creative in measuring preparedness, as the number of informational pamphlets is not a reliable indicator of preparedness.

OEM works to take advantage of public interest, such as that generated by last year's New Yorker article on the potential for a severe earthquake, to encourage preparation. Emergency preparedness national standards are relatively new, as the sector has become professionalized, with individuals educated in

the discipline. Seattle is accredited and Pierce County is accredited, but very few jurisdiction have met accreditation standards.

Finally, the panel discussed the lessons learned from the Cascadia Rising exercise. Mr. Ryan mentioned communication as a major lesson and distinguished between the volume of non-essential information (“white noise”) and usable information. There is not a common standard or tool for communicating. King County OEM is working to implement a common tool and even got the vender to provide rebates for individual jurisdictions who had previously purchased their own systems.

The panel also discussed the importance of push vs. pull for resources and in coordinating with non-governmental organizations with emergency plans, such as the Mormon church. OEM works to spread preparedness training during National Night Out and at neighborhood block parties.

After the conclusion of the panel presentation, the group had an engaged discussion regarding preregistering volunteers, universal badging, and the availability of federal resources.