

Notes from Red Cross Shelter Training Meeting
St. Marks Church October 2, 2007

The Red Cross shelter refresher training meeting was held at St. Mark's Church at 7 PM October 2, 2007. It was moderated by Paul Hundley, manager of disaster services at the Red Cross. Approximately 40 people from various church shelter teams attended. St. Augustine attendees included Jeanette Ortiz, Kathryn O'Meara, Jay Brumbaugh, Terry Knapp, Kim Ackerman, David and Carol Gibson, and Paul Bedard.

Purpose: To provide refresher training in shelter operations, including background on the Red Cross procedures for opening emergency shelters, and gain feedback from shelter teams for two Red Cross proposals.

Steve Astoria, the host from St. Marks Church, reviewed the operating rules for the meeting.

- It is "our" meeting, meaning all the attendees.
- Respect peoples' time. Start on time and close at the set time (9 PM).
- If not all agenda items are complete, move these to the next meeting.
- Appoint a time keeper to help keep the meeting on task and aware of the available time.
- Note: Steve (the time keeper) kept Paul aware of the available time; the meeting ended promptly at 9 PM.
- We should adopt this method for our team meetings at St. Augustine.

Paul Hundley provided background on the Red Cross decision-making process and time line for opening a shelter. Response actions to a disaster situation and time line (Example: apartment fire):

- (1-2 hours) Fire department responds to fire; calls the Red Cross to provide assistance to residents evacuated from the building.
- (1 hour) Red Cross Disaster Action Team (DAT) alerted and comes to the disaster site
 - 3 DAT teams on call (for a week at a time); 12 members per team
- (1 hour) Red Cross DAT assesses the situation
 - Identifies the need for food, shelter, other services
 - Identifies available resources: hotel, restaurant, other
- (1-4 hours) Red Cross DAT determines whether to open a shelter
 - Note: Opening a shelter is rarely done
 - If too many clients for a hotel, open shelter
 - If race weekend, there may not be enough hotel rooms, open a shelter
 - If large event (hurricane) use government facility (school)
 - If small event, use faith-based facility (church shelter)
 - Call points of contact for faith-based facility availability
 - Call points of contact for shelter team (5 person minimum)
 - Preferred: all team members from same faith-based community
 - If not enough, fill from other faith-based community teams
- (1-2 hours) Shelter team responds and opens emergency shelter; team members report to operate the shelter; shelter ready to receive clients
- (1-10 hours) estimated time from start of disaster event until emergency shelter is open and ready to receive clients

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- There is an obvious need to reduce this time to better serve those affected/displaced by the disaster
- Richmond and surrounding seven counties have a standing memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Red Cross to support 9 emergency shelters:
 - (2) Richmond
 - (2) Henrico
 - (1 each) Amelia, Goochland, Powhatan, Hanover, James City
 - Chesterfield: they will use county resources and its own shelter teams; they will use the Red Cross for shelter training
 - Hanover and Powhatan will provide their own shelter teams for the first 72 hours
 - Because of population demographics, there is a higher chance of the need for a shelter in Richmond than in the counties
 - Shelter teams and volunteers can expect to operate a shelter/serve as a shift team member in a shelter other than their own, in Richmond or one of the surrounding counties
 - Red Cross and Dept of Social Services will each provide a representative at Richmond shelters 24/7
 - Red Cross and Dept of Social Services teams alternate at shelters
 - Red Cross provides the food for its shelters
 - Food bank and food bank kitchen can provide up to 20,000 meals per day
 - Red Cross reimburses shelter teams who purchase, prepare and serve food
- Shelter staffing:
 - The Shelter Operations manual lists a number of staffing areas, however, the minimum number of staff for a shelter is 5
 - They need to cover the following areas: registration, health, feeding, dormitory and shift leader. Security will be provided by the local (city/county) law enforcement.
 - Shelter managers: plan to manage team members for the initial 24 hour period using three response teams (shifts) (of 5 people per team); know the availability of volunteers to staff each team.
- Five basic Red Cross response needs: Paul said that the Red Cross's mission at the chapter level has five components. They are developing documents that address these needs.
 - Public affairs and fund raising: getting out the word (tell their story) and getting financial support to sustain operations.
 - Assess the damage of the disaster; what is the size and scope; how many are affected; what resources are needed; what resources are available, etc.
 - Feed people: shelter, local community, first responders; deliver bulk supplies
 - Shelter people:
 - Red Cross is the lead in the US
 - In Virginia, the Department of Social Services (DSS) has this responsibility. Three options:

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- DSS operates its own shelters
- DSS and Red Cross collaborate in operating shelters
- Red Cross operates the shelters independently

Sandra Titus, the Red Cross person responsible for the list of organizations and contact persons for disaster relief volunteers, requested that representatives from the church shelter teams review and update the Red Cross contact person listing. Paul Bedard did this for St. Augustine.

Paul Hundley presented the following idea for consideration by the shelter teams:

Shelter teams would be asked to maintain a roster of volunteers who can respond on short notice to emergencies and provide this roster to the Red Cross on a regular basis (monthly?). This will save the Red Cross valuable time (estimated 2-4 hours) in identifying emergency shelters and shelter teams to respond to requirements on short notice. What it requires:

- A planning point of contact person (at St. Augustine: Katharine, Paul and ?) and a backup person who can contact (from available team members) a 5-10 member shelter team.
- Provide availability dates for the St. Augustine shelter team for the given period (example: November 2007); repeat this every month by a certain date.
- Canvass shelter volunteers and get a commitment to respond to short notice notification for a specific period of time. Example:
 - Identify what dates and shifts (3 per day) each volunteer is available/not available (Example: November 2007).
 - Prepare a call list by date and shift of who could respond. This includes Red Cross trained and untrained volunteers. Manage it on a monthly basis. Note: This could be very labor intensive.
 - Maintain the listing of shelter availability and team/team member availability (5-person team as base) of who could respond by shift period and provide it to the Red Cross and the team volunteers.
 - Paul was asked if the Red Cross has blank forms that could be used for shelter team call lists. The Red Cross has many admin forms, so Paul will check on this application.

Shelter volunteer recruitment and training:

Paul Hundley recognized that it is difficult to maintain interest and readiness for shelter operations among volunteers when they are rarely called to operate a shelter. Yet the need is great. When the requirement comes, the response has to be quick and effective. Communication with volunteers and periodic training can maintain visibility of the need, while sustaining interest in shelter operations and enabling the readiness to make it work at the shelter team level. Paul encouraged the shelter teams to meet at least quarterly and include a training element in their meetings. He offered help from the Red Cross in providing training opportunities, with staff attending shelter meetings to present/discuss

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topics of interest, etc. He spoke for the need to maintain communication with volunteers to maintain their interest and availability, and provide training opportunities.

Annual shelter training exercise:

The Red Cross is planning its second annual training exercise for the February-March 2008 period (to avoid holidays and Easter). Paul asked for volunteers to work with the Red Cross staff to help plan the exercise (send him an email or call if interested). The basic structure is in place from this year's exercise. Paul will send out an email to all the teams with the details.

Paul offered a training and exercise opportunity for shelter teams that serve as host shelters for the exercise. They need 4-5 teams to operate shelters for the exercise. The Red Cross would conduct a shelter operations class at these teams' location during an evening two weeks prior to the exercise to train and certify all their team members, followed by a shelter simulation exercise the Saturday preceding the exercise. This would also serve as a walk-through in preparation for the exercise.

Red Cross Push Packages:

Paul provided information about contingency stocks of disaster supplies (food, water, cots, sleeping mats, blankets, etc) that the Red Cross has organized into push packages that can be pre-positioned in locations to support recovery from anticipated events like hurricanes, etc.

Paul Hundley provided the following handouts for use by shelter teams:

- Shelter Operations Management Tool Kit
- Red Cross Disaster Services Program Guidance
- Richmond Shelter Opening Process
- Mass Care Shelter Staffing Guidelines
- Push Package Guidance

Sandra Titus gave Paul Bedard the promised Red Cross sign kit plus two packages of posters (one in English and one Spanish).

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Bedard
St. Augustine Church Emergency Shelter Team