

Notes from Red Cross Mock Disaster Exercise

St. Mark's Church

February 11, 2006 (8 AM-4 PM)

Attendees (St. Augustine): Pam Somma and Paul Bedard.

General: St. Mark's Church, Lucks Road, Richmond, hosted a Red Cross sponsored Mock Disaster exercise at their facilities. An outline of the events is provided below. This was an excellent opportunity to apply Red Cross shelter training to a practice situation. Our notes from observations are summarized below.

Mock Disaster Scenario: There was a fire at an apartment building. The Red Cross estimated that approximately 25-50 people may need shelter. The Red Cross determined that they needed to open an emergency shelter for the displaced persons. They contacted St. Mark's Church requesting that they open a shelter. The fire has disrupted telephone service in the local area, including St. Mark's Church.

Sequence of events (furnished by St. Mark's Church):

1) The Red Cross Emergency Operation Center (EOC) will be in operation with our mock shelter. So we will be interfacing with them as we would during a real Shelter operation. The Red Cross will also be setting up their HAM radio at St Marks and we communication with the Red Cross with it.

2) The day is shaping up like this

- hopefully 8:00 am - the mock event (disaster) will occur and the Red Cross EOC will respond.
- hopefully 8:30 - St Marks will get a request to open our shelter
- hopefully 9:00 - We will conduct a facility survey, signoff and open the shelter
- hopefully 9:30 - shelterees will arrive and register
- hopefully 10:30 - conduct an activity with the shelterees
- call in, receive, setup cots and establish the dormitory
- plan lunch, prepare lunch and plan but no not prepare dinner
- hopefully 12:00 - serve lunch
- hopefully 12:30 - finish lunch and clean up
- hopefully 1:00 - activity with shelterees
- hopefully 2:00 - close shelter, process out registration, complete close out activities, return cots, etc
- hopefully 2:30 - end Mock Shelter
- hopefully 2:30 to 4:30 - conduct feedback session, lessons learned, comments with Red Cross, Shelterees, and ourselves to learn what we did well and what we can do better.

Note: St. Mark's stayed close to their exercise plan. They opened the shelter, started registering clients (shelterees/observers from other church groups like St. Augustine's); held meetings for the clients, received cots and blankets from the Red Cross, established communications with the Red Cross Emergency Operations Center, served lunch to the clients, closed the shelter, and conducted an after action review of the exercise.

St. Mark's Church Goals of the Mock Disaster Exercise.

- Stand up (open) the emergency shelter
- Maintain communications with the Red Cross Emergency Operations Center
- Conduct registration of clients
- Provide feeding, dormitory, health and mental health services,
- Execute logistics support of registration, feeding and dormitory
- Maintain information flow from the EOC to shelter staff and clients
- Close the shelter
- Conduct an after action review to record lessons learned

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St. Mark's Shelter Team Organization. The shelter manager and shift leader supervised the operation and shelter staff as follows: There was a shelter team member responsible for each area, except health and mental health. The shelter manager requested Red Cross assistance for these two areas. The Red Cross provided people to perform these two tasks. St. Mark's provided separate rooms for health and mental health.

Shelter Manager.

- Red Cross coordination.
- Information.
- Health
- Mental Health

Shift Supervisor

- Registration
- Feeding
- Dormitory

Resources.

- The Red Cross furnished 25 cots, blankets, and adult comfort kits; and provided the lunch meal to the participants (pizza, beverage, packaged cookie). All were delivered in the Emergency Response Vehicle (ERV).
- The Red Cross set up a HAM radio for communications with the Red Cross EOC. They furnished hand held "walkie-talkie" radios for use by the St. Mark's shelter team for internal communications.
- St. Mark's provided juice, coffee, water and donuts after client Registration.

Initial team meeting. The Shelter Manager conducted a shelter team meeting at the start of the exercise.

- Announced goals of the exercise and reviewed Red Cross guidance: provide safe place where clients can get their life settled; treat all clients with respect and provide the same treatment and resources to all.
- Assigned responsibility of the shelter areas to team members.
- Outlined the supervision structure between the manager and shift supervisor.
- Provided the scenario information and time table of events and latest information from the Red Cross.
- Reviewed the shelter rules and discussed posting throughout the facility (registration, dormitory, etc). No guns, knives, etc.
- Outlined flow of clients from registration to dining and dormitory areas and control of clients' access in/out through the registration point.
- Discussed posting of signs in the shelter (already made). Need signs pointing to rest rooms.
- Announced meal schedule and need for sign.
 - Red Cross providing lunch meal.
 - Start meal planning for evening meal.

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- Identified resources to be provided by the Red Cross: cots, blankets, comfort kits, package for the health nurse.
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- Identified need for reading material, games, etc. for clients (for lounge and dormitory).
- Information: bulletin board to be set up near dormitory: rules, information about the disaster, feeding schedule.
- Communications:
 - Telephone service out (scenario)
 - Red Cross to set up HAM radio
 - Red Cross to provide hand radios (walkie-talkies) to shelter team
 - Forward client requests to contact next of kin to Red Cross EOC.
 - Shelter is not a service center. Other services information will be provided by the Red Cross: funds/identification, clothes lost in fire, where clients go after shelter closes, resettlement, counseling, job placement, etc.