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Practicum Methods and Research:
East County Fire & Rescue EOP Scope
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Abstract

East County Fire & Rescue (ECFR) operates in and around the city of Camas, Washington. This small fire and rescue entity is tasked with a plethora of daily responsibility ranging from medical emergencies to forested emergency issues. Because ECFR is tucked in with Vancouver Fire & Rescue as well as the Camas Fire Department, they are reliant upon each other in emergency situations to carry out mitigation, response, reaction and recovery strategies. Having a detailed Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) that includes hazards analysis, capabilities assessments and other concepts of operations is essential to having every operating entity on the same page, reporting to the correct appointed officials. The EOP also details mutual aid requests for state and federal resources as well as East County operational scope statistics. The organizational structure provides first response and mitigating parties the ability to correctly report information to the right people as well as provide a structure for decision making during emergency situations. It is the responsibility of the Incident Commander (top of the organizational structure) to have heard all necessary information to make decisions on immediate operations.

Literature Review

There was a significant amount of information to appropriately encompass all valuable information in an EOP. While much of the knowledge on the EOP structure was gained through the HLS undergraduate degree program, there was an immense amount of research needed to find the correct information and operational entities that would be involved in East County/Camas/Vancouver. One of the main assisting documents is an “Emergency Management

Support Function” written for King County, Washington. This document was used heavily in finding Washington State requirements and protocol in emergency response as well as mutual aid requests. The ECFR 2016 Annual Report was also heavily influential on the EOP. This detailed statistics and resources available to ECFR Stations 91, 92, 93, 94 and 95. It also allowed for some direct quotes to be taken and used to explain the ECFR scope as well as the operational capabilities available from ECFR staff. Other resources that were necessary came from Clark and Vancouver emergency response entities. Clark county uses CRESA (Clark Regional Comprehensive Emergency Services Agency) to detail their emergency operations. This helped detail some connections with the first response efforts and the private sector as well as public entities that will be lending a helping hand. These resources, along with other small references built a comprehensive and detailed EOP that will effectively bring structure and operational experience to any potential disasters in Southwest Washington.

Methods and Research

Throughout writing the EOP, there were significant barriers to overcome. Initially, setting up a structure and making sure that the plan would be inclusive enough to cover a wide array of potential disasters was of the utmost importance. This was done by reading other plans for different cities, mostly large metropolitan areas, and picking specific sections that would be necessary to create a detailed plan. Breaking the EOP into three main categories, followed by numerous subcategories was an essential first step because it allowed for the often repetitive information to be grouped up in a way that the reader could best understand. The initial category “Intro” is set up essentially to explain to the reader what an EOP encompasses, when it is used,

and who it mainly affects. Although this is very basic, it is essential because it sets up a scope of activity and allows the reader to understand if they are being taken care of by this EOP or not. Although very short, the introduction is very important in detailing what support agencies are used.

Section two is titled “Situational Overview” and details the capabilities of each fire and rescue entity. The Hazards Analysis Summary is integral to this text because it details a majority of the emergency situations in which this plan would be used. While more catastrophic events call for federal resources, the events detailed in this section are more area-appropriate and realistic. It also explains the numbers system in which emergency situations are categorized. Taken directly from the practicum assignment,

“The details outlined in this EOP will be called upon when all firefighter capabilities are exasperated. This will occur over a multitude of situations. If fire service operations abilities have been exceeded, there are competing requests for limited fire resources, local/state emergency proclamations have been made and fire zone coordinator have staffed essential areas.”

(Emergency Operations Plan East County, Camas/Washougal, Vancouver Fire & Rescue, 2017).

Because East County is a relatively small jurisdiction, it was important to find information outside of ECFR for the capabilities assessment. This was difficult because ECFR, Vancouver Fire and Camas/Washougal Fire do not have a comprehensive detailed assistance agreement that is published. To find this information, I had to research each entity individually to find out what resources would be best shared in this EOP in the event of a major disaster in Southwest Washington. For example, Vancouver Fire may be tending to a higher categorized

incident while a train rollover close to ECFR. Because ECFR is out of Vancouver's jurisdiction, they would request ECFR services. To access the necessary equipment, mutual aid and equipment agreements are written up. This is important because in emergency response, there is a plethora of possible situations. It is important to be able to rely upon outside assistance and mutual aid agreements in these situations. After all, this is what mutual aid agreements are meant for.

The most comprehensive section of this EOP is the "Concept of Operations". This section details codes, zones, staffing, and emergency support teams among many other subjects. The point of this section is to dive into the ECFR Scope portion of the EOP. Because ECFR is the main operating entity in reaching and creating this EOP, it was focused upon detailing its general operations, as listed in its 2016 report. This was one of the few times that there were direct quotes taken from outside sources and used in the EOP. Because a lot of ECFR operations are on a small scale, it is important to realize the functionality of a small Fire and Rescue entity like this. This was also outlined to detail the importance of mutual aid agreements and the writing of EOP's around the country. In an emergency situation, an "all hands on deck" mentality is relied upon from the first step of initial mitigation to the last step of recovery. With three operating response entities, it is also important to detail jurisdictional zones. While these zones may be useless in a catastrophic emergency, they are important for smaller scale events. It allows the assisting agencies to better split up the resources available at the time of the incident. This is even more essential in heavily forested jurisdictions like that of ECFR.

Including Review and Constant Progress Assurance in the "Concept of Operations" was a difficult decision. Review and Constant Progress Assurance is something I designed that

includes a majority of the details that the National Incident Management System (NIMS) specifies in its training and After Action Reports (AAR). I designed this to encompass all of the activities related to progressing protocol and operational awareness in emergency situations. The reason this could make up its own section is highlighted by the importance of these activities. This is what allows first response efforts to go smoothly. Without having been in action and under pressure in the past, first response efforts could potentially crumble in emergency situations. It is essential to provide funding to these agencies that allow them to work out the kinks in their operations and establish a successful culture for future incidents. A lot of the ideas put into the Constant Progress Assurance initiative are borrowed from the King County Emergency Support Function as well as other documents similar to EOP's in other parts of this country. While some jurisdictions choose not to include this type of information in their EOP because it does not directly correlate to initial mitigation, response or recovery, ECFR and the surrounding emergency support agencies have lacked the desired funding and/or placement of importance on these types of activities. Without training and practice, these EOP's could easily become disposable within hours of the initial emergency situation.

There were some issues when I was brainstorming ideas for the Constant Progress Assurance initiative. Some activities that were utilized by other jurisdictions across the U.S. provided an immense amount of training options. However, many of those cities and jurisdictions had a lot more operational spending allowances than ECFR. Combining efforts with Vancouver and Camas/Washougal would allow all three of these jurisdictions a better matched amount of funding for the projected activities, according to the EOP. Because in an emergency situation all of these entities will be combining in mitigation efforts, the combination makes

sense, especially for ECFR. The *Clark Regional Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan* delineated information on the politics of creating EOP's. This plan details the financial, equipment and resource sharing that would improve operational capabilities in an emergency to all entities involved. Allowing ECFR to become one of the supporting entities in that report was one of the reasons I developed the Constant Progress Assurance, encompassing all three fire and rescue entities. Included in the Concept of Operations is the information collection, analysis and dissemination. Many of these positions were difficult to find online. This is also because there are more operational entities in other EOP reports, like *Clark Regional Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan*.

The final section explored was "Operational Structure". This was perhaps the most difficult to research because of the lack of information and inclusion of ECFR in other EOP-type documents. Finding the basic structure in the King County EOP was important because it provided a visual representation of what the Incident Command Tree looks like and how decisions are made. The responsibilities breakdown was the most research-oriented part of writing this EOP. Because there are a lot of moving parts in any EOP, especially one encompassing three fire and rescue entities, there was difficulty in assessing which responsibilities needed to be elaborated upon, as well as which were essential. While there are undoubtedly many other entities involved in the EOP process, listing the main fire and rescue entities provides further explanation for what the majority of the EOP details.

There was tremendous value in researching and creating this EOP. The importance in EOP's and other operational documents is often overlooked because many feel it is one specific person's job to make tough decision in emergency situations. The lack of understanding in this

field is something that can not be overlooked going forward. As our climate continues to change, so will our history of natural and man-made catastrophic events. The future and advancement of American society and its ideologies lie within the country's ability to bounce back from whatever is thrown its way. EOP's across the country are aimed at allowing the public the proper assistance to respond and ultimately rely on first response agencies to help mitigate emergency situations. This EOP is very important to ECFR because of the encompassing effect it has on the fire and rescue entities of Southwest Washington. Because these agencies are spread out and have a large jurisdictional zone ranging from densely populated neighborhoods to heavily forested hills, it is important to be able to rely upon each other in emergency situations. Having these mutual aid agreements and equipment evaluations allows each agency to improve its scope of responsibility, while combining funding to provide more inclusive and modified training based on the threats pertinent to the area. As detailed above, the future is the most prominent and focused upon aspect of the EOP. Because there is an understanding of importance placed on training and the advancement of techniques and policy in the EOP, it essentially is an ever-adapting form of public policy. The training, operational capabilities, equipment, and relationships between these agencies should be constantly improving. In time, the progression of needs in Southwest Washington may shift, the EOP going along with it. The ultimate goal of this project is to allow the public the vessel with which to learn how it is being protected by its local emergency response entities. Far too often people overlook their safety and what is being done with their tax dollars. My hope is that this EOP provided detailed information on how local emergency responders work together for the betterment of the public.