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Marion County, Oregon Integration of School Emergency Preparedness

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Marion County, Oregon

Integration of School Emergency Preparedness



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Prepared for: Marion County

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Executive Summary

Collaboration between schools and emergency managers is paramount in addressing the whole community approach to emergency management for increasing preparedness (FEMA, 2011). As every disaster is local, a unified and collaborative approach should be taken to ensure schools are not a hindrance but rather an asset for preparedness, response and recovery efforts. Schools must have ownership and accountability for ensuring they are prepared for emergencies. Additionally, local emergency management agencies with their capabilities, capacity and knowledge must take action in response to the opportunity to build partnerships and expanded their efforts to create a resilient community.

Currently, public schools and emergency management partners are unclear about their own unique role and their shared capabilities resulting in inefficient use of resources in time of crisis. This proposal for Marion County Office of Emergency Management outlines the recommended actions to develop partnerships with local schools and school districts to be able to mitigate, plan for and respond to incidents as part of the community rather than a separate entity. Schools are tasked with providing a safe environment for teaching and learning, and therefore, must be integrated with the local, State, tribal, and Federal agencies who contribute to the well-being, health, safety, and security of the whole community (Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools, 2017). By joining together in collaborative partnerships, schools and the community will be more resilient.

Introduction

The Office of Emergency Management in Marion County Oregon oversees emergency management operations for nearly 341,000 residents in an area of 1,193 square miles (US Census Bureau, 2017). Of those residents, 24% are of public education school age. Marion County is home to 111 public schools incorporated into 10 school districts with Salem-Keizer School District being the second largest school district in Oregon (Oregon Department of Education, 2018). The mission statement for the Marion County Office of Emergency Management states that it “will ensure, through coordination with County and Local shareholders that the county is prepared to respond to, and recover from both natural and man-made incidents. This office will provide the leadership and support to reduce the loss of life and property through an all-hazards emergency management program of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery throughout Marion County” (Marion County, 2015).

Children, those that are under 18 and of school age, are a vulnerable population with respect to health and safety (World Health Organization, 2012). Children are separated from their parents or caregivers every workday to attend school or childcare. Because an emergency can happen anywhere and at any time, it is important that schools and childcare providers prepare to protect the children in their care. Two of the goals for the Office of Emergency Management for Marion County are “identifying and assisting in the mitigation of natural and human-caused hazards along with providing direction and coordination by being the liaison of activities between local, state and federal government in the response and recovery from emergencies and disasters (Marion County, 2015). Therefore, emergency management

agencies must play a pivotal role in supporting the local school districts which strictly deal with at-risk populations in emergency preparedness operations.

Problem Definition

Schools are entrusted to provide a safe environment for students each and every day. On the forefront of school administrator's priorities, school safety is increasingly becoming a hot topic with the increase of school shootings and severe weather patterns. Yet, school districts struggle to develop proactive and effective risk management programs to address the ever changing multitude of school safety and security concerns (Hayes, 2013). Schools are by in large, a city within a city. They transport, feed, mass shelter and take care of students' needs each and every day. However, emergency management practices such as mitigation, preparedness and response both from natural as well as manmade disasters have not been addressed. Schools need to be able operate as part of the community, not as a separate entity.

School buildings also serve other critical functions within the communities where they are located. They often serve as designated shelters for displaced families after a natural or manmade disaster. *In Loco Parentis*, the Latin term for in place of a parent, is the common law doctrine holding that educators assume custody of students in school (Stuart, 2015). So even when they may not be a designated shelter, school policy across the nation is that if children cannot be returned home safely, they must be sheltered in place in the school until parents can pick them up. So even if a school is not officially designated as a shelter, school policies have made them into *de facto* shelters.

Emergency preparedness in schools may not be consistent with emergency management concepts or standard practices and do not have a shared common language with emergency management partners. Furthermore, schools and emergency management partners are unclear about their own unique role in time of preparation and in crisis as well as their shared capabilities which results in an inefficient use of resources. Schools lack the knowledge, funding, resources and accountability to make emergency management principles a priority. Conversely, local emergency management agencies must address the topic of how the schools play a vital role in their community and emergency management efforts.

School district and building-level administrators are concerned about their lack of capabilities and planning for communications, sheltering, and reunification as well as the degree of readiness required for large emergencies such as high-intensity earthquakes (Rhodes, 2017). External collaborations with local emergency management experts are lacking across the board in schools. Events including Hurricane Katrina and the mass shooting tragedy at Virginia Tech have revealed serious vulnerabilities and exposed leadership to increased scrutiny relative to preplanning efforts and decision-making processes (FEMA, 2010).

MANDATES AND REGULATIONS:

In Oregon, there are two critical legislative documents that deal with school safety and emergency procedures; ORS 336.071 and OAR 581-022-2225. However, these mandates are commonly unbeknownst to school administration. They are not enforced, funded or regulated by the Oregon Department of Education. Furthermore, because these mandates are specific to schools, emergency management partners are unaware of the regulations set forth because the onus solely falls upon schools. Additionally, schools are required by Homeland Presidential Policy Directive 5 to be in compliance with the National Incident Management System, a critical element in addressing collaboration between local, state and federal emergency management.

SUMMARY OF OREGON REVISED STATUTE 336.071:

- All schools are required to instruct and drill students on emergency procedures so that the students can respond to an emergency without confusion or panic.

The emergency procedures shall include drills and instruction on:

- Fires;
 - Earthquakes, which shall include tsunami drills and instruction in schools in a tsunami hazard zone; and
 - Safety threats.
- Units of local government and state agencies associated with emergency procedures training and planning shall:
 - Review emergency procedures proposed by schools; and
 - Assist schools in the instruction and drilling of students in emergency procedures.

SUMMARY OF OREGON ADMINISTRATE RULE 581-022-2225:

The school district shall maintain a comprehensive safety program for all employees and students which shall:

- Include plans for responding to emergency situations
- Specify general safety and accident prevention procedures with specific instruction to students
- Provide instruction in basic emergency procedures including identification of common physical, chemical and electrical hazards

NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:

The Nation Incident Management System was directed by Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 “to enhance the ability of the United States to manage domestic incidents by establishing a single, comprehensive national incident management system” (Bush, 2003). All K-12 schools, urban, suburban, and rural; large and small; receiving Federal preparedness monies through the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and/or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services are required to support the implementation of NIMS “ (Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools, 2017).

Figure 1 states the problem within the environment we are currently in and the ultimate state schools and emergency management stakeholder partners should strive for. Highlighted are three critical hurdles that are interfering with the succes of desired outcome.

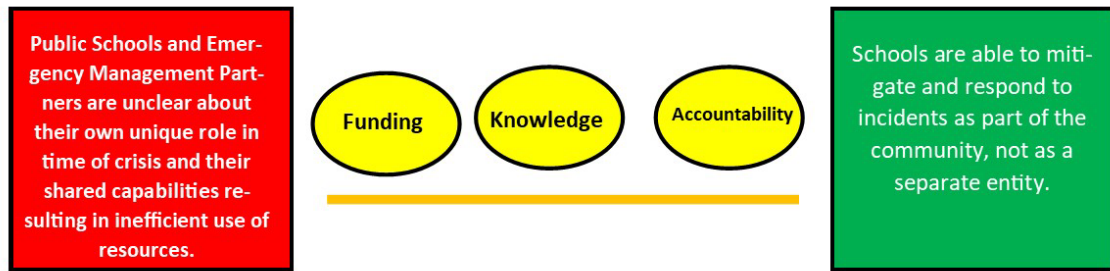


Figure 1: Problem Analysis

IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES:

- Schools are generally unprepared and unequipped to handle disasters;
- Lack of coordination and cooperation between different stakeholder groups;
- Lack of stakeholder/decision-maker buy-in, involvement;
- Lack of access to expertise/experts;
- Mandates/regulations that are not funded and enforced.

Possible Solutions

School disaster resilience is most effectively achieved when the community is engaged in the process to understand and reduce school risks, plan for emergencies, and recover from damaging events. For nearly a decade, FEMA has moved toward a “whole community” approach to emergency management. This approach recognizes that all resources and diverse segments of the community must be fully engaged in order to most effectively prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate against all hazards. Because “our society places great importance on the education system and its schools, and has a tremendous investment in current and future schools... The school is both a place of learning and an

important community resource and center” and should continue to be prepared for disaster (FEMA, 2010a).

Local emergency management professionals can provide invaluable information to schools regarding state-of-the-art preparedness, response, and mitigation activities. School leaders should be on a first name basis with leaders from local fire departments, law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, and emergency management, as these are the front-line responders who may provide lifesaving first response and can also help the school through the recovery process. Coordination with first responders, such as police, fire and EMS personnel, is key to maintaining a safe school environment. (Center for Education and Employment Law, 2010, p. 19) “State and local emergency management agencies are also a key partner in developing risk assessments for your school and can provide information about the disasters your school and community are prone too” (Moore, 2017).

Potential Solution	Continuing with the status quo	Mandates and Regulations with enforcement and funding	Collaborative Partnerships built between schools and EM's
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savings in time, money and resources • Not an issue until hazard/incident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardization of EOP's • Distribution of ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared knowledge • Building resiliency in the whole community • Addresses unique communities
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of continuity • Inability to effectively respond • Lack of resiliency • Increased omissions and redundancies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costly to support • Accountability • Late adopters • Does not address unique school districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding • No one entity owns the problem

Figure 2: Solutions Chart

CRITERIA FOR SOLUTION TO BE SUCCESSFUL:

- Feasibility – Must be within current budgetary constraints for stakeholders. Not funded through additional grant money, stakeholder service contracts, or new state/county funding.
- Time – Must be timely. The importance of a resolution to the problem is critical and must have actionable items that are able to be expeditiously completed.
- Scope – Recommendation must work for 80% of school districts. 7 out of 11 school districts in Marion County must have buy in.
- Compliance – compliance with state and federal requirements.

To remedy the problem of public schools and emergency management partners being unclear about their own unique roles in time of crisis and their shared capabilities resulting in inefficient use of resources for emergency readiness, Marion County Office of Emergency Management can do one of these three things:

- **OPTION ONE:** Choosing to continue with status quo and do nothing beyond what is currently being done. With this option, schools and emergency management partners do not create resiliency within the served communities and are largely unaware of the problem that exists. However, because of lack of critical funding for such an endeavor and the time either of the two other options would take this may continue to be the most realistic of the options presented.
- **OPTION TWO:** The current ORS and OAR presented would be strictly adhered to along with compliance of the National Incident Management System. An awareness campaign of these mandates would be necessary as well as additional funding and accountability for both schools and emergency management partners. Additionally, training opportunities for key school staff should be implemented. These regulations would provide a pathway to action as a task list for requirements which would in turn build community partnerships and resiliency.

- Other legislative policies could be passed such as:
 - Expansion of county offices of emergency management to include duties to serve the education system;¹
 - Creation of an emergency manager position in school government at either the local or state level²;
 - Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction shall provide guidance on emergency operation planning³;
 - Schools or districts that cannot demonstrate compliance with state laws for emergency operations should incur a penalty by either withholding of funds or by issuing a fine⁴.

- **OPTION THREE:** Organic collaborative partnerships between schools and emergency management agencies would address individual unique elements in the communities served. Partnerships would provide shared expertise and knowledge and be able to further the mission statement of Marion County Office of Emergency Management and bring awareness to the problem.

¹ Each county in Oregon has an Emergency Manager

² Virginia Chapter 14 § 22.1 -279.8: "... Each school division shall designate an emergency manager..."

³ Many states such as WA. Washington Code RCW 28A.320.125 "(2)(d) Use the training guidance provided by the Washington emergency management division of the state military department in collaboration with the Washington state office of the superintendent of public instruction school safety center and the school safety center advisory committee;"

⁴ New York education code Section 2801-a subsection 9: "Whenever it shall have been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the commissioner that a school district has failed to adopt a code of conduct which fully satisfies the requirements of section twenty-eight hundred one of this article, or a district-wide safety plan or building-level emergency response plans which satisfies the requirements of this section, or to faithfully and completely implement all three, the commissioner may, on thirty days' notice to the district, withhold from the district monies..."

Recommendation

Based upon an analysis of the options lists, Option Three is recommended because it is the most practical, meets the criteria and has the ability to address unique concerns while not being overwhelmed by the entirety of the problem. By taking small but actionable steps to action and involving all shared stakeholders, the time and cost of implementing collaborative partnerships can be successful in incremental steps.

By establishing a culture of preparedness and forming or solidifying supportive networks between schools and external partners in emergency management, these organizations will achieve a more collaborative approach to rectifying these issues, and will gain vital information to increase their readiness. The top priority of school administration is student safety. The vision of Marion County Office of Emergency Management is to maintain and improve the capability to successfully work together to mitigate against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from all-hazards related to emergencies and disasters (Marion County, 2015). By joining forces with schools across Marion County, community resilience can be built especially for a highly sensitive population group.

OBJECTIVE: IDENTIFICATION OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- Identify who emergency contacts and key personnel are for each district and school within the county by end of Quarter 1, 2019.
- Set up a “meet and greet” meeting with Marion County Office of Emergency Management and key stakeholder by end of Quarter 1, 2019.
- Establish and Facilitate bi-monthly meetings with school stakeholders to discuss emergency management and school safety topics. (ongoing)

OBJECTIVE: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANS FOR SCHOOLS.

- Collect EOP’s from all Schools and School Districts by Quarter 2, 2019.
- Evaluate plans and provide recommendations back to schools by Quarter 3, 2019.
- Facilitate 2 annual tabletop exercises that are would relative to schools, completed by Quarter 4 of 2019.
- Assist as an evaluator in school lockdown or reunification drills. (Ongoing.)

OBJECTIVE: TRAINING CALENDAR

- Create a training calendar for school administration by end of Quarter 1, 2019. By Quarter 1 of 2020, 80% of school districts should have key members be trained in:
 - **IS-100.c:** Introduction to the Incident Command System, ICS 100
 - **IS-200.b:** ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents
 - **IS-700.b:** An Introduction to the National Incident Management System
 - **IS-800.c:** National Response Framework, an Introduction
 - **E360:** Preparing for Emergencies: What Teachers Need to Know
 - **E361:** Multihazard Emergency Planning for Schools

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