Lesson Overview

Planning is a process, not a one-time event. An effective Emergency Operations Plan requires that you look at all the phases of emergency management.

This lesson introduces you to the four phases of emergency management. By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

▪ Explain what happens in each phase of emergency management.
▪ Describe planning procedures for each phase.

What Is Emergency Management?

Emergency management is an organized, four-phase process by which communities:

▪ **Prepare** for hazards that cannot be prevented, or mitigated.
▪ **Respond** to emergencies that occur.
▪ **Recover** from emergencies to restore the community to its pre-emergency condition.
▪ **Mitigate** risks.

The degree to which emergency management is effective depends heavily on the emergency planning process.

Phase I: Preparedness

Preparedness ensures that if a disaster occurs, people are ready to get through it safely, and respond to it effectively.

Preparedness means figuring out what you'll do if essential services break down, developing a plan for contingencies, and practicing the plan. Preparedness is the process in which school and community officials develop an Emergency Operations Plan that tells:

▪ How they will respond to an emergency.
▪ What steps they will take to recover from an emergency.

What Happens in the Preparedness Phase?

The preparedness phase involves the following steps, which will be covered in later lessons of this course:

▪ Step 1: Recruit the planning team
▪ Step 2: Assess your hazards
▪ Step 3: Develop the Emergency Operations Plan
▪ Step 4: Train and exercise the Plan

More on Emergency Planning Preparedness

Planning for emergencies includes the entire process—from identifying who will be involved, through who will do what and under what circumstances, to developing, testing, and revising the actual Plan.

Besides developing and testing the Plan for dealing with potential emergency situations, other aspects of preparedness include planning for the other phases of the emergency management cycle.

Home Preparedness

One key to effective school preparedness is effective home preparedness. School personnel will be able to focus on their emergency responsibilities at school if they know that all is well at home.

Phase II: Response

The next phase is Response. Response begins as soon as a disaster is detected or threatens.

This phase involves mobilizing and positioning emergency equipment; getting people out of danger; providing needed food, water, shelter, and medical services; and bringing damaged services and systems back on line. Local responders, government agencies, and private organizations take action. Sometimes the destruction goes beyond local and State capabilities. That's when Federal help is needed as well.

Planning for Response

When planning to respond, school and community personnel must consider the following factors:

- Who will make critical decisions.

- How to get necessary resources for the immediate response.

- What to do when the emergency scene is also a crime scene.

- What tasks must be completed immediately, and by whom.

Response Factors

Other response factors to consider include:

- How to notify faculty, staff, responders, parents, and others that emergency conditions exist.

- How to communicate with each other, parents, students, the community, and the media.

- What to do until help arrives.

Phase III: Recovery

Recovery is the task of rebuilding after a disaster. This process can take months, even years.

Not only services and infrastructure, not only the facilities and operations, but the lives and livelihoods of many thousands of people may be affected.

Planning for Recovery

Emergencies can occur very quickly, but recovering from an emergency takes time. Planning for an emergency includes planning for both response and recovery.

Recovery planning identifies the long-range actions needed to return the school to its normal operations as quickly and completely as possible, and involves:

- Medical issues.
- Psychological issues.
- Infrastructure issues.
- Liability issues.
- Insurance issues.
- Documentation issues.

Recovery Considerations for the Building

Key recovery considerations for the school building include the following activities:

- Repair structural and physical damage.

- Restore disrupted services.

- Clean the facility and remove all health and safety hazards.

- Plan for the resumption of classes. (This piece is especially important if a portion of the building is damaged to such a degree that classes must be relocated temporarily.)

Once a Catastrophic Event Occurs . . .

If an emergency situation occurs at a school, it is vital to document any damaged areas with videotape or photographs. Damaged equipment should not be discarded until it has been documented fully on film. Other key actions include:

- Track staff and volunteer time and labor involved in the cleanup. Should a disaster be declared, this time may be counted as part of the community's share of a matching grant.

- Develop a plan for conducting classes if the facility is damaged. Such a plan might include half-day sessions, alternative sites, and/or portable classrooms.

Medical and Psychological Aspects of Recovery

While the damage to infrastructure might be most obvious, medical and psychological damage may be harder to recognize—and yet more critical.

Recovery activities must involve attention given to:

- **Determine the status of the faculty and staff.** They are victims as well as the students.

- **Determine the status of students.** Students must be able to go to school, and learn while they are there. Establish a policy for handling student absences.

Facilitating Psychological Healing

Recovering from a traumatic event at a school requires providing an environment where students, faculty, and staff receive support.

Fear itself can be extremely debilitating following an emergency. Part of recovery, then, involves reducing fear by:

- Providing facts whenever possible about what has happened and what can be expected to happen (including information about grieving, if appropriate).
- Avoiding additional unnecessary changes to set routines.
- Providing a safe atmosphere in which students and adults can voice concerns, fears, and feelings, and can express grief.

Phase IV: Mitigation

Hazard Mitigation means any action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from natural hazards.

Example: Following devastating tornadoes it became clear that school children in Kansas were at risk. Using a partnership of Federal, State, and local resources, work began to find a way to construct tornado shelters in Kansas schools. As of August 2002, shelters were constructed or planned for construction in approximately 50 schools.

Planning for Hazard Mitigation

Hazard mitigation is any action taken to reduce the loss of life or damage to property from all hazards. Some hazards cannot be mitigated; others are too costly to mitigate.

Mitigation of community risks is probably beyond the control of school officials. However, school emergency planning teams should work closely with the local Emergency Manager and responders to learn:

- What hazards have been identified in the community.
- What steps the community is taking to mitigate community-wide risks.
- How school officials can help.

Mitigating School-Related Hazards

Experts in emergency management and response, risk management, structural engineering, and psychological tragedy response can suggest ways to mitigate hazards at the school.

After school officials have the necessary information about existing hazards and mitigation possibilities, they can identify the costs of mitigation and steps to be taken.

Many nonstructural hazards in a school can be mitigated easily and inexpensively.

Prioritizing Mitigation Activities

The results of a hazard analysis can leave school administrators feeling overwhelmed by all the hazards they have found.

To determine which potential risks to address with available financial resources, school personnel should prioritize mitigation activities according to:

- The risk to life safety.
- The number of people exposed to the hazard.
- The cost to mitigate (including time, money, and other resources).
- Probability that the hazard will occur.

Web Resources

- Are You Ready? A Guide to Citizen Preparedness (http://www.fema.gov/areyouready)

- School Critical Incident Planning: An Internet Resource Directory (http://www.nlectc.org/assistance/schoolsafety.html)

- The National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (http://www.ncptsd.org/)
  - PTSD: Children and Adolescents (http://www.ncptsd.org/facts/specific/fs_children.html)
  - Terrorist Attacks and Children (http://www.ncptsd.org/facts/disasters/fs_children_disaster.html)

- The Center for Mental Health Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (http://www.mentalhealth.org)

- Division of Adolescent and School Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash)

- Information About Coping With Traumatic Events, National Institute of Mental Health (http://www.nimh.nih.gov/outline/traumatic.cfm)

- National Association of School Psychologists (http://www.naspweb.org/neat)

- Disaster Preparedness for Schools (www.edfacilities.org/rl/disaster.cfm)

Summary

This lesson presented the following four phases of emergency management:

- Preparedness
- Response
- Recovery
- Mitigation