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The District of Columbia Citizen Corps' Automated Local Emergency Resource Tracking System

SUMMARY

The District of Columbia Citizen Corps Program, a division of the District of Columbia office of the Commission on National and Community Service (CNCS), has developed the DC Citizen Corps Automated Local Emergency Resource Tracking System (ALERTS), a tool for managing donated resources. ALERTS is a browser-based, database-driven system that tracks donated resources and allows CNCS administrators to assign them to the city agencies and emergency responders who need them. ALERTS streamlines the management of volunteers and donations prior to, during, and after emergencies.

BACKGROUND

One of the lessons learned from Oklahoma City and 9/11 was that a city undergoing a major incident can expect an overwhelming flood of charity. If those donations are to be a help instead of a hindrance, someone must be prepared to manage and distribute them. The District of Columbia, following the model of the Federal Response Plan, has identified 15 critical emergency response tasks as "Emergency Support Functions" (ESFs). Management of donations and volunteers is ESF 15, and it has been assigned to CNCS. ALERTS was developed by the CNCS in order to fulfill the agency's ESF 15 responsibilities.

GOALS

ALERTS is designed to give emergency responders easy access to up-to-date information about available donated resources so that those resources can be utilized efficiently during incidents and drills.

DESCRIPTION

Organize Resources Before an Emergency

The Citizen Corps division of CNCS is constantly recruiting city residents as volunteers and looking for local businesses willing to donate resources. Those volunteers and resources are entered into the ALERTS system. If Home Depot agrees to donate bull horns to the city during an emergency, CNCS enters a description of the horns, the number available, their location, and the contact information of the person at Home Depot who is in charge of the donation. CNCS makes sure that the city has a memorandum of understanding in place with every donor in the ALERTS system. After 9/11, New York was hit with millions of dollars in bills from vendors who decided to charge fees for their donations after the fact. ALERTS helps to ensure that won't happen to DC by providing emergency responders with a list of donors who have signed memoranda of understanding.

Volunteer time is also considered a donated resource, and is entered into the system as such. ALERTS allows CNCS to enter detailed information about each volunteer, such as whether they have any special skills or equipment. During a recent blizzard the city needed volunteers with SUVs to drive housebound senior citizens to doctors appointments. ALERTS makes it easy to find such volunteers.

The 15 Most Likely Hazards in DC

- Severe Weather
(<http://dcema.dc.gov/dcema/cwp/view.asp?a=1226&q=533361>)
- Urban Fires
- Transportation Accidents
- Special Events - Demonstrations
- Urban Floods
(<http://dcema.dc.gov/dcema/cwp/view.asp?a=1226&q=533347>)
- Utility and Power Failures
- Hurricanes
(<http://dcema.dc.gov/dcema/cwp/view.asp?a=1226&q=533354>)
- Terrorism
- Radiological and HAZMAT Incidents
- Civil Disorders
- Water Supply Failures
- Critical Resource Shortages
- Explosions
- Earthquakes
- Tornadoes
(<http://dcema.dc.gov/dcema/cwp/view.asp?a=1226&q=533375>)

ALERTS not only tracks resources that are collected, it also tells CNCS users which resources will be needed during specific incidents. In 1995 DC generated a list of the 15 hazards most likely to occur in the city, based on historical data, frequency of occurrence, damage statistics, and the city's overall vulnerability. CNCS surveyed the other city agencies that participate in emergency response to find out what resources would be needed during each of those 15 emergencies. All of this information has been entered into the system. This helps CNCS to focus its community outreach efforts. For example, donation coordinators at CNCS can now use ALERTS to find out

that the city will need bottled water during a power outage. That tells CNCS to target its solicitation efforts towards businesses that have bottled water to donate.

Manage Resources During an Emergency

During an incident or a drill, CNCS administrative users can log onto ALERTS and create an incident. Administrators can select the type of incident, and then the system will tell them what resources they need. During a HAZMAT incident, for example, ALERTS will tell administrative users that they need masks. CNCS can then verify that donated masks are available, and take steps to acquire them if they're not.

ALERTS end-users in other city agencies or in affiliated organizations such as the Red Cross can log on and request resources. Since ALERTS is browser-based, end-users need no more than a computer and a browser to submit requests. Emergency responders equipped with wireless laptops can use the system to notify CNCS that they need volunteers who speak Spanish without leaving the scene of an emergency.

After end-users make requests, they are reviewed by administrators at CNCS. CNCS can look through the database of available resources and match requests with donations. Resources in the ALERTS database can be easily searched, sorted, and filtered so that CNCS administrators can find what they need quickly. The CNCS administrator can either call the end-user and tell them where to pick the resource up or call the donater and ask them to deliver the resource.

ALERTS Screen Shots

Scroll to the bottom of the document to see ALERTS screen shots.



Analyze Resource Deployment After an Emergency

ALERTS can automatically generate an after-action report on donated resources and their use. End-users are encouraged to log on after an incident and provide feedback on how they used resources, whether they needed more or less of a resource than they expected, and what resources they needed but were unable to get. ALERTS administrators at CNCS can then print out this feedback, as well as statistics on who asked for what and who donated what. These after-action reports help CNCS improve the management of donated resources for future incidents.

REQUIREMENTS

Keys to Success

The CNCS believes the key to ALERTS's success will be its ease of use. During the design process, CNCS insisted that the system be as intuitive as possible. CNCS has entered pre-defined lists of resources and locations in the city into ALERTS so that end-users won't have to type a lot of information into forms when they make requests. By thinking carefully about users' needs, CNCS has created a tool that will be a help rather than a hindrance during emergencies.

Resources

The ALERTS system requires a significant investment of time and money. The CNCS spent three months working on the concept. EastBanc Technologies, an IT solutions firm, spent three months developing the system. The budget for the project was slightly less than \$100,000. The money was part of a Department of Homeland Security grant that the DC Office of Public Justice and Safety allocated to the project.

Training

Both end-users (emergency responders) and administrators (CNCS employees) will have to be trained to use ALERTS. Training is four hours for end-users and eight hours for system-administrators.

Links

- DC Commission on National and Community Service: <http://www.cncs.dc.gov/>
- EastBanc Technologies: <http://www.eastbanctech.com/>

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SCREEN SHOTS
Reviewing Requests

The screenshot shows the 'Review Request' page for request 'RQST 0133235'. The page header includes navigation links: DC HOME, ABOUT DC, RESIDENTS, BUSINESS, VISITORS, DC GOVERNMENT, and Kids. The main title is 'National and Community Service: Automated Local Emergency Resource Tracking System'. On the left, there is a sidebar with navigation options: Review Requests, Resources (Review, Add, Search), Incidents (Review, Add), Locations (Review, Add), Users (agencies) (Review, Add, Log View), and Schedule (View, Add entry). The main content area displays the request details in a table:

Supporting Agency	Executive Office of the Mayor (ESF #15)
Hazard	Hurricane
Resource	Bottled Water/Ice
Special Requirements	20 Gallon Bottles: maximum size
Duration	0
Location	Engine 10 Station (1342 Florida Avenue NE Zip 20007)
Priority	High
Supervisor	Mrs J. Dawson
Incident	Hurricane Isabel [Change]

Below the details, there are links for 'Resources Allocated for this Request', 'Allocate New Resource', and 'Search All Resources'. At the bottom, a table header is visible with columns: Resource, ESF, Name, Location, Dist, Training Program, Qty, Cost, dollars, Agency Resp, Source, Other, Actual Cost, \$, Used hrs.

Searching Resources

The screenshot shows the 'Search Resources for Request' page for request 'RQST 0133235'. The page header is identical to the previous screenshot. The main title is 'National and Community Service: Automated Local Emergency Resource Tracking System'. The sidebar is also identical. The main content area displays search criteria and results:

Search Resources for Request "RQST 0133235"
 Switch to Search [by Hazard and Zipcode]

Resource Category: Bottled Water/Ice Special Requirements:

Name: Include "Not Needed":

Language: Proximity (miles):

Training Program: All

	Resource Category	Training Program	Name	Location	Distance	Provider	Quantity Available	Cost, dollars	Other
[Assign...]	Bottled Water/Ice	Unaffiliated	Bottle Water	6435 H St NW	1.9	Safeways	100	0	Expendable
[Assign...]	Bottled Water/Ice		Small Bottled Water	123 D St NW	same area	Safeways	1000	0	Expendable

