

## **King County Office of Emergency Management Podcasts** ***Disasters: Are you ready?***

### **Consequence management**

The term “Consequence Management” reminds me of the old TV show, Truth or Consequences. Back when I had teenagers I think they got tired of me saying, “That with every choice comes consequences, good or bad.”

In emergency management terminology “Consequence Management” came to be the term used to describe what we as emergency managers do in relationship to our law enforcement counterparts in dealing with terrorism. They are in charge of “prevention” the actions necessary to interdict or prevent an act of terrorism from occurring, while we, like the last people in a parade that includes horses, follow along at the rear, dealing with the consequences of a terrorist act.

I am not disagreeing with the use of the term and our role. It is an apt description of what we do. From an “all-hazards” perspective I’ve always said it doesn’t matter to us what causes the building to fall down. If it was blown up by a bomb, or shaken apart by an earthquake, we still have to deal with the consequences of the event. How we deal with these two situations may differ. In one case it is a crime scene that requires us to work with our law enforcement counterparts to preserve as much of the evidence as possible. I am pleased to hear our local FBI Officials all speak to the need first to rescue people and then preserve evidence. They have their priorities right!

We too though have a “before the incident happens” role. In our case it is called “preparedness and mitigation.” The sexy part of what the public thinks we do is responding to an emergency by activating our emergency response centers and coordinating the response. But, none of that will happen efficiently and effectively unless there has been adequate planning, training and most importantly disaster exercises where people get to practice what we’ve planned and trained for.

And, we are not the only purveyors of mitigation. If we are really going to be effective in mitigation it requires a melding of our efforts with those of building code developers, flood plain managers, growth management specialists and elected officials. Because it is with mitigation that we really can have the widest impact on limiting the damages that might happen in our communities.

So we have two roles in the emergency management parade. We help in determining the route the parade will take, maybe even paving the road, and yes, in true "Consequence Management" form, we bring up the rear with our shovels and waste receptacles.