

**Victoria Partners in Preparedness  
Victoria Office of Emergency Management  
Victoria County, TX**

The Victoria Partners in Preparedness (Victoria PIP) Program is an information and resource sharing partnership between the City and County of Victoria, and the private and not-for-profit sectors. It is designed to be compartmentalized or easily expanded, and includes the following sub-groups: Community Partners (businesses and industry), Special Needs Partners, VOAD Partners, Education Partners, and Public Works/Services Partners.

The Victoria PIP grew out of a partnership between the Victoria OEM and a small group of around a dozen major employers in the region. The initial goal of the OEM was to expand the information sharing opportunities to the entire business community in response to Hurricane Ike in 2008. As a result, the PIP program grew rapidly, from a dozen members to over 100, in less than 24 hours. Fortunately, early plans to compartmentalize the program into different groups made the influx of interested businesses and organizations manageable. Since then, the program has served the community in numerous incidents, and has grown to over 380 participants. Additionally, through our “leadership core”, downward information is reaching an estimated 1000+ additional private partners who are not yet members of the program.

The primary goals of the program are:

- Develop multiple means of communicating information between the local government and the providers of goods and services in our community in all phases of an emergency.
- Provide a forum for collaboration between like-entities so that issues can be solved at the lowest level.
- Establish joint training and exercise programs that involve “whole-community” preparedness and foster interest in private and not-for-profit preparedness.
- Make Victoria an attractive place to live and conduct business by supporting and encouraging independent efforts to build community resilience.
- Ensure the “most qualified entity is tasked to solve the problem”.

The Victoria PIP is a true partnership between the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors.

**Leadership:** The program is executed by a “leadership core”, consisting of the Victoria County Office of Emergency Management, in partnership with the City of Victoria, the Victoria Economic Development Corporation, the Victoria Chamber of Commerce, and the University of Houston-Victoria’s Small Business Development Center. These organizations set strategic goals, manage the program day-to-day, and are the core contacts during times

of non-emergency. During emergencies, the “Partners Liaison” and his/her assistants manage each group.

**Community Partners:** The largest group in the Victoria PIP, the Community Partners are comprised of owners and managers of entities that conduct business in Victoria. Training opportunities, exercises and important information about current threats are regularly extended to the Partners. During disasters, the group is provided with near real-time information about response and recovery efforts so that they can more efficiently plan and execute their own recovery. In turn, they provide information about their own situation so that we can make realistic damage assessments, and more effectively focus our efforts. Lastly, the forum provides the local government with a pool of trained and equipped organizations from which it can draw resources and skilled labor to accomplish its goals.

**Special Needs Partners:** Special Needs Partners include public and private organizations that provide critical services to our special-needs population. This includes hospitals and clinics, assisted-living facilities, home-health specialists, and even service businesses such as dialysis centers. Some of the most disaster-sensitive residents in our community depend on the survivability of the organizations in our SN Partners program.

**VOAD Partners:** Volunteer and faith-based organizations, our donations management program, animal issues teams, ARES/RACES volunteers, and many other services are organized under the VOAD Partners. This includes a framework for local volunteer collection and employment, as well as our donations management framework.

**Education Partners:** In order to more efficiently respond to issues that may affect our student population, all area school districts, higher-education institutions, and private schools are invited to the table. Our next step is to begin including child day-care facilities in this group.

**Public Works/Services Partners:** In response to a severe weather/ice event, the OEM developed a program to bring local entities together with our state partners. Originally focused on Victoria’s road and bridge infrastructure, this PIP is designed to help address all aspects of Victoria’s energy, communications, and transportation systems.

**Compartmentalization:** While it may seem that Victoria’s PIP is overwhelmingly large, it is only manageable because it is compartmentalized. Because some emergency situations may only require certain skills, or impact certain groups, the program is designed to be very flexible. Additionally, we have designed some of our Partners groups to be semi-autonomous. Rooted in a principle we have coined “Strategic Disassociation”, we can allow certain groups to operate with limited or no involvement from the local government. The benefits are two-fold: The local government is free to focus its efforts elsewhere, and the private partners are left to operate in an environment in which they are much more comfortable... the private sector.

**Standardization:** Many organizations within our community are members of more than one program. For example, while a dialysis center may be geared toward special needs services,

it is also a business, and therefore may participate in both programs. This necessitates a concerted effort to insure standardization across the program.

**Staffing:** Maintaining such a program, providing valuable information and training, and meeting the customer's expectations during an expanding incident can be very difficult. Additionally, with such a large pool from which to draw input and information, even tasks such as damage assessments become much more involved. Partnering with organizations such as Chambers of Commerce and EDCs provides staffing, while providing those organizations with excellent selling points to draw business to your community.

**A seat in the Emergency Operations Centers:** Our EOC is staffed with "Partners Liaisons" for each of our core Partners groups.

**Resources to help prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters:** Training programs and exercise support are provided year-round. During disasters, multiple daily meetings are coordinated with each program.

**Web resources:** Future plans include enhancing the PIP website with business continuity and mitigation webinars and training aids.

The Victoria PIP has sponsored numerous training opportunities and informational seminars over the last few years. Courses on Hazard Mitigation, Hazard Analysis, Hurricane Preparedness, Public-Health in Education, and many others have been provided. In 2011, the Victoria OEM will launch its "Storm-Ready Supporter Program" in partnership with the NWS Corpus Christi, using the PIP program as the primary vehicle. In CY11, the Victoria PIP will begin consolidating public and private training opportunities under one umbrella in order to provide the greatest opportunity for participation.

**Email alerts:** Because the program has grown, we have moved to a private-vendor to manage our list-serve. Each group receives tailored communication, and is responsible for keeping their own contact information current. Moving the list-serve to a private-party has dramatically increased our capacity and effectiveness.

**In-person meetings:** During activations, meetings are conducted 1-2 times daily. However, all non-emergency communication is done via list-serve.

**Conferences and other events:** Victoria PIP conducts multiple planning and training events throughout the year. One major focus for 2011 is the integration of our private-partners into the exercise calendar. We will also begin to coordinate local government participation in private-partner drills, allowing us to fulfill annual requirements while assisting the private partners in their own preparedness efforts.

**Website:** Work on the Victoria PIP website is in the preliminary design phase, with plans to increase its usefulness in the coming year. One of the first goals is to incorporate a training and exercise calendar for the Victoria PIP.

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For more information, visit our web site:

<http://www.victoriatx.org/oem/partnersinpreparedness.asp>

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