

# City Emergency Preparedness Review

**Objective:** The objective of this agreed upon procedures review was to assess the City's emergency response preparedness as an organization in an effort to be positioned to adequately respond to various internal and external emergency situations.

**Scope and Methodology:** Scope includes conducting interviews with key senior managers and departmental staff to gain an understanding of the preparations currently in place, identifying key needs such as facility generator locations, fuel sources, capacity and identify gaps in coverage, review employee data accuracy for emergency contact, departmental and senior management meetings and discussion, communication procedures for staff and citizens and tools to use such as GPS on City vehicles for a solitary employee emergency or mass impact situations.

**Background:** The City of Bowling Green experienced a large tornado related event in December 2021 which tested our organization's response to a major weather related event. The City and the community at large did a great job in responding to that event and learned a lot of things along the way, but it also identified weaknesses in our emergency preparedness as an organization. This review is a first step in an effort to improve our organizations ability to respond to various potential emergencies in the future.

## Opportunities for Improvement

- Gaps in generator coverage for key facilities such as Park facilities and warming stations was identified. The recommended locations to expand were shared with appropriate senior management staff.
- Employee and emergency contact information is not consistently updated, nor verified via a test contact scenario. Analysis of departmental information was performed and updates were coordinated with each City department as part of this review. The current assumption is that employees will self report changes to HR, but this is difficult to verify. A password protected GIS map of employee contact information was created as part of this review, with the assistance of the City's IT department, to assist in determining potential employee impact on future emergencies.
- GPS location service should be added to all City vehicles to improve management's ability to locate staff in case of an emergency. We have numerous employees who travel independently throughout our City routinely to conduct City business and implementing a GPS system would improve our ability to quickly locate an employee's assigned vehicle in emergency situations.
- Departmental emergency incident response plans vary from formal written plans to non-existent. Each department should have a base emergency plan to include items such as:
  - predetermined meeting location for staff if assigned City facility is compromised
  - accessible printed versions of important documents, contact information and departmental forms in case IT systems are inaccessible
  - crisis manning plan of who shows up immediately in case of an emergency and a pre-defined plan for staff able to cover night shifts if 24 hour coverage is required
  - documentation of facility capabilities such as generators and where emergency related assets are located
- The City's communication plan for external public, citizens and agencies should be reviewed and updated. A draft Crisis Communication Plan has been updated recently, but is in the review and approval process. Once this plan is updated, it should be communicated throughout the organization and updated annually.
- Communication methods for City management and staff should also be reviewed and updated. There is a City text group, but it requires staff to take action to add themselves and it is purged periodically requiring staff to opt back in again. This group should automatically include all City phones and stipend personal numbers at a minimum. Quick and consistent communication timelines should be identified to ensure staff know what to do and expect during emergency situations.