



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS - MML HEPAC TALKING POINTS

Good day. We are here to talk about Hometown Emergency Preparedness, and HEPAC, the Maryland Municipal League's Hometown Emergency Preparedness Committee. The goal of the Committee is to encourage coordinated joint emergency preparedness at all levels of government with emphasis on municipal governments.

1. ***What is an emergency?*** First, let's talk about possible emergencies that could impact your city or town. We are all subject to the extremes of weather from blizzards to floods, heat waves to tornadoes. In addition, we have unique local conditions which could create emergency conditions, such as highways and train tracks carrying hazardous materials, dams, nuclear reactors, terrorist attacks and even mosquitoes.

An emergency has been described as a condition of disaster, or of extreme peril, to the safety of people and property. This may be caused by such conditions as mentioned, and by air pollution, fire, flood, hazardous material incident, storm, epidemic, riot, drought, sudden and severe shortage of essential supplies, plant or animal infestations or disease, earthquakes and volcanoes, etc.

What do you think the potential hazards to your community are? (Let audience give examples from their city or town.)

2. ***What is your responsibility to prevent and mitigate the results of emergencies?*** That depends. It depends on your position of responsibility, and your local emergency preparedness plans and programs. Most elected officials usually do not have operational responsibility during an emergency. Their role is to work with staff to provide resources, develop policy and approve emergency operations plans. City and town staff may have a variety of responsibilities depending on available municipal and county resources. Many small cities and towns in Maryland rely mostly on their counties for emergency management. All Maryland counties have a designated Emergency Manager. These provide the liaison to MEMA and FEMA resources.

What kind of municipal government do you have? Strong Mayor with operational responsibilities? Council/Manager where elected officials do not have operational responsibilities? Do you know who your County Emergency Manager is?

3. ***Who is in charge during an emergency?*** Again, that depends. It is usually not the elected officials of small towns and cities. In Maryland, the position of Emergency Manager is a county staff position, except in Baltimore City, Annapolis, and Ocean City. Federal funding for response and recovery is funneled through the state to the counties and then to the municipalities. Operationally, incident command depends on the nature of the emergency. For example, fire, hazmat, mass casualty and explosion response is under fire department command. Some counties have combined volunteer and career fire and emergency medical services which coordinate and command fire and EMS response in accordance with local law and operating procedures. Civil disturbances and active threat incidents are under police or sheriff command.

Some incidents evolve from one command to another, such as when a fire is extinguished and determined to be of suspicious origin. Emergency incident command in the United States follows an Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS). These processes allow for better incident response, mitigation, and recovery by multiple agencies.

4. ***What can your hometown do to prepare for emergencies?*** Assess and identify your local hazards and critical infrastructure. Inform elected officials about their responsibilities to establish policies and provide resources for staff support to plan, prepare, respond, mitigate, and recover from local emergencies. Provide training opportunities for municipal staff, and assign emergency management responsibilities in accordance with your plans and resources. Promote resident emergency preparedness, for themselves, for their families, for their communities, by sponsoring education and training such as Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT). Support other first responders such as local police, fire, and EMS agencies.
5. ***So, where can you learn more about how to access emergency resources and how to plan for emergencies in your city or town?*** The Maryland Municipal League has established a Hometown Emergency Preparedness Committee (HEPAC). The Hometown Emergency Preparedness Committee started as an Ad-Hoc (the A in HEPAC) committee of MML. It is a committee of elected officials and municipal staff appointed annually by the MML President to provide advice and support to MML members to help them prepare for hometown emergencies. In addition to planning relevant sessions at the annual MML convention, extensive information has been developed and is available on the MML web site, www.mdmunicipal.org/emergencyprep. Information and online training on ICS, NIMS and CERT are available online at www.FEMA.gov
6. ***What next?*** What do you plan to do next to help develop and support hometown emergency preparedness in your city or town? (Open discussion among attendees)