

# **Planned Events, Natural, And Manmade Disasters: An Analysis of Past and Future Response by Law Enforcement to Mass Incidents.**

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## *Abstract*

*Hurricanes, wild fires, tornados, homeland security events, or planned occurrences such as major sporting events and conventions; all present unique problems, not only for communities struck with just such an event, but also for law enforcement agencies responding to assist. As we repeat the scenarios, we learn from mistakes of the past and try to improve on the response in the future. Information was obtained from interviews with agency heads, supervisors, and responders, as well as other government, and organizational officials. The information collected gives the reader an overview of several events and presents different approaches to the response. Recommendations for best practices as well as a review of problems are offered for guidance and direction in the future.*

## Introduction

Natural disasters, manmade disasters, and planned events such as Super Bowls and political conventions have created a new interest in multi-agency response. This response to protect our citizens, however, requires collective advanced planning on several levels. These events far exceed local agencies manpower and resources. Events such as the Oklahoma City bombing, 911, and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina showed a need to call in large amounts of resources from neighboring communities, and even neighboring states.

The coordination and organization of the response has become a massive operation and is not without its problems. The frequency of such events has caused some officials to look upon deployments as a more permanent planning necessity. Unfortunately, even after several events mass problems do exist and some agencies still do not plan for sending assistance to other jurisdictions. Many vulnerable communities have no plans in place for what accommodations they will have to make should they require assistance.

## Literature Review

On August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1992, Hurricane Andrew slammed into southern Dade County Florida. Andrew was one of only three category 5 storms to have ever made landfall on the coastal United States. Andrew killed 43 people, left thousands of people homeless, and did millions of dollars in damage. The storm

also overloaded Dade County's ability to respond to its citizens. This was not the first time agencies traveled to assist other jurisdictions, but it was the first attempt by both State and local officials to organize the response. Ten years after Andrew residents still had fond memories of the responders who helped lift their community just after the storm (Pittman, 2002). Unfortunately ten years also saw no real progress in planning for such events.

Even with several events during the ninety's law enforcement and other first responders did not recognize deployments as a planning necessity until after 911. As history has taught us some good comes out of bad events. More technological and medical advances have come out of wars than any other time in human history. A new concept of cooperation between Federal, State, and Local agencies and between disciplines which have previously worked alone has emerged since 911.

Out of Andrew came Florida's concept of its current Emergency Management system. This system provides a conceptual structure for services and resources to be sent to an affected area. The system provides a structure to assist local governments with attaining and managing resources during major events. This system also provides funding for annual planning and preparation. Emergency Management embraces a four part concept of planning, response, recovery, and mitigation.

### *Natural disasters*

The earliest documented hurricane near Florida was in July 1502. Christopher Columbus wrote of the storm striking Santo Domingo, the new capital of Espanola. (Sheets, 2001) Other explorers such as Hernando Desoto and Ponce De Leon documented storms that we now refer to as hurricanes during their explorations of what is now Florida. Documentation of hurricanes as we know it didn't start until 1888 with the forerunner of what is now the National Weather Service. (Frank, 1998)

Hurricanes are the only natural disaster which a community has advanced warning. Florida sits on a hundred mile wide strip of land between two warm bodies of water which produce hurricanes six months out of the year. On average a hurricane will strike the coastal area of the United States at a rate of more than one a year. (Sheets, 2001) Even as recent as fifty years ago Florida was still a rural state. The population swelled during the winter months, but during the months which produced hurricanes the population remained within a manageable level. Communities still responded to help each other. In fact, that was the origins of the Florida's emergency management system. But, natural disasters were still considered localized, and the recovery was managed by local governments. Today with Florida's booming population, especially elderly population, a local, even state, government cannot shoulder the burden alone.

Events which take a community by surprise can always present problems for receiving assistance. Even when extensive plans exist a certain amount of chaos will happen. Incidents such as tornados will impact limited areas of a community. During the first hours after an impact trying to assess needs can be

difficult. (Dannenhower, 2007) Well intentioned agencies running into the area to assist can add to the confusion. During recent tornados in Sumter, Lake, and Volusia counties it took a good six hours to stabilize the situation, establish an incident command structure, and to account for all the agencies working in the areas.

### *Planned Events*

As our society has grown many events planned for large venues, even in large jurisdictions, can stretch manpower. Events such as the Super Bowl, the Olympics, or political conventions create huge orchestrations of manpower and resources. Even the largest of jurisdictions cannot handle the requirements of these events, and still accommodate the daily calls for service. The Olympics, political conventions, and the annual Super Bowls use officers from surrounding jurisdictions to augment their own departments. Most large events are classified as level 1 special security events by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The FBI and other Federal Law Enforcement Agencies have a joint team dedicated to coordination and planning for the security for the event. Accommodating the influx of resources and credentialing will still fall to local agencies for planning and execution.

### Methodology

Unlike the natural and physical sciences where research deals with laws and attempts to disprove near proven theories, the social sciences of which criminology is a part deals in the human aspects of the world we live in. Humans are not exact creatures and do not operate in a vacuum of predictable actions in response to certain stimuli or true mathematical calculations. One can therefore conclude that all research involving humans and human activity is subjective. Responses to surveys or observations of behavior are affected by many factors to include learned actions, experiences, gender, and environment.

The methodology for this paper included examination of documents, personal observation, and interviews of victims, responders, and supervisors involved in mass deployments to mass incidents. Personal interviews instead of sending out questionnaires was chosen because it is much more convenient for the subject of the study to respond verbally, and more information is gained than if one was to simply mail out surveys which would have to be filled out and returned. Many emergency management executives commented after the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons about the amount of surveys and studies they received, most said they threw them away due to the lack of spare office time it was requiring to complete them. Also by personally interviewing research sources I was able to obtain expansions to the listed questions which sometimes allowed for unique insight to situations which otherwise would not have been obtained from written responses.

The personal interviews were selected from a wide spectrum of involvement. Federal, state, and local elected officials, and responders were selected for interview. Responders included supervisors, both upper level and middle management, and line personnel. Also interviewed were persons in policy making positions, and federal, state and local elected officials. This study relied on the expertise of the people involved in the actual incidents. Very little of this study involved theory; except on a more grand scale than the incidents which are cited.

Certain documents and reference material such as after action reports, federal, state, and local agency guidelines, and mutual aid agreements were examined. Federal Emergency Management Agency local assistance financial reports were also helpful in establishing reimbursable percentages for various jurisdictions.

## Results

Once the information was collected and analyzed certain similarities, both good and bad, were discovered but one also discovers that some planning methods and level of readiness still vary greatly depending on agency, discipline, and region. Although I had concentrated this study in a Law Enforcement context, in some cases the planning element also spread to other categories of responders such as emergency medical services, fire, and public works.

The interviews and examination of documents revealed that more agencies are preparing for deployments. These plans run to various degrees. Most agencies, either in writing or by recent experience, reported that they have some level of planning in case they would have to deploy. Fewer however have a plan in place for receiving assistance. Some of this may be accounted for by the fact that most inland counties do not, and are not required to, plan for situations such as evacuation as it pertains to hurricanes. Those communities which come within the emergency planning zone for nuclear power plants have to plan for evacuations and assistance for plant emergencies, but not for hurricanes.

None of the agencies have a set time limit on deployment for their personnel. Most reported changing personnel on an average of seven to ten days. Few agencies have a plan for re-supply. Many agencies even as late as the 2005 hurricane season still simply put officers in vehicles and sent them into a situation, expecting someone else to house and feed them. Most agencies now have a policy in place to pay overtime for their personnel. This is important in obtaining reimbursement from FEMA for expenses made out of existing budgets.

Research revealed that planning for major events is usually extensive. When Jacksonville hosted the Super Bowl in 2005 there was extensive planning for the first responders invited to assist. Hotel rooms were reserved, meals were provided, and working shifts were preplanned. Jacksonville even held drills simulating certain situations for the first responders. The jurisdictional problems and credentialing were resolved over a year ahead of the Super Bowl.

## Discussion

Dade County officials were the first to actually attempt to coordinate the massive influx of both requested and not requested assistance which converged upon the area immediately after the hurricane passed. They were also the first to start to record what had worked and what had not in the coordination of the response. Sam Williams, who retired from Dade County in 2002 as the Assistant County Administrator in charge of Law Enforcement, Fire, Coroner, and Emergency Management, was a Major with Metro-Dade during Hurricane Andrew. He related that they were unprepared for the mass influx of un-solicited help they would receive. Dade County started using, the then Joe Robbie Stadium, as a receiving point for the responders. From that point they could start to match resources with need. This system was noted by Governor Lawton Childs when he started to address the organizational problems of the existing system. The response and recovery from Hurricane Andrew prompted the State of Florida to start the current Emergency Management system.

### *Funding*

Catastrophic events can bankrupt municipalities. Not only the drain on existing funds, but the long term loss of tax revenue from businesses and employers which may not be able to reopen for long terms if ever following an event. A Small Business Administration program is available to help rebuild local economies. (Barkin, 2007) For natural disasters the Federal Emergency Management Agency will reimburse about 90% of incurred costs, providing the event reaches the threshold for a presidential declaration.

The main problem most jurisdictions experience in funding is two fold. First, the affected government usually has to front the money for response and recovery and file for the reimbursement through a long governmental process. Second, the documentation is complicated and tedious. Both the affected jurisdiction and the responding jurisdiction have costs incurred during an event. Both have to make financial decisions associated with how they will fund the event. Agencies must also have existing policy to address situations such as compensation for salaried employees.

Annual funding to local governments for preparation is available from both the state and federal governments through the local emergency management offices. This is an annual award from the Emergency Management Preparedness Assistance grant which is funded by an insurance surcharge. This money may be available to Law Enforcement agencies to help them prepare for deployments.

Planned events have certain avenues for funding both private and public. Part of the budget for major events covers security and public safety.

## *Communications*

For over twenty seven years every debriefing following a major event that I have been a part of, no matter how successful, or how bad the incident was, the first and most common point brought out is communications. Two main issues arise. First, the equipment did not function properly. Second, the person(s) who needed to be apprised of important information were not told the information.

During a major event several factors contribute to the first problem. Most systems were not built to handle the traffic which transmits during such an event. Different agencies use different types of communications systems (i.e. 800 MHz, UHF, and VHF). There is a big push with the implementation of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) to establish interoperability between agencies. (Walsh, 2005) Many regions of Florida have purchased equipment which merges, or patches various radio systems in order to overcome this communications shortfall.

The second problem is purely humanistic. The person who has the information fails to relate the information to the person or people who need to know the information. One cannot eliminate the human element from any incident. The National Incident Management System is trying to build a common response structure for all agencies and disciplines to work under. (Walsh, 2005)

## *Logistics and supply*

Supporting the responders has become a large industry. Until recently it was common practice to put an officer in a patrol car and send the officer to "help". The problem is that the influx of unsupported responders becomes even more of a burden on the affected community.

## *Politics*

How the government handles mass events can make and break political careers. Politics can also get in the way of a smooth distribution of manpower immediately following an event. Sheriffs and police chiefs, sometimes well meaning, sometimes just wanting to get vehicles with their agency markings into an area, will send manpower and vehicles to an affecting areas without being requested or tasked. This can create more problems for an area already struggling with the event.

## *Posse Comitatus*

The military is absolutely a great resource during an event. They have the equipment, the manpower, and the logistical system. Civilian law enforcement and the military can, and has worked very well together in previous events. It would be a foolish idea to stop using the military during an event. But, two areas of emphasis arise in calling in the military. First is the basic tenant of our constitution which dictates that the military is subordinate to the civilian

government, even when that government appears to be not functioning well. At what point and to what extent can a military commander take command of a situation? Second, the National Guard has a state mission and has the state governor in its chain of command and there are laws regulating when they may be federally activated. It would have to be a severe situation for the military to take over a civilian government on American soil. (Boligiano, 2001)

### *Media*

Obviously the event will get large amounts of media coverage. Occasionally the media for the agency responding will want to send a reporter or photographer with the deployment. The accompanying media will have to be counted in when making arrangements for food and housing. If the media is going to angle their story about the event and not the deployment they should be directed to the Joint Information Center handling the event. (Walsh, 2005)

### Recommendations

Agencies should put details for deployments into standard planning components. Considerations should be made for the following areas:

- **Manpower** – How many officers can be spared at one time? On any given day an agency knows how many people it can spare off a particular shift. This number remains a constant as a percentage even as the agency grows. Having a pre-determined number to deploy and a roster of willing officers will save management time when tasked to deploy. If the deployment is going to be a long one, as with Hurricane Katrina, rotation of personnel has to be a consideration. Planning must also accommodate the time off for returning personnel. Initial compensation must also be in policy, an agency cannot wait to implement policy when they find out that FEMA will reimburse funds.
- **Support personnel** – The vehicles have to be kept running, communications must be established, and the officers have to be fed. The area devastated by the event will more than likely not be able to accommodate such needs. Some agencies will send mechanics, cooks, and communications officers. A medical person as a part of the team can also be an asset.
- **Housing** – During the 2004/2005 hurricane season many agencies put officers in patrol cars and sent them to affected areas. I came across many patrol cars idling with officers sleeping in their vehicles. Keep in mind an area which has been struck by a natural disaster is usually having problems housing their own populations. Two ideas for housing are used by the various agencies surveyed. First enter into an agreement with a local RV dealer to obtain rentals when needed. The second has been to obtain RVs or housing type units on their own and maintain them

for deployment. There are companies which will bring in portable housing units and they are rapid deployment capable, they can have them on the ground in 24 hours but they are expensive and may not be reimbursable.

- **Food** – After an incident there is usually a large influx of food product into an area however there are also problems in distributing the product. It is recommended that a food supply system be established for the deployment to include re-supply. Some agencies use procurement cards, and will send someone out of the effected area to obtain supplies.
- **Vehicles and maintenance** – Recommend using vehicles which are most conducive to the environment which they will be working in. For example four wheel drive vehicles are better for the aftermath of a hurricane due to the debris field and standing water. Extra fuel, tires, fluids, and small maintenance items should be taken with the deployment.
- **Command** – One point which was brought up by some of the people interviewed was that different responding agencies had different concepts as to, and different attitudes towards what their requested duties would be upon arrival. Some were under reactive, some did not like and even refused to perform requested duties, and some were even under the impression they were deployed to take over for the host agency. As long as the deployment is with in Florida and Florida certified officers are involved there will not be a jurisdictional problem. There are already in existence statutes and guidelines to remedy this problem. Liabilities for actions the officer engage in do not lift during declared emergencies. Both the host and responding agencies can be held accountable. Chiefs and Sheriff's who send personnel with out being tasked only add to the confusion and problems. The Emergency Operations Center system of sending and requesting resources is a very logical system in its true form. Agencies should work within the framework of this system and extend the respect to the impacted agencies which they would demand for themselves.

Many of the various professionals interviewed expressed that Regional Domestic Security Task Force Region 3 which includes thirteen northeast Florida Counties has developed the best and most innovative idea which streamlines the process for dispatching manpower before, during and after an event. The system also allows smaller agencies to participate which otherwise would not have the resources to support their officers while on deployment. The concept also streamlines the support for the agencies involved. The RDSTF puts together four predetermined teams of about thirty officers each. The four teams are anchored by four of the larger agencies in the region. Each team is outfitted with cooking personnel, and equipment, communications dispatchers and equipment, and mechanical personnel. There is also a re-supply system in place which brings food, fuel, and other supplies to the teams about every three days. The manpower rotation is set up for every ten days. The teams are updated each year around May, and the updates are submitted to the state EOC. The ESF 16 (emergency support function) desk has to only make one phone call to activate a

team. The lead agency contacts the other team members. The team concept was developed during the 2004 hurricane season, but the teams are available year round for other events. The agency CEOs have also pledged not to send officers with out being tasked by the state. Officers who work at the ESF 16 desk at the state EOC say that their job would be a lot simpler if every FDLE / RDSTF region would adopt the same system.

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**Appendix A**

Research Questionnaire for Senior Leadership Project  
FDLE Class #12

Receiving Assistance

Event \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Agency \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview \_\_\_\_\_

1. What point during the event did you determine that you would need outside resources?

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. What avenue did you use to request the resources?

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Did you work through the Emergency Management system?

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Did you receive the manpower you requested?

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5. What type of relationship did you experience with the entities deployed to your area?

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6. Did you at any time feel as if you were loosing control of your area?

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7. Were you able to file for reimbursement? What percentage did you recover?

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8. How did you handle logistics?

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9. Scaling down?

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10. What Changes would you make to the system?

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**Appendix B**

Research Questionnaire for Senior Leadership Class  
FDLE Class # 12

Sending Assistance

Event \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Agency \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview \_\_\_\_\_

1. Were your resources requested?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. By what avenue did the request the resources arrive?

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Did you work through the Emergency Management system - EOC?

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Were you able to send the manpower requested?

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. What type of relationship did you experience with the entities you were deployed to assist?

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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6. Did you at any time feel as if you were losing control of your resources?

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7. Was the job you ultimately performed the same you were requested to perform?

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8. Did you deploy with your own support system?

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9. Finance – What percent of reimbursement were you able to file for? And what percent have you received to date?

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10. Logistics – did you send support, and how?

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11. Scaling down – how did you bring your people back and put them back on shift?

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12. What Changes would you make to the system?

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13. Do you have existing plans for deployments?

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14. Do you have an existing policy for paying overtime?

## Appendix C

### Person Interview List

- Beary, Noel (interview by author, Orlando Fl. November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Binder, T. (interview by author, Tallahassee Fl, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Burton, James (interview by author, Ocala Fl. August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007)
- Bovaird, Terry (interview by author, Ocala Fl. August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Britts, Jim (interview by author, Camp Blanding Fl. November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Darnell, Sadie (interview by author, Gainesville Fl. April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Dean, Ed (interview by author, Ocala Fl. August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007)
- Emrick, Brenda (interview by author, Orlando Fl, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Freerksen, Gary (interview by author, Hernando Fl. July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Fugate, Craig (interview by author, Tallahassee Fl. September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Gentry, Dan (interview by author, Ocala Fl. May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Giles, Dee (interview by author, Hernando Fl. July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Goforth, Thomas (interview by author, Ocala Fl. September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Halstead, David (interview by author, Lowell Fl. May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Huckstep, David (interview by author, Gainesville Fl. April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Johnson, Bob (interview by author, Tallahassee Fl. July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Johnson, Mark (interview by author, Camp Blanding Fl. November 08<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Jowell, Sean (interview by author, Tallahassee Fl. July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Lanier, Mike (interview by author, Silver Springs Fl. October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Lito, Thomas (interview by author, Citrus Hills Fl. July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007)
- Manning, Russell (interview by author, Camp Blanding Fl. November 08<sup>th</sup>, 2007)

McClain, Stan (interview by author, Ocala Fl. November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007)

Nelson, Bill (interview by author, Washington D.C. February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007)

Payton, Jim (interview by author, Ocala Fl. November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2007)

Rice, Lisa (interview by author, Ocala Fl. August, 2007)

Sperring, David (interview by author, Ocala Fl. August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007)

Stanford, Jim (interview by author, Orlando Fl. November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007)

Stempnvak, Stephen (interview by author, Orlando Fl. November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007)

Strow, Dennis (interview by author, Ocala Fl. August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007)

Succi, Jeff (interview by author, Ocala Fl. June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2007)

Watts, Chas (interview by author, Orlando Fl. November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007)

Williams, Sam (interview by author, Ocala Fl. June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2007)