



Community Disaster Recovery: A Framework Approach

**San Diego Chapter
American Society of Safety Engineers
William F. Norris
Disaster Preparedness & Emergency Management
Consultant
January 11, 2011**

Let's talk about recovery

...Recovery is easy to do wrong (2005 Katrina)

...Recovery takes a long time (1989 Loma Prieta)

...Recovery is different; Recovery involves EVERYONE

...Recovery planning is a relatively new field

Recovery is a commonly misunderstood process. It is critical to the future wellbeing of a region or company that has been impacted by a catastrophic disaster. There are many disasters that are not catastrophic, however, if we plan for catastrophe, a less serious disaster is manageable by only using those parts of the catastrophic recovery plan that are applicable. Unfortunately, the reverse is not true.

If recovery is not done properly, it can itself become an additional disaster.

The recovery time is long. Katrina – ongoing after 5 ½ years; Loma Prieta – Projects closed out in 2000; Hurricane Iniki in Hawaii (1992) – closed out in 2002. These are typical times for community recoveries.

You should be concerned because typically, half of small companies never reopen.

PLAN AHEAD!

It is too late to plan for recovery once a disaster is upon us.

The first post disaster decision is to decide to what level do you want to recover:

- 1) Do only minimum repairs to regain functionality.
- 2) Return to pre-disaster condition
- 3) Improve the condition while rebuilding

The first level is really not satisfactory for reasons that will become clear.

- 1) Since recovery planning is a relatively new area of planning, let's look at recovery in terms of an actual recovery plan

Each level has its own advantages and issues; cost and time being one of the principal considerations.

Purpose of a Recovery Plan:

“... to provide the procedures needed for the coordination and management of disaster recovery operations to more effectively deliver recovery assistance to severely impacted entities.”

No one can forecast exactly what a catastrophic disaster will look like and how it will affect impacted regions and entities within the region.

The plan cannot be detailed as to specific actions. Rather it must address management strategies and methods to inform and coordinate the many stakeholders. Remember, we are talking about a period that may extend to 10 years or beyond.

Researchers Say:

“Recovery...means establishing viability within the post-event environment, viability for businesses, households, local government, and the community as a whole.”

Remember the three levels we discussed. When the goal is to reestablish viability, then the first level of minimum repairs must be accomplished as a necessary precursor to a full recovery rather than a goal. Reestablishing government is the first thing that comes to most people’s mind, however, government cannot long survive in a vacuum. For example, until the commercial sector is reestablished and people go back to work, the government has no income because no taxes are being paid. Viability includes reestablishing financial institutions, e.g. access to credit; transportation routes and means of moving cargo into the area e.g. food stocks, rebuilding supplies, medical care and supplies, etc.; courts and justice systems; utilities, and a myriad of other needs.

This can , and will, become a mess of arguing stakeholders, bitterness and finger pointing. (New Orleans)

Government must meet as equals and include all facets of both communities – individuals, functionally disabled, business sectors, nonprofits, community planning organizations, elected representatives, environmental organizations and the bane of all negotiations, emergent groups.

In short, EVERYONE must have a seat at the table and a voice.

Seven Planning Assumptions:

- Provide a policy oriented framework for addressing all potential post-disaster recovery issues over specified time intervals
- Recognize potential regional impacts and to provide a process for addressing multi-entity issues and priorities
- Provide a scalable plan so it is useful for recovering from small scale events (i.e., within a single entity) to large scale regional, and/or multi-state events

Considering all of that, we have established a list of assumptions implicit in a successful recovery plan.

The policy oriented framework is the heart of a recovery plan because the plan must provide an overall structure for the response expressed as consensus policies, priorities and public information.

Continued

- Recognize the region or location where the entity is located is likely to be a complex jurisdiction with private and public sectors involved together in the recovery process
- Assure all commercial entities, regional agencies, private nonprofits, state and federal agencies, and other area organizations are identified as participating stakeholders when the plan is activated

Finally

- Identify key private sector functions and services important to recovery and make sure they are included as essential participants
- Include provisions for informing the public of your actions and plans and eliciting input at appropriate times and locations during the recovery process

Note that including private sector functions is a planning assumption. This is because without full inclusion, the plan is likely to fail.

Public information is critical because all stakeholders must see everything going on and believe that it is a truly open process. The Recovery management team will have to make many tough decisions in the face of competing priorities.

Full and open communications AND including all stakeholders in the discussions and decisions is critical to avoid creating “winners” and “losers” in the process. If that is allowed to happen, the plan is doomed.

5 Major Sections

1. Introduction
2. Recovery Operations and Functions
3. Recovery Management and Coordination
4. Recovery Financing
5. After Action Reporting and Disaster Learning

Our plan is divided into the major sections outlined here.

I should point out the last section – Disaster Learning is an unfamiliar term to many .

What do you think it means?

(Response from audience)

Disaster learning is a holistic term comprising all sources of lessons learned during and after the disaster. The goal is to build a community awareness and understanding of disaster causes and effects, response and recovery strategies, goals and outcomes of actions and inaction. It leads to a shared understanding of shared responsibility for the welfare of the community.

All of functions involved would create a confusing and muddled plan. Our plan consists of all of the overall information in the five sections with each functional area described in an attachment so that any specific function can be examined, exercised and implemented.

17 Attachments

- Damage Assessment and Reporting
- Debris Clearance and Disposal
- Temporary Shelter and Housing
- Transportation Routes and Services
- Utilities Services Restoration
- Building Safety and Inspections
- Public Safety Services

I said that these are the following functions were arbitrarily developed. That is not really true. The functions selected were developed by a team of disaster response planners and professional planners who have been involved in both successful recoveries, failed recoveries and recoveries that became disasters

In general, the functions are arranged in chronological order of implementation.

Continued

- Business and Economic Recovery
- Critical Facilities Recovery
- Public Communications Services
- Land Use, Zoning, and Redevelopment
- Social Services
- Community Services

And Finally

- Hazard Mitigation Considerations
- Natural Resources and Environmental Quality
- Cultural and Historic Properties
- Public Participation and Information

But...

The four functions above are not in chronologic order. Rather they are functions that must be integrated into everything that is done in the recovery.

An additional consideration that is very important is the concept of social justice. In recovery planning, this refers to ensuring that all portions of the population are considered. For example, it would be easy to assume that rebuilding big shopping centers and downtown areas first makes sense because they generate the most taxes and do the greatest good for the most people.

It is true and not true. To do it will make losers of lower economic neighborhoods and create hard feelings, alienation and active resistance. The Recovery Management Team must take this into account and rebuild some small commercial sectors while rebuilding large ones. Public transportation must serve lower economic neighborhoods first because these neighborhoods have the most need.

Recovery Takes Time; Sometimes Decades

The Plan attachments are arranged as functional timelines, and each one:

- Defines each Issue / function
- Has 4 Phases: first 30 days, months 2-6; months 7-12; 1 year to 5-10 years
- Suggests known potential problems or issues

ATTACHMENT 9 Utility Services
(Organization) POST-DISASTER RECOVERY FUNCTIONAL MATRIX
RECOVERY FUNCTION: Utility services restoration

Issue / Function	By end of first 30 days	For months 2 thru 6	For months 7 thru 12	For 1 year to 5-10 years
Policy				
Review State and Federal Program Guidance				
Establish Assessment Teams				
Assess Damage				
Report				
Monitor				
Miscellaneous				

The handout contained one sample completed attachment. I selected the Temporary Shelter and Housing function because it is common to all disasters.

“Plan ahead and plan carefully or the recovery
will become another disaster”

QUESTIONS?

Thank you very much for your attention!

William F. Norris
Disaster Preparedness and Response
O - 619-294-9863 C - 415-336-0723
Bnorris@aspenrmg.com