



Technology To The Rescue

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Tarrant County, Texas

Tarrant County, TX – Disaster strikes without warning. While first responders do all within their power to handle emergencies efficiently, having additional information regarding the rescue mission can expedite the process. Fort Worth's Emergency Management Department is currently equipped to rapidly supply accurate information about residents with disabilities.



The Special Needs Assistance Program (SNAP), which encourages online enrollment, provides Fort Worth's emergency responders with vital information about residents with permanent disabilities, both adults and children. The elderly population is also targeted. Residents are encouraged to register annually with the Office of Emergency Management.

The program began in the mid 80s, which allowed residents to fill-out a paper form that was distributed by the city's community partners, and the data was entered into a history file in our computer-aided dispatch system.

Through the years, the program was restructured several times with marginal success because, after a period of time, the data became unreliable and difficult to update in the computer-aided dispatch system. Due to advances in technology and a series of lessons learned from the 2004 power outage, flooding, and Katrina, the office decided to revamp the program again.

"I'm new school. Personally, I don't like paper forms," said David Moss, Geographic Information System (GIS) Programmer/Analyst. "I wanted a faster, less burdensome way of providing disability-specific information to the Office of Emergency Management, 911 dispatch, and other agencies. I wanted to be able to create a database that could be easily queried, one that can easily generate a spreadsheet."

The database includes the resident's name, gender, age, weight, address, primary language, emergency contact, and handicapping condition. Other information includes use of aids such as a walker/cane, crutches, a wheelchair, a guide dog, oxygen, or a life support system. Whether equipment requires an intermittent or continuous electrical supply is also noted. Space is provided for additional comments.

"It's important that registrants know that their information is being obtained on a secured site and to know that our office is the only office with administrative rights to the data," Moss said.

The website is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which protects the rights of people with disabilities.

"With the help of the Mayor's Committee on Persons with Disabilities, our IT department, and other community agencies, we began revamping the program in January, 2007. We were ready for online registration in September," Moss said.

Online registration is preferred, and the program is user friendly; however, the Office of Emergency Management will continue to accept mail-ins from registrants.

"We are not at the end result of what we really want. However, we have definitely made good progress," Brown said. "We have access to vital information which is readily available to help emergency responders better prepare for disasters. This information can be used to mitigate the adverse affects on residents with permanent disabilities during an emergency."

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region VI**

State: **Texas**

County: **Tarrant County**

City/Community: **Fort Worth**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**

Hazard Type: **Severe Storm; Tornado; Flooding; Hurricane/Tropical Storm; Fire; Terrorism; Wildfire; Chemical/Biological**

Activity/Project Type: **Education/Outreach/Public Awareness**

Activity/Project Start Date: **01/2007**

Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**

Funding Source: **Local Sources**

Funding Recipient: **Local Government**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Unknown**

Value Tested By Disaster? **No**

Repetitive Loss Property? **No**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.fortworthgov.org/citymanager/em/default.aspx?id=354>

Reference URL 2: <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm>

Main Points

- Fort Worth's Emergency Program equipped itself with an emergency plan to help those with disabilities.
- The Special Needs Assistance Program (SNAP), which encourages online enrollment, provides Fort Worth's emergency responders with vital information about residents with permanent disabilities, both adults and children.
- Originally a paper form was filled out, but recently all of the information, including disability type and whether or not an aid is used (such as an oxygen machine or cane) has been added to an online database.
- The website is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which protects the rights of people with disabilities.
- Now Fort Worth has easier access to vital information which is readily available to help emergency responders better prepare for disasters.



Computer screen showing SNAP's website



Calvin Brown, Emergency Management Officer and David Moss, Gis Programmer/Analyst II