

Summary

The State of Louisiana has established an operational Business Emergency Operations Center (LA BEOC) as a supporting element to the state emergency operations center. The LA BEOC will coordinate the participation and activities of businesses, non-profit organizations and Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) in disaster management efforts through public-private partnerships.

Background

The need for establishing a Business Emergency Operations Center in the State of Louisiana was established following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. Operational concepts developed in the years following the 2005 Hurricane Season were applied during the 2008 Hurricane Season. Since taking office in 2008, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal has been a strong leader and supporter of the LA BEOC concept. The State of Louisiana has worked to develop and foster public-private partnerships to support disaster management response in Louisiana. The collaborative efforts of key LA BEOC stakeholders such as the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP), Louisiana Economic Development, University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and Louisiana State University have supported the continued enhancement of the project.



Photo: LA BEOC ribbon cutting on June 2, 2010

A major milestone was the opening of the new Business Emergency Operations Center on the South Campus of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge on June 2, 2010.

Goals and Objectives

- To facilitate communication of critical information between the state and private sector and promote the resumption of normal business operations;
- To determine economic impacts of events to major state economic drivers and the resulting impacts to regional, state, and national economies;
- To maximize the use of Louisiana businesses and national private sector resources and distribution capabilities to provide needed emergency response products and services;
- To support the coordination of voluntary donations from businesses through the Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOADs) and individuals;

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- Create a disaster resilient business community by building from current preparedness efforts such as the GOHSEP “Get a Game Plan” project, thereby helping Louisiana businesses to become more disaster resistant and able to support the various response and recovery efforts of the state and local community

Description

The LA BEOC is a collaborative initiative led by the State of Louisiana through the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) and Louisiana Economic Development (LED). Supporting organizations include the University of Louisiana’s National Incident Management Systems and Advanced Technologies Institute (NIMSAT), and Louisiana State University’s Stephenson Disaster Management Institute (SDMI). A steering committee comprised of representatives from all partners work together to research, plan, develop, and finalize procedures, operations and other supporting materials. All final versions are approved by all partners and tasks are divided among the committee members.

Through the LA BEOC, the State of Louisiana will improve disaster preparedness and response by maximizing business, industry and economic stabilization initiatives. Additionally, the LA BEOC will balance government and private industry resources to support to return business communities to normal operations and support the establishment of disaster resilient communities. The LA BEOC leverages the expertise, assets, and capabilities of all government and academic partners involved for the benefit of the state. By understanding the economic impacts of each disaster, state leaders are better positioned to report the status of Louisiana’s situation and report the support needed from, federal authorities. Communication through public-private partnerships with the business community and with National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (NVOADs) and state VOAD enhances Louisiana’s ability to organize public and private sectors into a coordinated disaster response. This model has gained the attention of DHS, and neighboring Gulf states, that have expressed interest in establishing Business Emergency Operations Centers within their own states.

Through a Cooperative Endeavour Agreement, Louisiana’s Governor’s Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness has provided baseline funding to support the development of concepts of operations and standard operating procedures for the LA BEOC facility. The LA BEOC facility, housed on the LSU campus, was established with funding from cash and in-kind private donations.

The LA BEOC supports Louisiana’s Emergency Operations Center. Under the direction of the GOHSEP and LED the LA BEOC partnership will support Louisiana’s business community. Primary emergency responsibilities of the LA BEOC include supporting the development of economic impact analysis and the coordination of volunteer services to establish resilient businesses. During activations of the LA BEOC, the facility is staffed by representatives of LED, the NIMSAT Institute, LSU SDMI, and professional trade associations representing the private sector.

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The LA BEOC Steering Committee maintains a LA BEOC portal to facilitate the exchange of information between the public and private sectors. LED maintains an existing software system capable of identifying the immediate impacts on the top 1000 economic drivers located within the State of Louisiana. The LA BEOC portal provides the ability for the State of Louisiana to disseminate information to the business community. The web based portal provides the State of Louisiana with the means to send specific alerts, messages and surveys to targeted private sector and organizational partners. A proprietary economic development tool used by LED as well as the LA BEOC portal both provide the private sector and organizational partners the ability to identify critical roadblocks to their business continuity and recovery, update their information, and communicate information related to the operational impact of the disaster on their business. Coordination between LED and the business community



occurs within the LA BEOC facility. The portal has been designed to facilitate the flow of needs from the LA BEOC to the private sector and allows the business community to respond by providing information on available products and services. LABEOC.ORG will be linked with GOHSEP's "Get a Game Plan" and a private sector preparedness campaign, along with other potential outreach efforts.

Photo: LA BEOC operations In Baton Rouge, LA

The partners involved in the collaboration each have certain tasking and responsibilities. During an event, under the leadership of LED, the LA BEOC will support the execution of the economic impact models and provide periodic updates to the State Emergency Operations Center on economic impacts to business and industry. Under the direction of GOHSEP, LED and the Louisiana Division of Administration, the LA BEOC will maximize the use of Louisiana businesses, or national private sector resources, and distribution capabilities, to identify needed emergency products and services, to improve coordination between the public and private sectors, while remaining consistent with state contract procurement rules and regulations. Under the direction of GOHSEP and LED, the LA BEOC will support the coordination of voluntary donations from businesses, VOAD and individuals with the needs identified and established by GOHSEP, parish authorities, and VOAD

The LA BEOC Project is presently transitioning from strategy to implementation. Stakeholders have worked diligently over the past year to develop the physical LA BEOC facility as well as standard operating procedures, user agreements, and relationships with the private sector. The LA BEOC was put to the test for the first time during the Macondo oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Additionally, the LA BEOC supported the development of economic impact analyses related to the oil spill. The LA BEOC Steering Committee is currently developing a series of exercises to identify any gaps as it relate to resource identification and the facility. Lessons learned from current and future

exercises or events will allow the LA BEOC to enhance the project's operational readiness and assist in the development of a prepared and resilient business community.

Requirements for Success

The key requirement for this collaborative effort to be successful is the sustained funding and support from various stakeholders. The support would mean a continued commitment from GOHSEP and LED. The participation from business and VOAD based on perceived benefits is also very important to the LA BEOC vision and success.

Resources

Louisiana Business EOC has the following resources available through its partnership – A seat in the Emergency Operations Centers; Resources to help prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters; Web resources; Tools and templates; and the establishment of a separate, fully functional, state of the art, Emergency Operations Center specifically for private sector representatives interconnected with the State EOC.

Training and Exercises

Louisiana Business EOC hosts and participates in joint training and exercises with the public and private sectors. The LA BEOC held an informational meeting for several industry representatives entitled “LA BEOC Concept Presentation.” The first training class was “Emergency Management Process and the Business Role” which discussed pre-disaster preparations and the importance of collaborating with other sectors. A third meeting is being scheduled called “LA BEOC Orientation.” The orientation will consist of industry representatives touring the physical center, discussing actual events that will happen with activation, and demonstrating procedures and technology tools that will assist in the effort. Other attendees included eight regional Economic Development Organizations (part of the LED structure), as well as many reps from GOHSEP, plus NIMSAT and SDMI staff members.

Communication Tools

Louisiana Business EOC uses the following methods of communication with your public/private partners—Email alerts; Text message; In-person meeting; Website; and Media outreach.

Links

<http://www.labeoc.org/labeoc/>

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