

What is Emergency Management?

Overview

Emergency Management is the discipline of dealing with and avoiding risks. It is a discipline that involves preparing for disaster before it occurs, disaster response (e.g., emergency evacuation, quarantine, mass decontamination, etc.), and supporting, and rebuilding society after natural or human-made disasters have occurred. In general, any emergency management is the continuous process by which all individuals, groups, and communities manage hazards in an effort to avoid or ameliorate the impact of disasters resulting from the hazards. Actions taken depend in part on perceptions of risk of those exposed. Effective emergency management relies on thorough integration of emergency plans at all levels of government and non-government involvement. Activities at each level (individual, group, community) affect the other levels. It is common to place the responsibility for governmental emergency management with the institutions for civil defence or within the conventional structure of the emergency services. However, emergency management actually starts at the lowest level and only increases to the next higher organizational level after the current level's resources have been exhausted.

Emergency Management is one of a number of terms which, since the end of the Cold War, have largely replaced Civil Defence, whose original focus was protecting civilians from military attack. Modern thinking focuses on a more general intent to protect the civilian population in times of peace as well as in times of war.



The Civil Defense logo that was created in 1939 and was phased out in 2006 following the development of the new Emergency Management logo, below.



Structure of Emergency Management in Iowa

Local Emergency Management in Iowa is structured as a commission form of government. Emergency Management Commissions are created as countywide governing bodies in the [Code of Iowa 29C](#). The Commissions are made up of the mayors of all incorporated cities (or their designated representative), a member of the Board of Supervisors (or their designated representative), and the Sheriff (or their designated representative). The Commission establishes an agency to carry out the daily operations and hires a Coordinator to lead the agency.

Responsibilities

There are 11 specific responsibilities that local emergency management commissions are responsible for. They are:

- Hazard analysis and risk assessment
- Resource management
- Planning
- Direction, control and coordination
- Damage assessment
- Communication and warning
- Operations and procedures
- Training
- Exercises
- Public education and information
- Agency administration.

More detail on each of these core responsibilities can be found in [Iowa Administrative Code, Section 605](#).

Other Important Concepts

All disasters are local. They affect local citizens, property, economies, and environments. Therefore, it is the responsibility of local government, neighbours, and businesses large and small to prepare for and be capable of responding to disasters that occur in our communities. Local emergency management agencies work to bring stakeholders to the table to address risks and work proactively through planning, training, and exercises. They are there to coordinate the local response so that resources are put to their highest and best use. Local emergency management agencies are also there serving as the critical linkage to integrate cities and counties with the state and federal partners during all phases of an emergency or disaster - preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.

Flooding in Iowa in 2008.

Local and State elected and key appointed officials play a vital role in this process. Critical decision making must take place under stressful situations. Working with the local emergency management agencies these decisions can be thought through before the

disaster strikes in a less emotionally-intense environment. Expectations can be shared and resources identified outside of the fog created by a disaster

