

# Building Resilient Communities

## State Project Report Oklahoma Project Summary



### Project Summary

Please share your thoughts on the following items:

(a) Based upon the discussions that took place in the Roundtables and Bridge meetings held in your two counties, what are the 4-5 most important things a community can do to help:

- **At-risk** or **Disadvantaged** people prepare for and respond to disasters?
  1. Education. This was a highly repetitive response – nearly everyone had it somewhere on their list. Informing the “at-risk” or “disadvantaged” individuals about the dangers they faced was seen as a very high priority.
  2. Identify the locations of the “at-risk” or “disadvantaged” people (mapping process as part of EPD would help).
  3. Identify the most commonly faced disasters for these individuals
  4. Obtain local buy-in from the community
  5. Produce a usable, simple product (flyer / map / handout?) for these individuals to take away and be able to be use when necessary.
- NOTE: Neither of our communities broke the responses to this question out into at-risk vs. disadvantaged categories.

(b) What final recommendations would you offer on the EPD process, regarding:

- The concept of a Community Coach?
  1. There are mixed opinions here. There is some resistance to bringing in outsiders to serve in this role, particularly noted by urban EM personnel. Rural communities were somewhat open to an outsider serving in this position, but stressed that they need to understand how rural areas operate. The technical expertise and experience with other communities that the coach would bring was seen as VITAL for the project to be successful.
  2. A good suggestion was to form “co-coaches”: one from outside the community, the other from the local emergency management scene.
  3. The coach CANNOT come in and dictate the entire process or be overbearing – community needs to feel ownership.
  4. The coach needs a magnetic personality – the ability to get others involved in the project.
- The vulnerability assessment for addressing the needs of **disadvantaged** people?
  1. Definitely a key feature of the EPD process.
  2. Getting the disadvantaged community to participate will be a challenge. The vulnerability assessment is great for demonstrating exactly what the project can do for them, but getting continual involvement is not easy. Even for our small, introductory level meetings we had difficulty bringing this demographic in. It will be challenging to get them involved (and keep them involved for a period of time), specifically when most don’t consider emergency preparedness a priority.

(c) *What specific needs do the counties have with regard to emergency preparedness and response?*

1. Bringing together EM personnel and everyday citizens
  2. Helping everyday citizens understand the dangers they face and what they should do in the case of specific emergencies
  3. EM personnel need to develop specific plans for disadvantaged individuals
- Extension can play a role in the first 2 responses above – bringing people together (facilitating meetings) and educating of the general public about what they need to do in specific emergencies.
  - Developing plans specifically for disadvantaged individuals or groups should definitely be a part of the EM planning process. The EPD process is a good example of how this could happen. As noted elsewhere, getting feedback from and participation from these disadvantaged communities is difficult.

(d) *What do you think about the meetings that were held in the county?*

- The meetings were helpful to the members of the community, if for no other reason than the fact that they opened up lines of communication between emergency management personnel and everyday citizens. In particular, specific contacts in different communities were identified, when they did not exist prior to these meetings. Emergency management personnel noted that they would now spend more time considering the needs of other, more rural communities in their future plans.
- The meetings did help increase awareness of the special needs of disadvantaged residents. Both the EM and CG participants indicated that they had not fully considered what various types of disadvantaged individuals faced during crises.

(e) *Did you learn anything new as a result of your involvement in this FEMA/CSREES/SRDC project?*

- EM personnel indicated that they learned that others in the community are not aware of the EOP for the county
- EM personnel learned about the need for improved communication between agencies – some jobs are being duplicated
- CG personnel learned that not very many individuals were as prepared as they needed to be, particularly in disadvantaged segments of the population.
- Both groups learned a new perspective on emergency management issues by listening to concerns that they had not considered
- New ideas about the EPD process itself – seems to be a good concept for starting change

(f) *Is there anything else you would like to bring to our attention in terms of your experiences taking part in these county meetings and the overall project?*

- Usefulness of the project in increasing awareness of issues facing disadvantaged individuals
- Increasing awareness of 211 / Emergency call-back numbers
- EPD is a very educational program, premise is good
- Pets are ALWAYS an issue – some will not leave without them
- Talking to people about this issue *outside* of the program meetings is important, that is how you raise awareness in some communities (having socially active participants is helpful)
- EM personnel are generally bombarded with preparedness training, but getting input from actual citizens is a very effective way to get them to think outside the box. However, multiple meetings may not be feasible as EM personnel are already stretched pretty thin.