

Flood Scenario Revisited

Background: It is March in Thomasville and the residents are experiencing a cold spring. Thomasville is a community of about 18,000 persons located in a small valley with a blue line creek running through a portion of the downtown. The community is surrounded by several small crop and livestock farms and a large county park offering camping and hiking trails is about 3 miles outside the city limits. There has been some flooding before, but not in the last 30 years.

Thomasville has grown by about 2,000 persons over the last two decades and most of the new residential development has occurred along the north/south two lane state road that parallels the creek that winds through the valley. Thomasville has its own water treatment and sewage plant; a fire department with two stations and 8 full time and 24 volunteer firemen; and a police department with 6 sworn officers. Thomasville also has access to the county's sheriff's department and two state highway officers. There are three ways to get in and out of Thomasville: the north/south 2 lane state road, a two lane east/west county road that 4 miles from town connects to a 4 lane state highway, and an intersecting county road that also moves traffic from east to west. There are a variety of city streets and smaller county roads throughout Thomasville and its surrounding area. There is a local radio station but the TV station is regional and comes from a larger city about 80 miles away.

The Event: Early in the morning of March 15th, the National Weather Service Doppler radar indicates that thunderstorms producing heavy rainfall and damaging winds in excess of 60 mph are headed towards Thomasville. By 9:00 a.m. that day, runoff from the heavy rain begins to flood low-lying areas in Thomasville and the wind downs power lines, causing power outages throughout the city. By 5:00 p.m., the normally quiet creek has crested its bank, causing more flooding. The strong winds continue to knock down more power lines. There are reports that in some areas of Thomasville, people are trapped in their businesses and homes, many streets and roads are flooded, and there is a concern for several homes that are located on a steep slope to the west of Thomasville.

The Results: Roads are closed, and the bridge that links the northern and southern parts of Thomasville has been washed out. The power is out in many areas across the community. The water and wastewater treatment plants are running on back-up power generators. The elementary and middle schools have decided to keep students at the schools because of concerns about bus safety and the high school students who attend the county high school will not have access to county buses to return home.

At the EOC: The Emergency Operations Center has been activated and the EMA director is in charge. He has delegated responsibility for the other sections. The sections are: Operations (responsible for coordinating with and supporting on-scene responders), Planning (gathers and analyzes information, keeps decision makers informed and tracks resources), Logistics (provides overall communications plan, coordinates transportation, housing, etc.), and Finance/Administration (coordinates financial management process for the incident). In addition, there are representatives from supporting agencies in the EOC.

Scenario adapted from:

<http://www.epa.gov/watersecurity/tools/trainingcd/Simple/Source/Scenario-8/SSc8-0.pdf>
Simple Tabletop Exercise, Interdependency – Natural Disaster Scenario, Scenario #8