Emergency Planning for Communities with Special Needs
Center for Accessible Technology
Melissa W. Kasnitz

R.15-06-009 (Phase 2)
Utility Disaster Planning and Emergency Response
Workshop 1

June 26, 2018

Targeted Workshop Questions:

- Please describe your organization's engagement with utilities with respect to their emergency response activities/plans. Case studies, if available, would be helpful.

- What is your perspective on the gaps in utilities' emergency response plans/activities that need to be addressed in this proceeding?

- What is your perspective on utilities' community engagement activities in the context of emergency preparedness/response?

- [For CforAT] What are the special needs of the communities that CforAT represents that are not currently taken into account by utilities' emergency response plans, and how can these plans be improved to allow for these communities needs to be better addressed?

Notice and Mitigation:

- Consider applicability of Commission Decision 12-04-024, issued in A.08-12-021 (SDG&E Application following 2007 wildfires)

- Consider pending Draft Resolution ESRB-8, which would extend the requirements of D.12-04-024 to other IOUs and add requirements for IOUs to meet with local communities

- Mitigation requirements should focus on utility-related risks and losses

- Community meeting requirement should extend to CBOs, not just government entities. Also consider working with local hosptials, nursing homes, board and care facilities, and retirement communities

Communication and Additional Assistance:

- Effective communication with people who cannot access standard forms of communication (due to disability or limited English proficiency) is highest priority

- Other requirements are direct assistance with evacuation or direct needs if the public is advised to shelter in place

- Shelters or care centers must be accessible to all

- Plans must address medical needs, including medication.

Tips for Effectively Communicating with the Whole Community in Disasters

DHS Publication:

From DHS Material on effective communication:

- Translate written materials into the major languages spoken in the impacted communities and provide oral interpretation to ensure limited English proficient (LEP) populations are informed and receive meaningful access to alerts and emergency-related information or other programs and services. (*Added: Also ensure written materials are available in alternative format such as large print and Braille.*)

- Notify impacted LEP populations that language services are available and that these services are free. (*Added: Also notify people with vision disabilities that alternative format materials are available for free.*)

- Arrange to have sign language interpreters available at press conferences and in other televised (within the screen shot) or in-person announcements to the public.

- Review staffing and capabilities for 911 call centers to ensure personnel can effectively communicate with LEP callers and callers who are deaf or hard of hearing or have other disabilities that could affect communication access.

- Reach out to local ethnic media (television, radio, internet) to help get information out to impacted communities.

- Maintain open lines of communication with non-profit, community and faith-based organizations that serve diverse racial and ethnic populations and those serving people with disabilities to assist in communicating emergency related information.

From DHS Material (continued):

- Identify bilingual employees and volunteers who can provide assistance to LEP populations, keeping in mind that individuals who serve as translators and interpreters must be competent to do so. Sign language interpreters must be qualified.

- Provide auxiliary aids to communication such as Braille, TTYs, hearing aid-compatible telephones, or interpreters. This is especially important for emergency assistance providers (such as mass care shelters), along with health and social service programs.

- Review websites used to provide information to the public during disasters to ensure they are accessible to persons with disabilities. (Simple features built into a web page will assist someone who, for instance, cannot see a computer monitor or use a mouse. Accessible features include using alt tags for graphics, using accessible online forms and tables, and posting documents that have been created in accessible text-based formats. For technical assistance regarding Section 508 Standards and how to make webpages accessible to people with disabilities, please visit the U.S. Access Board: www.access-board.gov/508.htm.

- Review the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) fact sheets summarizing the closed captioning and access to emergency information rules at the FCC's Website at http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/closedcaption.html, and http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/emergencyvideo.html.

- Review joint federal guidance issued to recipients: Guidance to State and Local Governments and Other Federally Assisted Recipients Engaged in Emergency Preparedness, Response, Mitigation, and Recovery Activities on Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Available online in English and Spanish: https://www.justice.gov/crt/fcs/EmergenciesGuidance (English version), https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/885496/download (Spanish version).

Additional Resources

- ADA Guide for Local Governments:

  https://www.ada.gov/emerprepguideprt.pdf

- FEMA 2010 Guidance for Shelters:

  https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/odic/fnss_guidance.pdf

- Additional Useful Links on Emergency Preparedness:

  https://www.adapacific.org/emergency-preparedness-publications-resources