Little Hoover Commission
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Crisis Management Leadership

- Capable leadership, accurate information, and clear communications are as important as food, water, or shelter in a disaster. You can not "over communicate" in a crisis and there is no excuse for not telling the truth. The public deserves respect and honesty from public officials.

- Senior government officials should be highly visible when leading disaster recovery efforts. Leaders should be seen and heard.

- A single unified voice is required, demonstrating control, knowledge, and confidence while delivering a clear message to the public. These actions will help to reduce tension and maintain order during challenging and evolving crisis events.

- Capable leaders in a crisis should be individuals that have public trust along with the training and practical field experience to effectively manage a complex natural or man-made disaster.

Local Capabilities

- Local knowledge is often critical when managing a crisis. There are many examples of local officials (i.e. Ellis Stanley – City of Los Angeles Emergency Manager) who are highly skilled, trusted, certified professionals with proven experience.

- The capability of these local managers should be carefully considered when reviewing and making decisions on incident command and control escalation.

- Where proven local skills in disaster management do not exist there should be an orderly escalation process to elevate command and control responsibilities to trained, certified, and experienced regional, county, and state crisis management officials as appropriate for the size and complexity of the event.

- Escalation is required when local resources are exhausted or overwhelmed. A unified command structure can be used to maintain local leadership while adding physical and operational resources.

Accreditation and Skill Levels – Assessment, Measurement, and Accountability

- The skill level of emergency management officials should be reviewed against

industry standards (a common yardstick). A government appointed "blue ribbon" panel could be utilized to assess skills and develop programs to build capabilities in crisis management as needed.

- Emergency management goals and objectives must be well documented with specific timelines and actions that can be measured. A yearly integrated vulnerability assessment of key operations and facilities can help to track progress, identify areas for improvement, and address issues. A comprehensive independent assessment of State capabilities in managing catastrophic events would be highly beneficial. Such an assessment must be conducted by qualified professionals with extensive experience in responding to and managing complex, large scale disasters.

Private Sector Expertise

- Many private sector firms are willing to make resources and qualified personnel available to the public sector at no charge during times of crisis. Many private sector firms have no ulterior or hidden profit motive when making humanitarian relief contributions. They contribute for the good of the community as a component of their corporate responsibility or ethics.

- Private sector firms need to know what is needed, when is it needed and where is it needed and who do we deliver it to.

- Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) need to be established in advance with private sector firms that are willing to contribute during times of crisis.

- Private sector resources can be effectively utilized to accelerate recovery, minimize loss, improve distribution of critical services, and reduce redundancy.

- Examples of effective public private partnerships include New York City - Sparks, Nevada - Tulsa, Oklahoma and several former "Project Impact" communities.

Technology, Communications, and Interoperability

- Technology advances in communications and crisis management support systems can be effectively utilized to improve response, accelerate recovery, minimize loss and improve efficiency.

- Communications and Information management are cornerstones of a solid continuity of operations plan. If you can not call for help, you can not get help. Voice and data communications are always critical in a disaster. Improvements in voice and data interoperability can allow multiple emergency responders (police, fire, EMS) to more effectively communicate with each other during times of crisis.

- Crisis management decision makers need access to high value information matched against pre-defined decision support variables. This process enables decision makers to be more effective and reduce errors. This "data triage" procedure helps to reduce the amount of non-critical information flowing into the Emergency Operations Center which may distract from the core information needs.