

Massachusetts Libraries as Disaster Recovery Centers

Partners

Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC)

Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)



Background

- MBLC approached MEMA to consider using Libraries as pre-designated Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs)
- June 2008 – MEMA requests support from FEMA Individual Assistance (IA) to help initiate and develop a pilot program
- FEMA deploys a DRC Coordinator to MEMA for initial meeting to develop project goals and objectives
- Pre-designate libraries to utilize as DRCs when a Presidential Declaration is received or use as state recovery centers prior to a Presidential Declaration



Goals

- Identify libraries to utilize as DRCs and/or Information Centers
- Survey libraries for their ability to operate independent of library hours
- Identify if site is a good location for Primary DRC location or to be used as informational only



Why Libraries?

- Citizens know where libraries are-comfortable in familiar atmosphere
- Library staff are professional-can offer information resources on local, state, and federal programs before, during and after an event/disaster-becomes a community resource for disaster information
- Most libraries have meeting spaces that can operate independently of library hours and staff
- Most libraries have communication systems with public access. This can reduce logistical requirements for FEMA set-up and centers opened quicker to meet needs of the residents



Why Libraries?

- Most libraries have active security and surveillance systems
- Having pre-designated centers makes it easier for MEMA and FEMA to get centers opened quickly to meet the needs of the residents
- Allows the State to easily identify and utilize sites as state recovery centers prior to receiving a Presidential Federal Declaration
- Lastly, as the partnership grows between the local emergency management and the libraries, additional local emergency planning information and programs will follow helping the residents be safer and more prepared should disasters or incidents occur in the community



How is the location determined?

- Convenient location within or near the disaster area
- Availability of facility
- Not all libraries will be chosen as a DRC location, however all libraries can be used as an informational locations prior to, during and after a disaster
- Locations can also be determined by the direction of the Governor of the state, the town managers or the mayor of the city.



Important Factors when choosing location of a DRC

- Meeting room size and availability
- Parking/public transportation
- Correct address and GPS coordinates
- Point of Contact (POC) information
- Proximity to fire, police and medical facilities
- ADA, safety and security profile
- Restroom availability

IT Requirements

- Telephone and cable provider information, capabilities and location of service points
- Cell phone and air card signal strength
- Capability to park Mobile DRC (MDRC)) or other communication vehicle/unit within operational parameters to utilize satellite connectivity if required



What is a Disaster Recovery Center?

- Disaster Recovery Centers are often described as “one-stop service/shopping centers”
- Residents can meet face to face with representatives from FEMA, MEMA, Small Business Administration (SBA) Volunteers, and others who are at the DRC and receive information about available disaster assistance.
- Disaster Recovery Centers are co-managed by MEMA and FEMA. There is no cost to the city and or town.



Services provided at the DRC.....

- Guidance on the disaster recovery process – Registration assistance
- Clarification of written correspondence from FEMA or other agencies
- Housing and rental assistance resource information
- FEMA, MEMA, SBA and mitigation representatives
- Status of application being processed by FEMA and SBA
- Referrals to other organizations and agencies for additional resources



Libraries used in past disasters

- **FEMA 1895 March 2010 Floods**

- Lakeville Public Library, Lakeville
- Billerica Public Library, Billerica
- Thayer Memorial Library, Lancaster

FEMA 1994 June 1, 2011 Tornado

- Jacob Edwards Library, Southbridge
- Agawam Public Library, Agawam* (Library was available, however, few applicants in the Agawam Area, not necessary to move all Library activities, therefore, DRC was held at MEMA Regional Office)

- **FEMA 4028 Tropical Storm Irene**

- Berkshire Athenaeum-Pittsfield Public Library, Pittsfield



Questions?