



Safely wade through the aftermath with reliable and effective restoration plans.

After the storm has passed, widespread disruption can leave municipal governments facing a multitude of challenges. Restoration plans — detailed outlines for getting the right resources into a disaster-stricken area — are designed to complement emergency response plans.

Many of these restoration plans, however, fail to consider that the core employees and security needed to enact the plan might have been affected by the emergency as well.

“Most restoration plans focus on keeping operators and the community safe rather than the specific

resources and skill sets required to begin those processes,” says RJ Hope, a section manager at Burns & McDonnell. “You have to determine where resources will come from when they are absent or no longer available locally. A plan to get service restored is great until you don’t have the people to do it.”

Engineers bring utilities back online; security personnel escort the engineers to where they need to be. Municipalities that understand this connection among employees, systems and equipment can more effectively shorten the duration of a natural disaster’s effects through proper planning.



THINK OF MURPHY'S LAW: ANYTHING THAT CAN GO WRONG, WILL GO WRONG. CONSIDER THIS WITHIN YOUR RESTORATION PLAN, AND DESIGN THE PLAN TO AFFORD PEOPLE ON THE GROUND THE OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY TO ADJUST TO MEET DYNAMIC SITUATIONS AS THEY ARISE.

RJ HOPE

SUPPLEMENTING THE STAFF

Building effective restoration plans should include agreements with peer utilities in surrounding municipalities, which can be an effective method of supplementing staff.

Creating mutual aid agreements with the proper peer utilities gives an organization the ability to reach out and request assistance from organizations outside of the affected disaster zone.

Also, peer utility personnel must be familiar with the right equipment to be considered effective supplementary staff. Utilities that operate similar systems will have an upper hand in this area, saving the training time needed to get people up to speed.

SECURING THE SITUATION

The chaos that ensues after a disaster often compounds existing public tensions. Such tensions can overflow, resulting in increased security concerns for public entities.

To prepare for such concerns, many organizations hire private security groups.

“Built-in clauses in security contracts can help a company increase staff in the event of an emergency,” Hope says. “But many organizations in the vicinity are using the same security group with the same contract, and those security employees also could be affected by the same emergency.”

Such staffing limitations can be detrimental. Under certain conditions, utility personnel will need a

security escort to enter flooded areas or situations of civil unrest. The threat of losing equipment or vehicles, or of someone being hurt, might be low, but it does not alleviate an organization’s responsibility to protect its people.

SHAPING SUCCESS

An organization’s ability to adapt and succeed is only limited by its creativity in executing its restoration plan. Following a disaster, teams need to be able to quickly find the answers to problems as they arise.

“Think of Murphy’s law,” Hope says. “Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong. Consider this within your restoration plan, and design the plan to afford people on the ground the operational flexibility to adjust to meet dynamic situations as they arise.”

Planning for multiple scenarios or situations is crucial to remaining flexible. One plan might assume 100 percent of staff will be available. Another might count on 50 percent, and yet another a skeleton staff of 25 percent. Municipalities that consider how each scenario can affect staffing in key functional areas will more clearly understand how it will affect the restoration of service to customers, making faster — and safer — restoration possible. ●

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