

# **Fire Safety and Emergency Planning**

## **2007-2008 Annual Report**

### **FUNCTION**

The primary function of Fire Safety and Emergency Planning is to ensure the safety of members of the USC community and the continuity of the university's mission by establishing optimal emergency preparedness and fire safety programs.

### **SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

The Fire Safety & Emergency Planning Department during this fiscal year made significant progress in establishing programs to manage life safety risk and prepare the university for major emergencies.

#### **USC Emergency Operations Center**

On the University Park Campus, staff conducted two active shooter tabletop exercises for primary as well as secondary Emergency Operation Center responders, and helped to coordinate two field drills with the Department of Public Safety in which active shooter threats were successfully neutralized. Due to the demolition of the Topping Student Center, which has served as the university's emergency operations center, staff also evaluated several possible locations and identified the Facilities Management Services Training Room as a new EOC location. In March, the EOC was moved to the new location. Emergency power was wired to the room in March to ensure the room is operational if power is lost on campus.

Staff conducted an earthquake response tabletop exercise for the Health Sciences Campus Emergency Operations Center. Participants representing all critical departments attended, including the Department of Public Safety, Facilities Management, HSC Public Relations, Transportation, Housing, Hospitality, USC Care and USC Hospital/Norris Hospital. This exercise brought the groups together and built a team of dedicated responders that when a major emergency arises will be better able to communicate and effectively support HSC staff, students, faculty and patients.

### **Disaster Medical Response Plan**

In the event of a large-scale disaster such as an earthquake, the number of people injured may very quickly outnumber the staff capable of rendering care, and 911 services will not be available. This year a major accomplishment was the training of over 125 UPC staff members on first aid and triage, and the training of another 250 medical team members on the HSC, including many first year Pharmacy School students. Staff conducted several orientations to the plan for Student Health Center staff and management, and two tabletop exercises were conducted. The first exercise was for the Disaster Medical Plan management staff and it focused on how medical resources are to be coordinated. The second exercise included the Department of Public Safety, The Disaster Mental Health Response Team, Transportation, Hospitality, Dental School, and Facilities Management staff. A full-scale mass-casualty drill will be conducted on campus on November 13th. This drill will signify a major milestone in the university's disaster preparedness.

### **Community Emergency Response Team**

In July/August 2007 staff recruited and trained 40 staff members in the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program. The 21-hour FEMA course teaches participants first aid, triage, light search and rescue, fire suppression, team organization, incident command, terrorism awareness and psychological first aid. During the fall 2007 semester, a second CERT team of USC students was organized and trained, which has become a recognized student club and a very enthusiastic team.

In the event of a large-scale disaster, CERT teams will be critical since resources such as the fire department will not be available to respond to the campus. In addition, internal departments responsible for emergency response such as DPS and FMS will be overwhelmed, and will need CERT assistance. The CERT program provides a team of volunteers who have formal training and an understanding of the university plan. The group will be a great asset not only to the university but may also help the community surrounding the campus and within the communities the staff members live. This program draws upon the spirit of volunteerism and self-help associated with volunteer fire departments in many communities.

### **Fire Prevention**

A Fire Protection Impairment Program has been developed that will provide an effective management program to supervise the safe shutdown of fire protection systems, control potential fire hazards during the impairment, and restore the fire protection system to service as soon as possible. This program involves collaboration between fire safety, construction managers, Public Safety, and the LA Fire Department, and it is critical to prevent fires on campus.

### **Auxiliary Services Emergency Preparedness**

During this fiscal year Housing, Hospitality, Transportation and the Bookstore have worked diligently with staff to take their emergency response planning to the next level. In addition to developing written plans, these groups have procured the recommended equipment and supplies to manage their roles and have developed a Department Operation Center (DOC) to be activated in an emergency. An organization chart with a clear line of succession to ensure coverage 24/7 has been developed and training has been provided ensuring management and front line staff know what their roles are and how to execute them. Auxiliary Services has now become one of the best prepared units at USC.

### **Violence Prevention**

Following the Virginia Tech shootings, staff assisted in the development of violence prevention and response programs, including development and implementation of the TrojansAlert emergency notification system, which allows the university to rapidly disseminate warning information to over 15,000 students, staff and faculty in the event of an incident. A violence prevention website (<http://violenceprevention@usc.edu>) was also developed to provide information on awareness of campus violence risk factors, and appropriate violence prevention actions. Staff conducted two active shooter tabletop exercises for Emergency Operations Center responders, and helped to coordinate two field drills with the Department of Public Safety in which active shooter threats were successfully neutralized. The DPS tactical drills were conducted in partnership with the LAPD. In addition, campus lockdown procedures have been developed and implemented by DPS staff, and are practiced each month to ensure readiness for a potential incident.

### **Department of Public Safety**

Staff provided extensive training of DPS staff to improve emergency response, including:

- Hazardous Material Safety Awareness Training. The need for the training was identified by DPS in regards to safely approaching incidents involving hazardous materials. The training teaches personnel to safely approach, isolate the area, notify response units and set up the incident command post.
- Staff trained select DPS staff and Communications Center personnel in the use and activation of TrojansAlert.
- Staff trained all University Park Campus Community Service and Public Safety Officers in the proper procedures for responding to fire alarms. To reinforce the training, each officer was given a laminated pocket card to use as a memory tool in the field.

### **Facilities Management Services Emergency Preparedness**

Facility Management Services emergency planning took a major step forward this year with Field Incident Command Post Drills for each campus zone. Each zone consists of approximately

100 FMS staff, and each went through a three step training process: a pre-drill explaining the earthquake building assessment process, a Field Incident Command Post training exercise, and a post-drill debrief and critique to ensure continuous improvement. The zone exercises also included participation by other response departments that interface with FMS, particularly Environmental Health & Safety.

As a result of the planning and training efforts, Facilities Management now has in place:

- Improved written emergency plans.
- Enhanced understanding of roles and responsibilities for responders.
- Essential emergency supplies in place.
- Functional status boards to track and manage information and response actions.

Staff also assisted in coordinating ATC-20 Post Earthquake Building Safety Assessment Training for FMS and construction management staff. This eight hour course is the official standard for earthquake damage assessment, and was provided to over 200 FMS field staff, Environmental Health & Safety, Fire Safety & Emergency Planning, Housing, and Capital Construction staff.

### **Business Continuity**

Staff initiated the USC business continuity program, designed to go beyond the response phase and ensure recovery of critical university services and resumption of academic programs rapidly after any disaster. A business continuity plan template was developed and disseminated to all university schools and departments, and representatives were identified from all units. Several workshops were organized to assist units in developing their Recovery/Continuity Plans. This was a critical step forward in a major program that will ultimately result in the establishment of designated disaster recovery/business continuity teams in over 100 schools and departments, allowing the university to resume operations more quickly and avoiding disruption to the university mission.

### **Disaster Mental Health Response Team**

Following a major disaster such as an earthquake, for every person who suffers a physical injury, several may suffer psychological injuries. A sub-group of the Disaster Medical Response Team is the new Disaster Mental Health Response Team. Participants from the Office of Work and Family Life, School of Social Work, Office of Religious Life, and the Student Health Center have developed a comprehensive written plan to address psychological care needs for disaster victims and responders. Staff facilitated several planning meetings and training sessions to develop responder role checklists, a response organization chart, protocols for providing individual and group services plus procedures for integrating with other departments on campus. Equipment and supplies were procured to manage the response including tents, tables, office supplies, lighting and a generator. In late 2007, training was provided for all Mental Health

Responders by the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health on Crisis Intervention and Critical Incident Stress. In addition, a group of 20 Social Work Grad Students have been recruited to serve on the team.

### **Fire/Emergency Medical Services Program**

Fire Safety & Emergency Planning has established a new fire/emergency medical services program to augment the university's capabilities and better protect students, staff, faculty, and visitors. The program has been very active and successful to this point, and the intent is to continue its development in the coming year.

Staff members monitor emergency radios and respond to every fire alarm and emergency medical call on campus. The goal is to provide emergency services in the early minutes of an emergency prior to the arrival of the fire department or paramedics, and to augment those services as needed to save lives and protect university assets. These staff members are trained and certified National Registry Emergency Medical Technicians, a national certification requiring four months of study, certified firefighters, or certified rescue personnel. The major benefit of this program is that early arrival at an emergency can reduce human injury and minimize university losses. In many instances, the team can provide initial medical treatment to stabilize an injured student until the arrival of paramedics, which can take 20-30 minutes. In the event of a fire, the team can extinguish the fire well before the arrival of the fire department, or solve a fire alarm problem. The team works closely with the Department of Public Safety, and has established a very close collaboration with that department, which has been a welcome benefit of the program.

### **Fire Prevention**

Fire prevention is a critical priority on campus, and fire/life safety systems must be kept operational at all times. A Fire Protection Impairment Program has been developed in partnership with Facilities Management that will provide an effective management program to supervise the safe shutdown of fire protection systems, control potential fire hazards during the impairment, and restore fire protection systems to service as soon as possible. These programs are particularly important during periods of high construction activity such as that now occurring on campus

### **Special Events Safety Compliance**

This program has improved dramatically since the inception of the weekly event management meetings, and staff worked closely with other campus groups to ensure safety and compliance for over 600 campus events during this fiscal year.

### **Emergency Preparedness Fairs**

In October, staff coordinated a very well attended Emergency Preparedness Fair at the Health Sciences Campus. The purpose of the fair was to educate staff, faculty, and students on home and workplace preparedness and how to respond to emergencies when they occur. An estimated

1000-1200 people from throughout the campus attended. A smaller-scale event was coordinated in September at the University Park Campus in conjunction with the Public Safety Awareness Fair.

### **Resident Student Emergency Flyer**

7000 copies of a flyer containing basic emergency information were mailed to incoming residents in campus housing. Given that USC is becoming an increasingly residential campus, this basic information is valuable in providing residents with knowledge of basic emergency procedures.

### **Building Emergency Information Sheets**

Building Emergency Information Sheets have been developed and disseminated to over 200 USC buildings on and off campus. The information in the sheet includes each building's team members, emergency supply locations, evacuation assembly area as well as basic emergency procedures. This information sheet is valuable in that it informs and provides all building occupants critical information about emergency response.

### **Library Student Employee Team Training**

While ensuring the safety of its facilities and collections, the Student Security Officers have been trained to make the best decisions about emergency situations. Staff conveyed procedures for handling events such as earthquakes, fire, flood, bomb threats or any other condition requiring evacuation or relocation of library patrons.

### **Cinema Student Training**

More than 900 students produce over 2000 films each year at the USC School of Cinematic Arts, and staff provided a safety presentation on emergency procedures for campus locations, and provided technical assistance throughout the year for productions utilizing pyrotechnics and hazardous special effects.

### **Catalina Island/Off-Campus Locations**

Staff trained the Catalina/Wrigley Institute team on fire and disaster procedures. The need for the Catalina staff's training was evident during the wildfires earlier in the year, when a fire threatened the USC facility at a time when emergency assistance was unavailable. Emergency response team training was also provided for all other off campus USC locations, including Orange County Center, Alhambra, Marina Del Rey, Gamble House, and Sacramento Center.

## STATUS OF PROGRAMS

Great strides were made during the past two years in emergency preparedness and crisis management. Staff have initiated many key programs and projects, and the department's efforts were acknowledged with the Southern California Emergency Services Association Award of Excellence (October 2007) and the Business and Industry Council for Emergency Planning and Preparedness Award for Outstanding Emergency Management (February 2008). At the same time, the progress has taken the university approximately halfway to the goal of comprehensive preparedness, and much remains to be done in the coming two years.

Current status can be summarized in the checklist format below:

- Emergency management: emergency management teams are in place and trained, but more training is needed to ensure that teams are well prepared to implement all required emergency action plans, and that sufficient backup personnel for emergency managers and key executives are in place.
- Emergency response departments: Outstanding progress has been made in training emergency response departments, but some departments are not as well prepared and trained as others, and the preparedness effort needs to continue.
- Emergency equipment and supplies: The university now has most of the needed emergency equipment and supplies in place, but a multi-purpose emergency response vehicle is still urgently needed, and the university therefore remains vulnerable to major fire disaster.
- Building emergency teams/floor wardens: All USC buildings now have teams trained in basic emergency procedures and floor warden duties; however, these teams need substantial additional training to ensure they react properly in an emergency, and training for new members as some staff have left.
- CERT teams have now been established at the University Park Campus, and will be trained early in the new fiscal year at the Health Sciences Campus; the teams will need additional training and preparation to ensure that they are effective in an emergency.
- Public education on emergency procedures: In this area a great deal remains to be done; most staff, faculty and students are unaware of basic emergency procedures, and very little has been developed in terms of publications, websites, or other educational campaigns for the campus community.

- Business continuity: This program has been initiated, but has a long way to go in terms of reaching the 100+ departments, schools, and units that must have recovery/continuity plans in place.
- Although emergency preparedness needs to remain a top priority, fire prevention and safety programs also need to be strengthened over time to ensure optimal life safety and compliance.

As we move forward, we must continue to make progress toward becoming a disaster-resistant university, and build a reputation as one of the safest campuses in America.

## **FUTURE CHALLENGES**

Key challenges include:

- Ensuring preparation for a major earthquake disaster in Southern California; scientists express increasing concern over that this will occur in the coming years, and the university must be prepared to ride out the event and promptly recover.
- It is critical that programs be extended to the Health Sciences Campus and the hospitals to ensure adequate life safety and emergency response in that vital area of the university.
- Business continuity/disaster recovery planning must be accomplished to ensure continuity of the university and its mission.
- As the university rapidly grows, there is a challenge in providing service to more units and locations.
- As the university becomes a 24/7 campus, there is a challenge in ensuring coverage of the myriad after-hours and weekend activities.
- The current emergency operations center is scheduled to be demolished in June 2009. A new EOC will be built into the new Campus Center, but this will not be available until summer 2010, and there will be a need to find a temporary on-campus location for the interim period.
- Current budget resources are inadequate to accomplish the above imperatives, so staff must either find creative strategies to do more with less or request addition budget.