

Big City Partnership-Arlington County, VA

ARLINGTON COUNTY, VA SAFER ARLINGTON PARTNERSHIP

Summary

Arlington County's Public/Private Partnership program consists of non-profit, businesses and public organizations that are stakeholders. There are three task forces: Exercise and Training, Information/Resource Sharing and Emergency Planning, in which volunteers work together to enhance the overall level of preparedness, response, and recovery in Arlington County.

Background

When major incidents occur, public resources are not enough. The substantial resources and logistical capabilities of the public-sector become more important in alleviating suffering and mitigating the effects disasters have on communities. In an effort to involve the private-sector more in our efforts, in 2007 Arlington OEM developed a "Safer Arlington Partnership" Program which engages diverse stakeholders in pre-planning, exercising/training, and resource/information sharing opportunities. This forum supports private-sector short and long term strategic planning, enhances the level of emergency preparedness, and strengthens relationships within the community. We hold major partnership events of 120 +/- participants engaging in what strong emergency public/private partnerships are and geographically-based tabletop exercises. Safer Arlington Partnership's mission:

"To serve as a conduit between the private sector and government to promote emergency preparedness, continuity planning, and the integration of the business and non-profit communities in critical incident response and recovery."

Goals and Objectives

The programs main Goals are to:

- Strengthen private-sector involvement and communication with government emergency planning and response entities.
- Improve private-sector knowledge of government plans and procedures, and vice-versa.
- Eliminate barriers to efficient and effective partnerships, response, and recovery created by regulations, bureaucracy, and redefine preconceived perceptions of traditional roles.
- Link businesses together with government resources to create a resource network for emergency events to enable the marshalling of resources.
- Encourage business emergency/disaster, mitigation, and resumption.

And its main Objectives are to:

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- Ensure community preparedness for and rapid recovery from disaster threats in Arlington County and the Region by providing businesses with encouragement and the tools to assess their risks and develop appropriate plans, by developing an effective system of coordinating response and resources in times of emergency, and by increasing private-sector involvement, information, tools, and education in community-wide preparedness and recovery.
- Encourage significant interchange between Arlington County and its business community (for- and not for-profit) through an effective forum for communication and coordination in emergency and disaster management.

Description

The program purpose, mission, goals and objectives will be achieved through designated Task Force activities. There is a Strategic Planning Team that supports and is the managing entity for the activities of the four Task Forces. This team works under the guidance, resources and instruction from Arlington OEM.

Four Task Forces; designed to fulfill the goals and objectives of the “A Safer Arlington Partnership” program:

1. Training and Exercises: Strengthen private-sector involvement and communications with government emergency planning and response entities and increase private-sector understanding of emergency management.
Objectives:
 - Create a program to provide training opportunities for businesses: BCP, emergency response. BERT (Citizen Corp) programs.
 - Increase scenario exercise opportunities with Arlington County emergency managers and the private sector on a regular basis.
 - Inventory “training and exercise” volunteer professionals to deliver trainings, exercises, seminars, etc.
 - Maintain a calendar of exercises and trainings available to the public throughout the region.
2. Information and Tools: Provide businesses with the tools to mitigate their risks, collect, analyze, and make readily available the data, plans, and models needed to increase private-sector awareness of disaster threats.
Objectives:
 - Create and provide information to Web pages dedicated to the “partnership.”
 - Compile on-line library of example and/or model business emergency plans and business continuity plans for a variety of business sizes and types, resources, emergency management information, and contact lists, etc.
 - Arlington Alert campaign to increase awareness and enrollment and its “usefulness” to the community.
 - Create targeted education program for specific business-types that can provide community-wide resources and/or where groups congregate to increase public awareness and public safety and community resiliency (for example hotels).

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- Work with other communities in the region to help collect and centrally organize information.
 - On-going: Work closely with the other interest groups to help collect the data they need and centrally organize the information and create as part of the online “library.”
3. Resource Inventory and Management: Facilitate an efficient system of distributing goods, services, and other resources to the community and businesses in times of need.

Objectives:

- Identify categories of business-types that have resources: people/skills, agencies, facilities, land, equipment, food/supplies, media, transportation, technology, information, and utilities, that can be useful to the community-at-large should an incident occur.
 - Inventory and prioritize public and private organizations, resources, and services that are most important to the community. Identify gaps and work with the Information and Tools Interest Group to locate and recruit.
 - Match resource providers with appropriate Essential Support Functions (ESF) and facilitate relationship-building and resource identification opportunities.
 - Work with non-profits to development database of constituencies, special areas of expertise, special needs, and what they need to sustain themselves re: an incident.
 - Resource list may be developed and/or maintained on-line, including a survey of available skills within appropriate privacy perimeters.
 - A networking strategy for encouraging private-to-private Memorandum of Understanding's (MOUs) for critical resources.
 - Work with “regional” organizations/communities to expand resource inventory.
4. Education and Outreach: Increase awareness, understanding and public acceptance that business emergency preparedness and partnerships are important to all businesses and to Arlington's economic sustainability and ability to recover should an incident occur and to promote the partnership as a way to involve the community in this effort.

Objectives:

- Develop an outreach/awareness strategy to outreach to businesses not yet involved in the “partnership.”
- Public acknowledgement of participants.
- Utilization of existing business organizations to perform outreach activities.
- Encouraging business to prepare emergency plans.
- Making businesses aware of existing public-sector plans, procedures, & contacts and other information available.
- Possibility of a mentoring program to assist businesses to create plans and be better prepared.
- On-going: Recruit the involvement of the Arlington businesses and resource providers in education and awareness activities, including participation on the other interest group

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Requirements for Success

There is one fulltime staff managing this program. Arlington's program success is based on a volunteer model. There are 1,200 emergency management professionals from the private-sector (for and not for profit) and public-sector organizations who have communicated that they want to be kept informed of the activities of the "Partnership." There are 20 volunteer members of the Task Forces along with other subject-matter experts brought in as needed. The one large resource challenge is that the more exercise and training activities we have the more we need to rely of the first responders: Fire, Police, to participate. In an environment in which resources are stretched, this additionally stretches budgets and personnel. Although very much in the initial phases, we are working on a model that involves the private-sector to paying small sums to participate in our tabletops exercises

Resources

Resources provided are outlined in the DESCRIPTION section above except the following:

- We are working on creating a Business Emergency Operations Center. Our EOC does not have the room to accommodate businesses at the moment.
- Emergency planning consultations and presentations: individual, family and workforce preparedness and organization evacuation, emergency and continuity of operations planning.

Training and Exercises

Found in the DESCRIPTION section above.

Communication Tools

Tools used to communicate with our public and private-sector community include: segregated alert notifications (email, pager and text), social media (Face Book, Twitter), frequent in-person presentations and plan consultations, partnership meetings and events, information: trainings, links, resources, webinars, etc. pushed out quarterly, exercises and trainings.

Links

Face Book and Twitter: Ready Arlington
Website: <http://www.arlingtonva.us/oem>

Contact Information

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