



EMA (Emergency
Management Agency) –
*“What is it and Why Should I
Care?”*

**January 22, 2004 – Valdosta, GA
General Session**

WHAT IS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT?

- **Emergency Management is the discipline and profession of applying science, technology, planning and management to deal with extreme events that can injure or kill large numbers of people, do extensive damage to property, and disrupt community life.**

Another definition:

- **Emergency Management is preparing for and managing the effects of disasters in a community. The aim is to achieve:**
 - 1. a reduction in the occurrence or effects of disasters (aka: Mitigation)**
 - 2. a community that is in a state of readiness if a disaster should occur**
 - 3. a community that is able to provide an effective response in a disaster**
 - 4. a community that can organize recovery so the community can return to usual activities quickly after a disaster**

So what constitutes a disaster?

- **The word *disaster* is widely used to describe everything from a flooded basement in New Jersey to the earthquakes in California.**
- **Emergency Management makes distinctions between emergencies and disasters. Emergencies are generally “routine” events that do not have a community wide impact or do not require the use of resources to bring conditions back to normal**

EMA - structures

- **State EMA** – usually the ‘buck stops’ on the desk of the Governor. The top EMA official may be 2 steps or 72 steps removed from the Governor’s office.
- **“The nation's Governors have a critical role to play in emergency management. As the state's chief executive, the Governor is responsible for the public safety and welfare of the people of his or her state or territory. A Governor has extraordinary powers to suspend authority, seize personal property, direct evacuations, and authorize emergency funds. The Governor also plays a key role in communicating with the public, requesting federal disaster assistance, and helping people and businesses cope with disasters.”**

(source: National Governor’s Association - “A Governors Guide to Emergency Management”)

County or City EMA

- **The County Executive or Sheriff's Office may be the responsible party for Emergency Management, or there may be a Director of Emergency Management position.**
- **At the Municipal or City level it could be the Mayor or Chief of Police or Fire Chief that controls/directs the local EMA.**
- **Are you seeing a theme of 'politics' here?**

EMA agencies & partners

- **Emergency management is a shared responsibility that involves many agencies; the key to successful emergency management is teamwork.**
- **Interaction is needed among the governor's office, the state emergency management office, the state legislature, other state agencies, local governments, the private sector, volunteer organizations, and the federal government.**
- **This interaction is both pre and post disaster!**

Where do we come in?

- The Affiliates of A2H belong at the table of every local/county and state EMA. We all have vital resources that will help bring conditions back to normal faster – after a disaster strikes.
- A2H serves all 50 states and Puerto Rico. We're there 365 days a year. The community knows us and our outreach impacts 50,000+ agencies.
- Many states wisely recognize the important role A2H plays during a disaster. We are partnered with FEMA and NVOAD and can give insights/ideas and perspective to the EMA officials that do not know service as well as we do.

How do we come in?

- **VOAD and its leadership positions.**
- **Educating local and state EMA officials on the work we do everyday.**
- **Knowledge. FEMA, Red Cross, A2H and others offer tons of disaster specific training. Grab it! The more you know the better you can understand the intricacies of Emergency Management and where your assistance can be best utilized.**

Why bother? Let gov't do it!

- **The Governor's Office and all levels of government are seeing the value of voluntary agencies differently - especially since budgets are being slashed.**
- **Eventually you will be impacted by a disaster – directly or indirectly. Someone at EMA will send volunteers or things to you without your knowledge. Be part of the planning process and you'll be in a much better position to handle what is thrown at you. If you're not in the game you can't know the rules.**