

**Accounting for the Needs of Beavercreek Township Fire  
Department Employees and Their Families During a Disaster**

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## CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that the following statements are true:

1. This paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The author researched the Beavercreek Township Fire Department (BFD) to determine if there is a need for the BFD to account for the needs of the employees' family during a disaster. Research was conducted to determine if the employee had an expectation that the BFD was responsible to account for the families' needs during a disaster; to what level the employee expected the BFD to assist their family; and would assisting the family allow the employee to remain focused on their job in the event of a disaster.

Data collection was achieved through evaluative research methods, starting with literature review on the topic. This review consisted of various trade journals, applied research projects from the National Fire Academy's EFO program, and a post incident report of Hurricane Katrina by the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement. Following the literature review, two surveys were conducted. One survey was within the BFD to determine: first if there is a need to assist the employees' family; secondly what is the employees' expectation of the BFD to assist their family; and what could the BFD do to address those needs identified by the study. The second, a survey was conducted with neighboring fire departments. The author wanted to determine how these organizations address their employees' families' needs during a disaster. How would that organizations' service delivery be affected by a disaster, and did that organization have a plan in place to assist the employee and their family during a disaster.

The study's results concluded that while on duty, the employees of the BFD do feel that the department has an obligation to account for the needs of the employees' family during a disaster, and that minimal assistance is expected of the BFD when it comes to assisting the family. The study has shown that the employee's focus is shifted from their job when they're worried about their family's well being.

The study has identified that the BFD does need to develop a plan to account for the well being of the employee's family during a disaster. The plan is necessary to help keep the employees focused on their job in order to continue providing quality service to the community. The plan must be incorporated into the BFD's disaster management plan.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem that this study will address is, keeping the Beaver Creek Township Fire Department's (BFD) employees focused on their jobs by addressing the needs of their families in the event of a disaster. This study will be utilized to identify any method(s) that the BFD can use to assist the employees in staying focused on their job during a catastrophic event.

In September 2008, a wind storm created by the remnants of Hurricane Ike raised several questions. How well prepared is the BFD to ensure that employees remain focused on their job in the event of a disaster? Is the BFD prepared to address the needs of the employees and their family during a disaster? Does the BFD have a responsibility to assist the employee and their family during a disaster?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to determine, if there is a need to assist the employee and their family during a disaster. Second if workers worrying about their family impacts service delivery during a disaster. Third to determine the necessity of any process or procedure for meeting the needs of an employee's family during a disaster. This study will also help to identify the responsibilities that the employee, the employee's family, and the fire department share in accounting for the needs of the employee's family during a disaster.

. The goal of the project is to gather the information necessary for identifying the type of policy and procedure necessary to account for the needs of the employee's family during a disaster. If the study results find that the BFD does have a responsibility to its employees and their family during a disaster; the author hopes to identify to what extent that responsibility

extends; and how does the BFD best achieve its goal of keeping the employee focused on their job by assisting the employee's family. The results of this research will also guide the BFD in development of any necessary policies or procedures.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions this study will investigate are:

1. What are the effects on service delivery when first responders are worried about the well being of their families during a disaster?
2. Does the BFD have a responsibility to account for the needs of the employees' family during a disaster?
3. What type of policies and procedures should be implemented if it is determined that the fire department should account for the needs of employees' families in the event of a disaster?
4. What are the role and responsibilities of the employee and employer in disaster preparedness and during a disaster with relation to the employee's family?

### **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Located in Greene County, southwestern Ohio, the Beaver Creek Township Fire Department provides service to Beaver Creek Township, the City of Beaver Creek, and the Village of Alpha with a combined population of approximately 48,000. The fire department is governed by the Beaver Creek Township Board of Trustees. The BFD responds to over 5,000 calls for service annually, with a combined staff of 85 career, part-time, and civilian employees. The coverage of approximately 50 square miles is provided from four fire stations strategically located throughout Beaver Creek Township and the City of Beaver Creek. Beaver Creek is primarily

a bedroom community with a wide mix of retail; technology based engineering and lite manufacturing businesses. Wright Patterson Air Force Base has a very strong influence on the type of technological business brought into Beavercreek.

The windstorm of September 2008 brought with it widespread property damage and power outages to Beavercreek, as well as the rest of the Miami Valley. Many of those affected by the storm were the members of the various fire departments in the Miami Valley. One question brought to light in the BFD was how to address the needs of the families of those on-duty or those who are called in to work during the emergency. Communication problems between on-duty employees and their families were the biggest issue. Once contact was established between employees and their families, the fire department was fortunate in the aspect that no one needed to be relieved from duty to attend to any family emergencies. As a result, there were some questions raised about how well prepared is the BFD to keep employees focused on their duties, while also addressing the needs of employees' families during a disaster. How can the department lessen the burden of on-duty employees affected by the disaster? What are the costs to the fire department associated with developing a program that assist in addressing the needs of the employees' families during a disaster?

The ability to determine the safety and well being of the family members of the on-duty personnel is paramount in allowing an employee to focus on their duties. The impact of employee distraction and inattention can be catastrophic. In New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina, a New Orleans police officer committed suicide upon finding that his family had died during the storm while he was at work unable to contact them. As word of this situation passed among other officers, some abandoned their post to check on their families. This abandonment of posts led to reduced efficiency in the operations of the police department. Carle Jackson (2005)



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, describes the two most basic needs for people: as the need to provide themselves with the basic physiological needs of air, water, food, and shelter; and the need for safety and security, the ability to protect yourself and the ones you love from those things that can harm you or your basic physiological needs. In times of crisis, we will revert back to ensuring that our needs and our family's basic physiologic needs are met before we are able to focus on any other tasks. (IFSTA 1999)

Many of our employees live in Beavercreek or adjoining communities. This creates the likelihood that they will have to respond to a situation knowing that their family may possibly be involved in the very disaster they are expected to mitigate.

Justification for the study is simply the potential for a disaster to strike our region. The Midwest is subject to dramatic weather extremes, Ohio has seen its share of weather related disasters. The spring brings severe thunderstorms with tornadic activity and flooding; the summer can bring extreme heat and humidity lasting for extended periods of time; and the winter can bring blizzards and bitter cold temperatures. Beavercreek also borders a United States Air Force base with the potential for a major disaster resulting from a large frame aircraft crash.

The ability to provide communication and information between the on-duty personnel and their families in times of crisis can aid in meeting the basic needs described by Maslow. If the employees are comfortable with the status of their families and know that their needs are being met; the employees will be better able to focus on their duties. This will increase safety and efficiency benefitting both the fire department and community. The employees focus will be on mitigating the disaster's effect on the community and the department.

The impact that this study will have on the fire department is an increased awareness of disaster preparedness not only for the organization but the individual employee as well. The

department will also be investing in its most important resource, its personnel. This investment will pay off in several ways. First and foremost, personnel will have the comfort in knowing their families will be taken care of while they are at work. Secondly, personnel will be better educated on the role they and their families have in disaster preparedness and what assistance they can expect from the department during a disaster. Personnel who are able to focus on their job will be able to better serve the community. Finally, having a mechanism in the Incident Management System (IMS) process to identify and account for the direct and indirect needs of the employee will ensure that these needs are prioritized and addressed in a timely manner.

While the BFD did not have a direct event requiring us to render assistance to an employee's family during the 2008 windstorm, the storm did raise several questions. This study will help to identify any responsibility that the department has in addressing the needs of employees' family during a disaster. The study will also identify the ways that the BFD can keep employees at work and focused on their job during extremely trying events. The study will provide a clearer picture as to what role the fire department has in assisting employees' family during catastrophic event.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Service delivery is affected when first responders worry about their family during a disaster. These affects range from reduced productivity because of the inability to remain focused on duty, to employee suicide. Weinblatt (2008), "One of the principle differences between sworn public servants and their neighbors is the latter have the option of evacuating with their families when a disaster strikes the community. In contrast, law-enforcement personnel and other first responders have no choice but to leave their loved ones behind during

the crisis and depend on the family's resilience to struggle through." Kenneth Kuntz a fire studies specialist for the US Fire Administration stated that "the general population expects to call 911 and have someone show up". The vast majority of first responders do show up, but at a great personal cost to their peace of mind and ability to focus on their job while their own families are in harm's way. Landahl and Cox (2009), based on a study of the Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) alumni and students; it would be imprudent to dismiss organizational responsibility in the preparedness of responders and their families.

Bannon (2006) uses several case studies to identify the affects of events involving first responders and their families. One case study involved a California firefighter fighting a wild fire in his neighborhood who stated that "for several hours I was not focused on my job." Kennell (2004), after Hurricane Charley made land fall on August 13, 2004, in Sarasota, Manatee and Charlotte counties in Florida, 200 of the 800 members of IAFF Local 2546 members and their families reported some extent of damage to their homes. Of those, 30 reported that their homes were destroyed. Carle Jackson (2005), a criminal justice policy adviser from the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement, noted that worrying about family was a serious problem in New Orleans during Katrina. *"A major lesson of Katrina is that first responder personnel cannot function at best efficiency if they are worried about their own families. The role of law enforcement, fire, ems and other frontline personnel is highly stressful. In situations where these local responders are uncertain about the welfare and even survival of their families, that stress level is raised to the breaking point.... Evacuating and sheltering families ahead of time, or having a preset plan when the disaster is of such a nature as to provide no advanced warning, is, therefore, critical to the first responder role."*

One of the most commonly noted distractions amongst the sources of literature was the inability to communicate with family members. Kennell (2004), many problems were encountered when trying to assess and meet the needs of employees and their families. The coordination between defining the needs and getting resources to those in need was difficult. The plans utilized to address family needs during a disaster vary from department to department and coast to coast.

There are many schools of thought as to how much responsibility the employer assumes when addressing the needs of the employee's family during a disaster. West (2004), in Sarasota County, Florida extra staffing is brought in to allow on-duty members to attend to family needs as they arise while still providing service to the community. Sarasota County Fire Chief, Brian Gorski noted that of the plans in place, the plans that worked the best were jointly developed and were managed locally and regionally. A common factor among any of the plans was the responsibility on the employee's part to educate and prepare their family for a disaster. The need for a command staff to handle solely the needs of the fire responder was also identified. This staff must work closely with the emergency operations center and staff to avoid duplication of efforts. These plans would require a large amount of preplanning with businesses both locally and regionally. Establishing any relief fund raising mechanisms ahead of time is essential to ensure that accounts are ready when needed. Secondly, by establishing accounts ahead of time you're not competing with others to set up your accounts. Establishing lists of reputable vendors and agencies is essential to speeding the recovery process for your members. Most importantly you must maintain open and constant communication with the command staff of your organization.

There is an interesting correlation between what the employee expects of the department and the level of responsibility the employee holds the organization accountable to when it comes to assisting the employee and their family during a crisis. Landahl and Cox (September 2009), utilizing the 2009 (CHDS) survey, concluded that 65.9 percent of those surveyed work in an organization that provide general emergency preparedness training to its employees. 29 percent of those surveyed state that their organizations have written plans in place to support employee families during a large scale disaster. 48 percent had plans in place that only addressed employee needs. 97 percent of those surveyed agreed that employee and family preparedness is essential to organizational resilience. Of those surveyed there was a strong opinion that the organization shared some level of responsibility in offering or providing preparedness training to the employee and their family. Only 1.2 percent felt that the organization shared no responsibility in preparedness training. While 97 percent of those surveyed agreed that employees and their families play a part in organizational resilience, only 29 percent of the participants are actively trained by their organization.

The CHDS also recognized that there is not a set “best practice” for determining the level of organization responsibility in disaster preparedness or accounting for employee and family needs. The study did show, however, that there are two major areas that the organization must address if they are going to make a commitment to its employees and their families. First is pre-incident preparedness. The survey identified four levels of involvement: none, no involvement at all; low, encouraging and providing disaster preparedness training; moderate, provide mandatory training and education for employee and family; finally high, mandatory training with incentives attached to performance evaluation. The second area is the response during the disaster. Again four levels of participation were identified. None, employer has no responsibility at all. Low

encourages employees to attend training to maintain resources for preparedness. Moderate, the employer assumes some responsibility in large scale disasters to provide shelter and food. High, the employer assumes responsibility in large scale disasters to provide shelter and food.

The (CHSD) survey concluded that the level of organizational responsibility varies from organization to organization. There are some key elements that must be in any plan developed. First and foremost is that every employee and their family are aware of the plan and any policy that would require the plan to be enacted. Each person involved must understand their role and responsibility in the plan. The plan should be locally developed and focused since each community and organization has its own needs. Employee families should be involved in the development of the plan. This ensures that their perspective is addressed and understood. A recommended base line to follow for a preparedness plan development can be found through the American Red Cross' personal and family preparedness materials. These plans must then be practiced and trained on at regular intervals. Without thorough training and a complete understanding of the roles and responsibilities contained in the plan, there is a high probability that the plan will fail during a crisis.

## **PROCEDURES**

This project began at the urging of the fire chief after some questions were raised as a result of a windstorm in 2008. As an organization, what responsibilities do we have to our employees and their families? How is the organization prepared to meet those responsibilities? As a result of these questions it was determined that a study was necessary to determine any course of action the fire department should take.

The researcher began by developing four questions to be answered by the study. What are the effects on service delivery when first responders are worried about the well being of their families during a disaster? What type of plans and procedures should be implemented if it is determined necessary for the department to account for the needs of the employee's family in the event of a disaster? What are the roles and responsibilities of the employee and employer in disaster preparedness and during a disaster with relation to the employee's family? What are the roles and responsibilities of the employee, and the employer in disaster preparedness and during a disaster with relation to the of the employees' family? In order to answer these questions the researcher performed several tasks. First was a literature review, containing other research papers, magazine, journal and internet articles. The literature review was very useful in determining that there was sufficient cause to carry forward with the study and in defining some parameters to proceed under. Second, there were two surveys performed. One survey was a population survey of the BFD. This was used to determine what the employees of the BFD believe is the responsibility of the organization with meeting the needs of the employees' families during a disaster. The survey also solicited input on what actions the department could take to assist the families. The second survey polled other fire departments in the region to determine if they had plans to address the needs of employees and their families during a disaster. The survey also determined to what level the organization felt it had a responsibility to the employees and their families.

The research was conducted in two ways. First, a ten question written survey was completed voluntarily by BFD employees at a multi-company training session. The employees were given one week to complete the survey and return it to the author by the interdepartmental mail system. The employee involvement was strictly voluntary. Secondly, a phone interview

was conducted with department heads from neighboring fire agencies. The external survey candidates are agencies / communities that the BFD responds with under mutual aid agreements. These candidates are also likely to experience the same or similar types of events that the BFD may experience.

The researcher compiled the results of both surveys independently and then compared the results against one another to determine if they answered the research questions asked of this research project. Complete results are attached as Appendices 1 and 2.

### **Definition of Terms**

CERT- Community Emergency Response Teams, part of the FEMA Citizen Corps, which are trained in disaster preparedness, basic safety and first aid that assist the community during a disaster.

Disaster- For the purpose of this paper, a disaster is defined as a natural or manmade event that has a wide spread, overwhelming, long term impact on an organization and its employees

EOC – Emergency Operations Center- The physical location where organizations meet during an emergency to coordinate the response, recovery actions and resources for a large scale event.

SOG- Standard Operating Guideline – The policies of an organization which define the mission, responsibilities and authority of the organization’s branches and procedures for operating.



### **Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of the study is the turnover of personnel between September 2008, and the time of the study. The BFD is a combination career and part-time fire department that experiences continual turnover of part-time personnel. Several personnel who were with the organization in 2008 are no longer here and approximately twenty new personnel have entered the department. This may have lead to a failure to capture any significant problems dealt with during the storm that could have affected an employee's ability to focus on their job.

Another limitation to the study is the disparity of the staffing make up between the outside departments surveyed and the BFD. The BFD is staffed 24 hours with a mix of part-time and career personnel. The neighboring departments that were surveyed have either all career staffing, all volunteer staffing, or a mix of career and volunteer staffing. The limitation this creates is the expectation of availability to respond for the volunteer departments versus a 24 hour staffed department.

The limited external survey has produced very one sided results. This has created some difficulty in finding how organizations view their responsibility of assisting the employees' family during a disaster. A broader survey of departments in areas which experienced a recent disaster may have provided more definitive results. The external survey did show that regionally the fire departments have not adequately considered nor prepared for addressing the employees' family's needs during a disaster.

Cost analysis is another limitation to the study. No data was collected in the survey process referencing the costs associated with managing a program that addresses family needs during a disaster. The author realizes that there are costs associated with any process that would

be utilized in assisting the employee. These costs would vary based on the level of assistance provided from organization to organization.

## RESULTS

The internal survey had 35 surveys returned out of the 54 distributed, or a 65 percent return. Of those surveyed 91 percent responded that if the fire department had a plan in place to account for the needs of the employees' family while they were at work it would be easier for the employee to remain focused on their job. Thoughts of how in depth the department's involvement should be in accounting for these needs will be discussed later in the survey results.

The survey had several questions directly related to a specific event that involved fire department personnel and their affected families, the windstorm of September 2008. There were 25 employees working that day, and of those 22 or 88 percent responded to the survey. Of those, 62 percent were able to make contact with their families when necessary. 51 percent of those surveyed had some type of problem that they were unable to immediately address, however none of these problems were of a nature that required anyone to leave work. Of those surveyed, 66 percent reported that the problems at home posed no or very little distraction from their ability to focus on their job. No one surveyed reported having a major distracting factor while at work.

The survey did show that the employees' expectations of the department are relatively high when it comes to accounting for the needs of the employee's family. Of those surveyed, 57 percent feel the department has a responsibility to assist the family in some fashion. The most consistent items identified by the respondents for the department to address are a communication plan, disaster preparedness training and allowing for temporary shelter for family members affected by a disaster (see figure 1). The respondents felt strongly that any plan should be a joint venture between labor and management. An overwhelming majority, 74 percent, felt that any plan put in place should include a liaison position in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to account for the needs of employees' family.

The results of the survey did not produce any truly unreasonable expectations of the organization. The biggest goal appears to be establishing some form of communications process to account for the employee and their family, along identifying any potential problems. For complete survey results refer to Appendix 1.

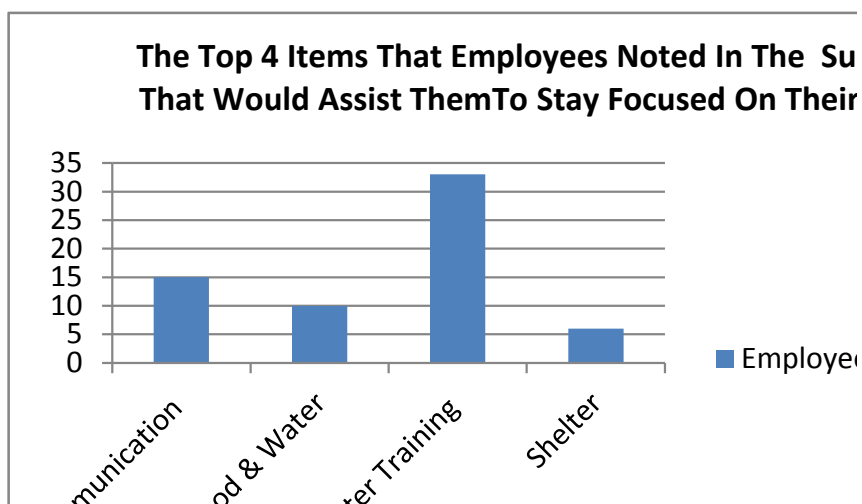


Figure 1

The external survey was conducted over the phone or in person with senior leaders of the surveyed organizations. The surveyed departments were comprised of various types of staffing. Two organizations were purely volunteer organizations, with no in house staffing; two organizations were combination staffed organizations with 24 hour in house staffing supplemented by volunteers; the final two organizations were career staffed with 24 hour in house staffing. Staffing levels varied among those surveyed. The average number of employees for the surveyed organizations was between 25 and 75 employees. One organization exceeded 125 employees. The number of employees living in the community varied based on the type of organization. In the volunteer departments almost 100 percent of the employees lived in the

community. The combination departments had 50 -75 percent living within the community. The career organizations had less than 50 percent living in the community served.

Of those surveyed only one organization had a plan in place to account for the employees in the event of a disaster. This plan was a city wide plan covering all city employees. The remaining organizations had an unwritten policy that the employee was to secure their family prior to reporting for duty. The one entity which has a plan in place offers shelter to the employees' family for up to 24 hours and provides the employee with disaster preparedness training. They also have a liaison assigned to the EOC in the event of a disaster. This liaison's sole responsibility is to focus on the employees' family needs and assist the incident command staff in accounting for those needs.

Five of the six surveyed departments have experienced a disaster that has affected the employee and their family. The effects of the disaster, did, affect the employee's ability to focus on their job to a minimal extent. The two factors most noted affecting the employees' ability to perform their job are: the inability to respond to the initial incident for the volunteer organizations along with the recall of personnel for career and combination organizations; and the inability to contact family members during the disaster.

None of the organizations surveyed have provided any formal disaster preparedness training for the family members of employees. One organization does have family members who have gone through CERT training provided by the Greene County Emergency Management Agency (GCEMA).

The most common responses as to how far the organization should support the employee and their family were: to provide a communications mechanism; then allowing the employee time to attend to their family's needs prior to responding into work; providing of food and shelter

for the employee's family for up to 24 hours at a minimal cost to the organization. For comprehensive external survey results please refer to Appendix 2.

The researcher found that the study results answered the research question as follows:

1. *What are the effects on service delivery when first responders are worried about the well being of their families during a disaster?* The effects on employee's ability to perform can range from very minor distractions to the abandonment of duties based on the severity of the incident. These distractions will affect how prepared and how well the employee will perform their duties. This directly affects the service provided to the community.
2. *Does the BFD have a responsibility to account for the needs of the employees' family during a disaster?* The BFD does have a moral obligation to the employees and their families to provide for some basic needs. First and foremost the BFD needs to identify the roles and responsibilities of the BFD, its employees and their families. The BFD needs to identify, clearly, what its obligations are and how it will assist the employee.
3. *What type of policies and procedures should be implemented if it is determined necessary for the fire department to account for the needs of employees' families in the event of a disaster?* The study revealed that plans should include disaster preparedness training, mechanism incorporated into the incident management system to address family needs, and a communications process. The policy should define the roles and responsibilities of all parties.

4. *What are the roles and responsibilities of the employee and employer in disaster preparedness and during a disaster with relation to the employee's family?* The responsibilities that the BFD has in this process are: provide the employee the safety work environment possible and the resources necessary to perform their job; provide the best services necessary to stabilize and mitigate any hazards that are a threat to the community's well being. The employee shares the responsibility in providing the safest most efficient service to the community possible. One key to this process is the employee's willingness to actively participate in the development of policies and training themselves and their family on the policies.

## **DISCUSSION**

Upon the completion of the research, the author found that there are several steps that the BFD can take to improve service to the community and account for the needs of its employees and their families during a disaster. The internal survey supports this fact with 57 percent of BFD employees surveyed believing the BFD has a level of responsibility in accounting for their family's needs during a disaster. One of the first steps the BFD can take is to define the level of assistance the BFD is willing to provide the employee and their family. Another step is to develop the Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) that clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the BFD, the employee and the employee's family. Develop a mechanism that allows the communication between family members and the on-duty employees, allowing for status reports and wellness checks. Provide training to the employee and their family in disaster preparedness, and the roles everyone share in departmental plans for disaster recovery. Identify a liaison position within the EOC to address the employee and family needs during disaster

operations. These plans should be jointly developed between management, labor and family members.

Keeping the employee focused on their job is the best way to ensure employee safety and operational efficiency. Educating and assisting the employee and their family are the most effective ways the BFD can maintain the goal of keeping the employee focused while serving the community during a disaster.

During the course of the study, identifying the costs and funding associated with a program that accounts for the needs of the employee and their family was considered. However, the author was unable to identify the true cost associated with the program, since there was a lack of comparables from the external survey. The costs anticipated that the author has considered are the cost to have personnel in the EOC as a liaison, the cost of staffing a call center for employees and their family, and the cost associated with the utilities necessary for providing temporary shelter. Providing food and water as a component would create a significant cost to any employee assistance plan. Another consideration by the author is financially, are the limitations on publicly funded organization, such as the fire department, when it comes to public funds and assisting its employees' families in the event of a disaster. The financial consideration must be given very careful review to ensure that no laws are violated regarding the use of public funds. One funding alternative discussed in the literature review was the uses of labor organizations and employee associations to set up relieve funds for such events. The use of relieve funds would eliminate the use of public funds for assisting the employee and their family.



## **Recommendations**

The recommendations derived from this research project include the: development of a program that addresses the needs of the employee and their family during a disaster; disaster preparedness training for the employee and their family; disaster relief funding mechanisms identified and established; and the incorporation of the response plan into the incident management system and disaster plan.

Any relief program developed should be a township wide program that includes all Beaver Creek Township employees. The program should be jointly developed by management, labor organizations, elected officials, and a representation of family members from all departments. Based on the results of the research project's internal survey, the components of the relief program should include the following: a mechanism to communicate the status of the employee to the family and family to the employee; identify the limitations of the department and what the employee and their family should expect to in the way of assistance from the department; identify the department's expectations' of the employee during a disaster; develop a system to track and prioritize the needs of the employee or their family; and establish a means of addressing the needs of the employee or their family through a family assistance team. This component, program development, should be addressed through standard operating guidelines (SOG).

The second recommendation is provide disaster preparedness training to all employees and their family. The format for this training should be a standardized program such as FEMA or American Red Cross guidelines for disaster preparedness. The training should incorporate any SOGs the department adopts. Once established, there should be annual refresher training. The refresher training should be required for all employees and optional for family members. Besides

disaster preparedness the most important component of the training program is to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the department and the individual.

The third component to this process is the coordination and implementation of the program into our incident management system, and the department's disaster plan. A liaison position should be built into the disaster plan and the incident management process to account for and address the needs of the employee's family. The liaison's position is essential to the process in order to ensure that the command staff is aware of the employee / family needs, and the affects those needs may place on personnel working to stabilize the effects of the disaster. The incorporation of this position into the disaster plan would have to be approved as an addendum, with the Township Trustees' approval. The addendum should identify the roles and responsibilities of the liaison, the employee, the employee's family and the Township.

Integration into the Fire Department's incident management system would be accomplished through the development of SOGs defining when and how the position would be activated. SOGs would also govern the scope of the liaison role as well as the types of requests that would be forwarded to the liaison for command's consideration. The liaison should function as the go between for the family assistance team and the command staff.

The final and most difficult component to the program is relief funding. A committee would need to be formed to research and identify the following: identify what are the legal limitations for the use of public money (tax dollars) for disaster relief purposes; determine what types of fund raising mechanisms are available to support an employee; and to establish any relief funds or funding sources ahead of time. This committee should also identify vendors who are willing to grant special pricing, set aside or prioritize products and services as part of the relief effort. The segment of the organization which is best suited for establishing the relief fund

is the firefighter's union. The firefighter's union would be able to establish funds under their name; keeping the Fire Department separated from any funding issues associated with meeting the needs of the employees and their family.

Financially, the initial costs to the fire department are mainly personnel costs. There will be overtime costs associated with program development and training. These costs are projectable based on the number of hours required to develop the program and to train the employees and their families. The cost estimate is between \$5,000- \$7,500 for the initial program development and initial training. The estimated number of hours is approximately 100-250 hours for program development and the initial training. The majority of development hours would be normal on duty hours for the staff officers assigned to the project. The bulk of the training could be conducted while personnel are on duty as part of their normal routine training cycle.

One known cost factor is the liaison position. However the cost of the position is difficult to determine, because no one knows when a disaster will strike or how long it will last. The cost of the command staff positions would be considered normal operational costs associated with this type of incident. In the event of a disaster meeting the requirements for federal assistance, these costs may be reimbursed by FEMA.

The on-going cost to support the program should be broken down into two categories; operations and relief funding. Operational cost would include the cost of annual training and program review / revision. These costs would be minimal, and are primarily related to personnel costs, approximately \$1000-\$2000 annually.

Relief funding will be the most difficult to predict, for several reasons. First each and every disaster would pose different needs. Secondly the ability to establish, collect and maintain funding that is based off of the solicitation of private funds is well outside of the Township scope

of practice. As stated earlier, the relief funds would have to be managed by an entity other than any of the Township's departments.

The relief funds should be overseen by an oversight board made up of representatives from the firefighter's union, and an employee's family member from each department participating in the program. This should ensure that funds are solicited, maintained and distributed in accordance with the law.

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## APPENDIX 1 – INTERNAL SURVEY

Hello,

I am completing a research project for the Ohio Fire Executive Program. The information gathered in this survey will be used to determine if the Beavercreek Fire Department needs to develop a plan that provides assistance for the employee's family in the event of a disaster. The information gathered will be used for statistical research purposes and anonymity will be protected. Completion of the survey is purely voluntary.

Please complete the survey and return it to me at Station 61 by via inter departmental mail. Thank you very much for your assistance in this research.

Lt. Scott Dorsten

1. Did your family experience a difficulty during the 2008 windstorm while you were on duty that required your attention?

A. Yes            17

B. No             16

N/A               1

2. Were you able to address those needs while you were at work?

A. Yes            7

B. No             18

N/A               8

No answer      2

3. Was your family able to contact you immediately when they needed you while you were at work?

A. Yes	22
B. No	9
N/A	4

4. Did you have any concerns about your family during the storm that distracted your attention from the job?

A. Major distraction	0
B. Somewhat of a distraction	13
C. Very little distraction	15
D. No distraction at all	8

5. Do you think that if the department had a plan in place to account for the needs of your family during a disaster it would allow you to remain focused on your job?

A. Yes	33
B. No	2



6. Does the fire department have a responsibility to account for your family's need during a disaster while you are working?

- A. Yes completely      7
- B. Somewhat      20
- C. No none at all      8

7. During a disaster do you feel that it would help you focus on your job if the department had a designated phone number for your family members to call and report their status so that we could relay that information to you?

- A. Yes      33
- B. No      2

8. Do you think that the department should have a plan in place to assist your family during a disaster while you are working?

- A. Yes      30
- B. No      5

If yes, please share your ideas on how the department could assist your family.

Information gathering and supplying food, water, shelter, and medical assistance;

Checking on families, provide supplies, designate a phone contact person, and provide facilities;

Allow families to come to stations, allow the borrowing of resources, update families, contact point for resources, who to call in crisis, where to find supplies, emergency power;

Phone system to make contact and pass along information;

Provide time off for employees to go check on families and problems;

Visits by designated employee to check on families;

Central gathering point for families;

Provide transportation to shelters for those who cannot drive;

Pre-plan for disasters; provide disaster preparedness training for families;

It is the employees' responsibility to prepare and inform the family of the resources the employer may have to offer, have a team and plan in place to deal with family issues in a disaster.

9. Would you support disaster preparedness training for you and your family if offered by the department?

A. Yes 33

B. No 2

10. Would you support a plan that offered assistance to members' families while the employee is on-duty or ordered in to work in the event of a disaster?

A. Yes 34

B. No 1

11. Do you think that a program set up by the department should be a joint venture between labor and management?

A. Yes	31
B. No	2
No answer	2

12. Should any plan developed be incorporated in to the department's disaster plan and be an active component of the emergency operation center (EOC) with a designated position in the command staff in the EOC?

A. Yes	26
B. No	7
No answer	2

Please feel free to share any comment you may have on the back of the form.

Thank you for your time and assistance!

**Additional comments**

Many families live out of town while at work I don't think Beaver creek can do anything physically to help at the time.

Training and support can help

Support team equipped with tool cache for securing a residential home

Provide 3 day supply of food and water for those who need it or that are unable to vacate their house.

## APPENDIX 2 – EXTERNAL PHONE SURVEY

Hello I am Scott Dorsten, a student in the Ohio Fire Executive Program. I work for the Beavercreek Township Fire Department and I am currently working on an applied research project for class. I am seeking data on the level of assistance rendered to on-duty employees or their families during a disaster. I would like to ask you 10 questions referencing the level of support offered to the employees of your department in the event of a disaster. The data collected will be used to make general references as to the level of involvement a department has in assisting an employee's family during a disaster while the employee is working.

Thank you for your assistance.

Department name: **Xenia, Fairborn, New Jasper, Cedarville, Kettering, Bellbrook**

Contact number:

Person providing information:

Title:

Date:

### Demographics

1. What is the makeup of the department?
  - A. Career 2
  - B. Volunteer 2
  - C. Combination career and volunteer 2
  - D. Combination career and part-time

2. How many members are there on the department?

- A. < 25
- B. 25-75           **5**
- C. 75-125
- D. > 125           **1**

3. What is the percentage of department members living in the community served by the department?

- A. <25%           **1**
- B. 25-50%       **1**
- C. 50-75%       **1**
- D. > 75%       **3**

Disaster Assistance

4. Does the department have a policy or procedure that accounts for the needs of the employee's family during a disaster?

Yes       **1**                      No       **5**

(If you answered Yes to #4 please answer 5-6, if you answered No please go to question # 7)

5. To what level does the department assist the family?

\_\_\_ Provide a point of contact for the family        \_\_\_ Allow personnel time off

\_\_\_ Provide phone # for family to call in            **1** Provide shelter for family

**1** Provide disaster preparedness training for the employee and family

Other: **City wide emergency plan addressing employee and family needs**

6. Does the department assign a family liaison to the EOC when activated during a disaster?

Yes        **1**

No         **5**

7. Has the department ever experienced a disaster response that affected the employee or the employee's family?

Yes        **5**

No         **1**

8. If your answer to QUESTION 7 is **Yes** did the disaster have an effect on the employee's ability to perform their duties?

Yes        **3**

No

How? **The inability to respond to the initial incident or staff recall**

9. Has the department ever provided disaster preparedness for the members' family?

Yes

No         **6**

10. How far should the department go in offering assistance to the employee's family during a disaster?

a. Do whatever it takes to ensure safety and well being at any cost.    **1**

b. Provide food and shelter for 24-72 hours at minimal cost.            **1**

c. Provide a point of contact for ensuring accountability and establishing communications between the family and employee.

d. Provide time off for employees to attend to family needs during the disaster   **2**

e. Nothing at all

**Comments:** Five of the six departments surveyed did not have any plan in place prior to the disaster which caused service disruptions. The most common response was it was an unwritten rule that the employee takes care of their family prior to reporting to duty. In one case as crews deployed they were allowed to go to the area of their and work out from their after accounting for their family.



**APPENDIX 3 – STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE DRAFT**

**Beavercreek Township Fire Department  
Standard Operating Guideline**

<p align="center"><b>Disaster Management (XXX) Accounting For Employee Needs</b></p>	<p><b>SOG:       XXX</b>  <b>EFFECTIVE DATE: XXX XX XXXX</b>  Supersedes:  Approved: _____  <span style="margin-left: 150px;">Fire Chief</span></p> <p align="right">Page 1 of 4</p>
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**1.0 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to provide a guideline for the identification and accounting for the employee and the employees' family's needs during a disaster.
- 1.2 Establish the role and responsibilities of the entities and personnel involved with disaster management, and the employee's family.
- 1.3 Keep the employee focused on their duties in the event of a disaster to ensure and enhance employee safety and efficiency.

**2.0 DIVISIONS AFFECTED**

- 2.1 All Fire Department Personnel.
- 2.2 All Township Personnel.

**3.0 RESPONSIBILITY**

- 3.1 All Officers and supervisors are responsible to comply with and ensure that personnel under their command are adequately trained, fully understand, and comply with this policy.
- 3.2 All members have the responsibility to learn and follow this policy.

- 3.3 All personnel are to have a basic working knowledge of the Incident Command Procedures.

#### **4.0 DEFINITIONS**

- 4.1 Disaster- a natural or manmade event that has an immediate and/or long term effects on the employee's and their family's safety and well being.
- 4.2 Family Member- an employee's spouse, child, sibling, in-law, relative, or significant other that resides in the same residence as the employee.
- 4.3 Family Services Team (FST) - a team of personnel whose responsibility is to establish communication with employees and their family during a disaster to account for personnel and identify any needs that are pertinent to the safety and well being. This team will be comprised of BFD Auxiliary members, Township fiscal office and road department designees.
- 4.4 Incident Command Staff- the personnel assigned to the command post and/or the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) responsible for all aspects of disaster stabilization and mitigation.
- 4.5 Liaison- a position within the command staff assigned to function as a go between with a specific resource or group and the command staff to assist with incident mitigation.
- 4.6 Point of Contact- A designated phone number or person to contact in the event of an emergency to report your status or receive information.
- 4.7 Relief Fund- a fund of money or resources specifically established and allocated for assisting those effected by a disaster. These funds are privately donated and collected funds, they are not tax dollars.

#### **5.0 GUIDELINE:**

- 5.1 In the event of a disaster that directly affects the community of Beaver creek, and requires the activation of the EOC, a Family Services Team (FST) will be established. The FST will account for the safety and well being of all employees' family who may be in the affected area.
- 5.2 The FST will set up in the Fire Prevention Bureau offices at 851 Orchard Ln. They will utilize the resources at this location to:
- 5.2.1 Contact all employees and / or family members in the affected area.

- 5.2.2 Report the status and needs of those contacted to the FST liaison.
- 5.2.3 Develop a list of personnel not accounted for, and report those findings to the FST liaison.
- 5.2.4 The FST will establish a list of resources necessary for the safety and well being of the employee or their family. Arrange for the procurement of those resources based on the priority, funds and availability of those resources.
- 5.2.5 FST will assist the employees with acquiring temporary shelter as necessary.
- 5.3 A Fire department officer will be assigned to the EOC to act as the liaison for the FST.
  - 5.3.1 The liaison will coordinate and communicate with command the status of the employees and their families.
  - 5.3.2 The liaison will prioritize the needs of the employees' family and coordinate with command the mitigation of those needs in conjunction with or secondary to the mitigation of the event.
  - 5.3.3 The liaison will inform the FST of all command decision and monitor the operation of the FST.

## 6.0 **TOWNSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 6.1 Provide a safe and healthy work environment. Account for the needs of the employee necessary for providing a safe work environment.
- 6.2 The Township will support a system of contacting and communicating the safety and accountability of all personnel and their family members.
- 6.3 The Township will allow for temporary shelter, not to exceed twenty four hours, for family members during the initial stage of disaster management. This shelter will be provided in a township owned facility so long as the shelter does not interfere with the operational effectiveness of the facility.
- 6.4 The Township will not be responsible for any financial aid to any employee or their family.
- 6.5 The Township will not sponsor or manage any relief funds. Relief funding must be established by a non tax payer funded entity, such as the firefighter's union.

## 7.0 **Relief Funding**

- 7.1 Relief funding will be the responsibility of an entity that is non-profit, and separate from any direct tax dollar funded portion of any Township department.
- 7.2 All relief funding will be set up in accordance with applicable state and federal laws.
- 7.3 Relief funding will have an oversight board to account for the managing and distribution of funds.