A Florida County’s Special Needs Coordination During EOC Activation For Tropical Storm Andrea

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Background

The Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) assigns students to organizations to strengthen fundamental emergency concepts and develop skills necessary to work in emergency management. One student intern was assigned to the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department Emergency Preparedness Division (JFRD), Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Duval County Special Needs department during the EOC Level II activation during Tropical Storm Andrea.

Methods

A quantitative methodology was used. Regional cross sectional telephone surveys were performed to gather patient census of all local categories 1-2 healthcare facilities on the number of patients that use stretchers or wheelchairs. This information was used to determine the number and type of health care vehicles needed for a possible evacuation to special needs shelters. Establishment of special needs shelters were the coordination between local agencies that included the Florida Health Department of Public Health, the American Red Cross, JFRD EOC, and the Duval County School Board.

Results

The results showed that local ambulances (city and private) were limited and additional resources were needed. The city’s transportation authority were informed to develop plans to provide additional vehicles if needed.

Conclusion

The EOC relies on telephone communication and Web EOC system to receive current patient transportation needs; however, the system has not been tested on full scale activation using category 4-5 healthcare facilities. The process also depends on the number of EOC personnel available to manage phone traffic and if communication to the facilities is still maintained during a disaster. A potential problem noted is that the contacts made to the areas’ facilities administration for patient census information were made by cell phones.

References


Acknowledgments

• The Florida Division of Emergency Management, Tallahassee, Florida
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• The Florida Department of Health-Duval County Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response-Jacksonville, Florida

Objectives

1. Collaborate with a multidisciplinary team to provide the best practices for a large metropolitan area with a diverse population.
2. Observe the process of an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) on a county wide event.