

IAFC Terrorism And Homeland Security Subcommittee Comprehensive Homeland Security And Resiliency - Inclusion And Access To All Communities Strategy To Support Equity And Inclusion - Preparedness In An All-Hazards World

I. Introduction:

To serve and include all of our communities are closely aligned concepts that unfortunately have not been fully realized in our modern world. From a homeland security perspective, along the spectrum of natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina as well as COVID-19, we see that not all communities are equally impacted or have different levels of resiliency to adverse events. Analysis points to many causative factors such as public health, hospital capabilities and capacities, critical infrastructure, age and types of buildings, social services, community resources, local economies, trust in government/history of prior collaboration, non for profit, faith-based community resources, etc.

These challenges exist across the six areas of preparedness: prevention/protection, response, mitigation, recovery, resiliency, and imagination. These are complex issues and resolution is predicated on the available resources/partnering opportunities and could potentially function as a force multiplier in terms of enhancing preparedness and resiliency.

For the purpose of this strategic planning framework and any supplemental documents to support this initiative, the term “Whole Communities” is recommended to replace the terminology use of “All Communities.” FEMA describes whole communities as preparedness being a shared responsibility; it calls for everyone - not just government - in preparedness efforts. The phrase “whole community” is a guiding principle to encourage two things:

1. Involve people in the development of national preparedness documents
2. Ensure their roles and responsibilities are reflected in the content of the documents developed (FEMA.gov/glossary/whole-community)

Strategic Action Planning: The IAFC Terrorism And Homeland Security Sub-Committee Commits To Furthering Research And Partnering To Advocate For Solutions Addressing Of The Following Complex Challenges:

II. Education And Awareness:

Homeland Security and Resiliency begins with understanding these concepts and how they apply to your unique community and family. This includes understanding the difference between reacting and responding to emergency situations, versus being truly resilient to an event. Resiliency supports both the individual’s concerns over life safety and property protection; moreover, it reduces the impact and perhaps decreases the recovery time to resume normal life activities as well as scales down the reliance on emergency and social services. This is particularly vital in communities with a small bandwidth of economic and critical infrastructure capital that may have been disproportionately impacted by a large-scale disaster, natural disaster, or terror attack.

Education and Awareness should feature the following:

- ✓ Introduced early as part of primary and secondary education.
- ✓ Be lifelong and continue to serve the most senior members of our community.
- ✓ Be built on a partnership between emergency services, local government, and the community
- ✓ Leverage trusted partnerships i.e., faith-based institutions and academia.
- ✓ Leverage best practices in messaging and how people consume information, such as via the robust use of social media outreach.

- ✓ Be highly relevant to the type of community (rural, suburban, urban) with general themes of homeland security and preparedness coupled with real-world focused emphasis on local challenges and issues.

III. Critical Infrastructure - Weakened Or In Need Of Significant Repair Or Upgrade:

- ✓ Research and apply best practices from other international partners.
- ✓ Advocate for a comprehensive analysis of national, regional, state, tribal, and local critical infrastructure across all sectors.
- ✓ Based on this analysis, advocate jurisdictional risk assessment that includes the application of concept of threats, vulnerabilities, and consequences when applied across all sectors of critical infrastructure. Red and Blue Team analysis may be particularly helpful in achieving this objective.
- ✓ Based on this risk assessment, advocate for comprehensive improvement planning utilizing the Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound (SMART) concept.
- ✓ This risk assessment and improvement planning process should focus very specifically on key areas, including but not limited to, clean water supplies, telecommunications infrastructure, mass transportation infrastructure, and electrical network capacity. All of these sectors are vital in daily living; moreover, be robust and resilient to support comprehensive community-based preparedness and homeland security.
- ✓ Promote the adoption of resilient design principles and standards in the construction and maintenance of critical infrastructure to mitigate potential risk and enhance their ability to withstand various hazards.
- ✓ Establish robust backup systems (Continuity Of Operations Plan (COOP)) and redundancy measures to ensure continuous operation of critical infrastructure during emergencies and disruptions.

IV. Public Health Infrastructure - Hospitals And Local Clinics That Are Already Understaffed And Struggling To Meet Patient Demand During Routine Times, Have No Elasticity To Flex And Meet The Extraordinary Demands Of An Urgent, Large-Scale Crisis:

- ✓ Advocate for community-based needs assessment for the establishment of additional public health infrastructure, hospitals, clinics to support both acute as well as chronic physical and mental health challenges.
- ✓ Advocate for continued research into innovative concepts, such as community paramedicine, that brings comprehensive medical care to those most in need without adding additional workload on the 911 system and hospital sector.
- ✓ Advocate for continued research and application of telemedicine technologies.
- ✓ Support an emphasis on strategic action planning for public health infrastructure that supports optimum health, preventative screenings, wellness programs so that our communities have a baseline of healthy living that will support resiliency during health crisis, natural disasters, or other high consequence events.
- ✓ Advocate for expansion of disaster medical capabilities within our hospital settings such as mass casualty care and burn surge care.
- ✓ Support the funding, programmatic development, training and implementing of national, regional, statewide, and community-based disaster medical care, search and rescue capabilities and capacities, and disaster mental health infrastructure.

V. Support For A Broad Spectrum Of Special Needs And Disabilities....How Does Their Preparedness Look Different:

- ✓ Advocate for comprehensive education and awareness of national, regional, state-wide, tribal, and local leadership of the unique challenges posed by providing preparedness, homeland security, evacuation, and sheltering for the special needs community. This includes the full spectrum of cognitive and physical disabilities.
- ✓ Fund and develop a broad educational outreach and improvement program to inform and foster a climate of collaboration and coordination amongst community leadership, emergency management professionals, the first responder community, non-governmental organizations, and caregivers to realistically address the preparedness and homeland security needs of the special-needs population. These should follow the SMART concept.
- ✓ Advocate for funding at the national, regional, state, tribal, and local level to support the implementation of improvement planning.
- ✓ Champion the integration of mental health and special needs support services into emergency response plans, recognizing the impact of trauma and stress on community resilience.
- ✓ Provide training for emergency responders and community members on disability awareness, communication strategies, and appropriate support techniques for individuals with special needs and disabilities.

VI. Comprehensive Fire Safety And Prevention Programs:

- ✓ Fire, smoke, and toxic gases can create a life-threatening preparedness and homeland security challenge. Sadly as a nation, we are seeing a rise in the fatality rate due to the occurrence of fire, especially in the light of new technologies such as E-Bikes and other personal mobility devices.
- ✓ Successful fire safety and prevention programs must first seek to understand local community knowledge and perspectives on the dangers of fire and smoke.
- ✓ Successful fire safety and prevention programs must be delivered in all appropriate languages and with a degree of cultural awareness to develop effective education and messaging.
- ✓ Successful fire safety and prevention programs require buy-in, support, and funding from the fire service community, local, tribal, state, regional, and national leadership.
- ✓ Successful fire safety and prevention programs should be delivered in collaboration and coordination with trusted community partners such as faith-based organizations.
- ✓ Successful fire safety and prevention programs require a high degree of collaboration with local codes experts, building departments, construction industry professionals, as well as architects and engineers to plan for, design, build, and maintain structures with a high degree of inherent fire protection and safety.
- ✓ All efforts serve to effectively prepare our local communities against the dangers of uncontrolled fire and smoke while also adding to our general preparedness and homeland security resiliency.
- ✓ Development of targeted outreach programs and educational campaigns to ensure that underserved communities have access to information and resources for all-hazards preparedness.
- ✓ Collaboration with community-based organizations to identify and address the specific needs and challenges faced by marginalized populations during emergencies.

VII. Comprehensive National/Regional/State/Tribal/Local Programs To Address Homelessness:

- ✓ This is already a vulnerable population, with physical, health, and mental health needs, and are especially susceptible to large scale disasters and other community threats.
- ✓ Community based, realistic, and appropriately funded programs that provide for health care, counseling, substance abuse treatment, and housing are the primary foundational steps that must be addressed to reduce vulnerability of these communities.
- ✓ Develop a coordinated and integrated approach to homelessness that involves multiple sectors, including housing, healthcare, social services, and employment.

- ✓ Increase affordable housing options through the construction, renovation, and rehabilitation of housing units specifically targeted for individuals experiencing homelessness.
- ✓ Expand support for rapid rehousing programs that provide short-term assistance and supportive services to help individuals and families quickly transition out of homelessness.
- ✓ Strengthen outreach and engagement efforts to identify and connect individuals experiencing homelessness with appropriate resources and services.
- ✓ Foster partnerships between government agencies, non-profit organizations, and community stakeholders to create a coordinated system of care for individuals experiencing homelessness to enhance mental health and substance abuse treatment services.

VIII. Climate Change May Have A Disproportionate Impact On Communities Without Robust Emergency Planning, Weakened Critical Infrastructure, Lack Of Medical Facilities, Erosion Control, Flood Management, And Lack Of Appropriate Urban-Rural Interface Planning:

- ✓ This is a complex, global, national, and local issue of great concern with no one solution. However, the fire and emergency services sector should focus their efforts at having a voice at this table, particularly in regard to consequence management.
- ✓ Fire and emergency services commitment and planning to reduce our contribution to climate change.
- ✓ Advocate for state and local emergency management planning to develop a community risk assessment, based on threat identification, vulnerability, and consequence analysis of all aspects and impacts of climate change. This spans preparedness, response, and recovery to natural disasters, flood protection and management, large scale wildland fire potential, heat related illness and injury, and air quality concerns.
- ✓ Identify and proactively address threat(s) to community resiliency resulting from loss of critical infrastructure and resulting cascading impact(s).
- ✓ This risk assessment should drive educational efforts, local community preparedness and response training, critical infrastructure investment and strategic planning, as well as support for first responder capabilities and capacities.

IX. Communities Already Unstable Due To High Crime And Transnational Narcotics Challenges:

- ✓ It is difficult for communities to focus on, fund, plan, and support both short- and long-term preparedness and homeland security needs when faced with daily safety challenges caused by high crime, gun violence and narcotics trafficking.
- ✓ Addressing these significant society issues is a foundational step to supporting a more resilient population in the face of homeland security threats.
- ✓ The IAFC Terrorism and Homeland Security Committee seeks to collaborate and support partners within the first responder, emergency management, and political leadership at all levels to address:
 - Foundational societal issues that if addressed, can impact high crime, gun violence, and narcotics trafficking
 - Support common sense gun control
 - Support national and local campaigns to recruit the brightest, most compassionate, and professional community members to careers in public service and law enforcement
 - Continue to support and collaboratively train and prepare with our law enforcement partners, at all levels, to address response and lifesaving capabilities needed as a result of high crime, gun violence, and narcotics trafficking

X. Central To The Mission Of The Homeland Security Enterprise And The DHS Strategic Plan Are Security Missions Which Impact The Emergency Preparedness, Response, And Resiliency Of Our Communities:

- ✓ Counter terrorism and homeland security threats posed by domestic violent extremist groups require a whole community approach for emergency preparedness and development of interagency collaboration.
 - Develop and cultivate collaborative relationships and communication pathways for a unified and cohesive strategy for threat assessment and identification, and preparedness / response / mitigation of community risk.
 - Continue support of and seek opportunity for improvement of regional threat and risk assessment and distribution among interdisciplinary partners.
 - Advocate for collaboration between law enforcement agencies and fire service/all-hazard partners for the development of an inclusive and cohesive environment for information sharing and situational awareness.
- ✓ Emerging threats and risks posed from advances in cyber and application of artificial intelligence.
 - Identification of primary cybersecurity threat vectors for federal, state, tribal, local government, and private industry.
 - Identification and distribution of best practices for cybersecurity threat assessment and resiliency of community critical infrastructure protection.
 - Identification and planning for loss of service of community critical infrastructure and planning for mitigation of cascading impact(s).

Summary:

The International Association of Fire Chief's Terrorism and Homeland Security Committee plays a unique facilitative role in identifying a wide spectrum of threats, as well as subject matter expertise, and mitigation experience. We as a collaborative team set as a continual objective that this knowledge and advocacy be applied to support a national wide conversation, collaboration, and coordination to most effectively address long standing community inequities to achieve high levels of preparedness and homeland security. We look forward to collaborating with all partners, both within the IAFC as well as many external partners at all levels of society to achieve these vital objectives.