



## **Abstracts of Presentation by Stephen J. LeBlanc**

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*Readiness for Recovery: Galveston Evacuation Model*

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### **LeBlanc Abstracts**

#### **Inform the community at large about emergency preparedness plans throughout the year:**

Inform the community at select times throughout the year through town hall meetings; emergency management coordination; the public information channel and city website; and sign-up meetings for individuals with special needs. During hurricane season hold monthly or more frequent meetings with community and county stakeholders to review respective plans and necessary collaboration.

#### **Conduct tabletop exercises:**

In recognition of the direct correlation between practicing a plan and successful performance of the plan in case of disaster, conduct tabletop exercises to review all aspects of the readiness and response plan of action especially with respect to evacuation and acknowledgment of lines of authority.

#### **Establish a timeline for response:**

Firstly establish the estimated time that the storm would make landfall and refer to that time as the zero hour, or H-zero and with that basis assign tasks along a timeline. Tasks in the Galveston timeline include: H-100 - hour regional leadership conference; H-100 hour to H-72 - leadership handoff from City Council to Mayor; H-72 - voluntary evacuation, care of special needs population, and implementation of reverse 911 system; H-48 - mandatory evacuation; H-24 - relocation of remaining City staff, police, fire, public works and emergency management staff to safe havens with reserves of fuel, food and supplies.

**Establish continuity of government through redundant commands and facilities:** To preserve continuity in case of loss of communication or

control relocate the Mayor Pro Tem and the Assistant City Manager to the mainland's county emergency management facility to serve as the backup team. Establish agreements with other entities as may be necessary to access redundant emergency management facilities for post storm operations.

**Assisting special needs evacuees:** Prepare an evacuation plan to assist special needs persons including those without transportation, the bedridden, homebound, homeless, drug addicts, those requiring oxygen, or those without family. The pre-plan should include buses with bathrooms and city staff to accompany special needs evacuees on long trips, a staging area, and additional transportation as may be required and provided by emergency management services.

**Pre-plan evacuation destinations:** Pre-establish agreements as necessary with authorities in evacuation destinations to house evacuees appropriately.

**Provide training for city staff to accompany evacuees:** Train sufficient personnel or (up to 50) city staff to accompany and provide appropriate care for (3,500) special needs evacuees.

**Ensure that the mandatory evacuation plan includes a plan to evacuate family pets and abandoned pets:** Ensure that evacuation plans include transportation for and destination shelters for pets. Transport abandoned pets and pre-arrange care for abandoned pets at the destination city(ies) with the Humane Society.

**Establish a refuge of last resort:** Establish a local agreement with a facility such as school district to serve as refuge of last resort for citizens who refuse to evacuate under mandatory evacuation. Citizens who choose this option must sign waivers acknowledging all risks even death.

**Establish mutual aid agreements with neighboring cities:** Establish mutual aid agreements with neighboring cities to encourage local response as the first response.

**Establish redundant communication systems:** Ensure ample supply of two-way radios and satellite phones for emergency managers and local leaders as cell phone transmissions are unreliable post disaster and it is likely that the user will suffer loss of battery power.

**Manage media inquiries with daily press conferences to communicate key messages to citizens:** To effectively manage time with the media to communicate key storm status messages to the public, establish set daily times to speak to the media such as 10:00 o'clock in the morning and at

4:00 o'clock in the afternoon, rather than respond to media inquiries throughout the day.

**Protect the city's water supply:** Take the necessary steps to protect the water source as water is essential to support human life and to fight fires. Protect the water source by cutting off the water supply to avoid the risk of bleeding the system and contamination through broken lines. When turning the water back take the time necessary to test to be sure that the supply has not reverse contaminated itself.

**Keep your emergency plan flexible:** Bear in mind that emergency plan flexibility may be necessary to effectively respond to unexpected situations.

To save three structures of the east end historic district from a fire during Rita's 90 mile an hour winds we broke policy during the bunker down mode to allow willing firefighters to fight a fire to save the historic district. Additionally, our neighbor cities in mutual aid agreement with us came to Galveston during this period to protect the rest of the city in case of fire.

**Plan for cleanup redundancy:** A redundant cleanup plan should entail multiple contracts. Our city maintains three contracts and an additional agreement with a company to manage the three debris management companies so that the proper paperwork is in order to be reimbursed by FEMA.

**Be prepared to readily assess damages in order to expedite recovery:** Be prepared with resources including software to efficiently assess and track damages.

**Establish a plan to restore utilities and power:** Establish a plan for restoration of utilities and power in priority order for critical community providers including hospitals, command centers, select grocery stores and retailers, gas stations, and fuel vendors.

**Establish 90 day reserves for all city funds:** To maintain continuity post disaster establish 90 day reserves for all city funds including the water, sewer, drainage, enterprise and general funds. These funds will preserve continuity in a number of ways including that FEMA reimburses based on expenditures.

***“Galveston, I'm proud to say is a shining example of long term readiness and preparedness.”***: Our forefathers planned for a sufficient water storage supply to enable survive for days without water coming to the island. This water storage system continues to serve us well. Our

forefathers also constructed the seawall that has protected this island for 100 years.

**“The greatest lesson is to share; exactly what you’re doing. Share with others, go visit other communities, find out their successes, their failures.”**: Galveston has done just that and will continue to do that.