

A.J. Mumm (Emergency Management)
Polk County, Iowa

A.J. Mumm
Emergency Management Director
Individual Award Category
ISAC 2008 Excellence in Action Awards

1) Abstract of the program

Emergency management is a coordinated effort, involving local, state, and federal government agencies as well as volunteer organizations and businesses. The members of the Polk County Emergency Management Agency are the cities of Alleman, Altoona, Ankeny, Bondurant, Clive, Des Moines, Elkhart, Grimes, Johnston, Mitchellville, Pleasant Hill, Polk City, Polk County Board of Supervisors, Polk County Sheriff, Runnells, Urbandale, West Des Moines and Windsor Heights. These various entities assist citizens and their communities to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and eliminate or reduce the effects of natural, civil, and technological emergencies and disasters. The primary goal of emergency management is to prevent injuries, save lives, and reduce property damage in communities.

The four phases of Emergency management are Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery. A.J. Mumm, Emergency Management Director, established an Emergency Operations Center within Polk County in response to the June flooding. Mr. Mumm's ability to effectively operate the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) under the four areas of emergency management was proven to be beyond reproach and deserving of an individual award from the 2008 ISAC Excellence In Action.

2) The problem/need for the program

In anticipation of flooding conditions in the Des Moines Metro area and cities within Polk County, the Emergency Operation Center opened on Monday, June 9, 2008 through the direction of Emergency Management Director A.J. Mumm. The EOC was located at 2008 Forest Avenue (Polk County's Central Senior Center) and served as a command center for the Polk County Emergency Management Agency. In addition to emergency management staff, the EOC included response personnel (police, fire) from entities within Polk County as well as representatives from engineering, transportation, public health and medical services, energy, communications, mass care, housing, human services, public information, mitigation and recovery.

On June 10th, the Army Corps of Engineers began releasing additional flood waters over the Saylorville spillway which caused flooding in many areas of Polk County. What transpired throughout the following days resulted in a cooperative team effort involving all entity members of emergency

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management. Through the planning of the EOC by Emergency Management Director, A.J. Mumm, the protocol for the EOC was set into operation. The EOC functioned and succeeded beyond expectation enabling governments of all areas to work cohesively toward a common goal.

The effort and support received from the communities across Polk County, the countless volunteers, responders, outside emergency management coordinators, commission members, elected officials, National Guard troops and Corps of Engineers throughout this event reinforced the establishment of the EOC by AJ Mumm. This was a significant event but could have been much worse had it not been effectively managed. The calm leadership provided by the Incident Command Team who operated the EOC 24 hours per day spent many long hours with little rest. They, along with their families, made extreme personal sacrifices to provide critical support to the Polk County Emergency Management Commission, the Metro's Elected Officials and all residents throughout the greater Polk County Area.

On June 13th, the Birdland levee breach was taken to heart by many at the EOC. Despite this setback, the EOC continued to move forward tackling the numerous challenges they faced everyday in a very dynamic situation. It was the quick coordinated reaction to the situation by Public Works, Metro STAR, the Iowa National Guard, Clive, Ankeny, Polk County and others that bought us time to complete second and third evacuation sweeps. Despite our proactive efforts, we still suffered property loss in the Birdland Neighborhood, but likely prevented the catastrophic release of hazardous materials by removing hazardous chemical from Eagle Iron Works before this event and supported efforts at Des Moines Cold Storage to shut down their anhydrous ammonia refrigeration system before the power was cut to their facility and the uncontrolled release of anhydrous that could have threatened area residents and responders working the immediate vicinity.

Had the EOC not responded at the direction of the Corps of Engineers to the incidents at SE 7th & Vail and SE 4th and Shaw as quickly and effectively as they had, if we had not planned the evacuation of Zone 3, and had we not reached out and placed numerous resources from multiple governments on notice, we would have likely lost two more neighborhoods, much of the City of Des Moines facilities, additional surface street transportation routes and suffered an increased risk of injury to responders and residents. See attached Chronology of Events.

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3) Description of the program

The EOC through the direction of Emergency Management Director, A.J. Mumm served as the hub for the coordination of all activities surrounding this flood event. The EOC consisted of a unified command that represented local governments within Polk County and Polk County government. Law enforcement agencies, the Polk County public health department, the Army Corps of Engineers, public works, fire departments, law enforcement, and other public service entities within Polk County made up the team that coordinated emergency operational activities and the release of important information for the safety and well being of the public. Three times daily informational press conferences were provided to give updates on potential flooding conditions, contingency planning of the EOC, resources for residents affected by flooding, shelter locations, street closings, and safety advisories. Also involved in the EOC were entities outside the emergency management membership, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Homeland Security, State homeland security, and the Iowa National Guard.

4) Use of technology

Internet and GIS connections were provided to allow staff to provide mapping of the flood areas as well as road closures and safe traffic routes throughout the metro area. Traffic Cams from the Iowa Department of Transportation were utilized to monitor affected areas. The Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division's WebEOC was utilized for entering needs for our County. There were a number of different radio systems in operation so that there was communication with all disciplines. The City and County networks were running during the operation. The Amateur Radio Group were present in the EOC and the shelters. The three PSAPs were present at the EOC utilizing their systems. The MICRN radio network was being used as well to communicate with public sectors and the National Weather Service. United way utilized their website for volunteer registration and management. There was an area designated for press conferences for live broadcasts including local Channel 7. The Advanced Hydrological Prediction System was used to gage the rivers through the web. Automated Notification Systems City Watch and CodeRed were used to alert residents to evacuate.

5) The cost of the program is difficult to break down. This program has been ongoing leveraging Homeland Security Grant funds as well as private investments. The system has National, State-wide and Regional applications.

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6) The results/success of the program

It is difficult to measure success in this type of a disaster but no loss of life was reported and only one guardsman suffered a heat related injury. The Polk City water treatment plant was saved and many other critical assets such as Magellan Pipeline and terminal which kept flowing throughout Central Iowa, as well as many neighborhood, businesses and government operations in Johnston, Polk City, Polk County, Des Moines, West Des Moines and Pleasant Hill. The EOC was extremely successful in coordinating protective measures for many governments who agreed to share and deliver resources around the clock, without question or concern about repayment. The coordination of the EOC efforts resulted in so many things happening behind the scenes that no one will ever report on, or know about, or appreciate, but was so critical to the efforts of the EOC to protect life, stabilize the incident and protect property and the environment.

The successful operation of the EOC provided safety to the citizens of Polk County throughout the tenuous weeks in June in Polk County.

7) Worthiness of an Award

Without the organizational and leadership skills of A.J. Mumm, Polk County Emergency Management Director, Polk County would not have been able to operate as effectively and efficiently during this natural disaster. His calm demeanor and attention to detail brought all entities in Polk County together to work toward the common goal of ensuring the safety of our residents. Remarkably, throughout the many days of flooding, only one injury was reported. We all owe a debt of gratitude to all who worked so tirelessly to save our community during this time of crisis. Particularly, the efforts exhibited through the operation of the Emergency Operations Center. The efficient operation of this command center is the best example of regional cooperation this area has ever seen.

Submitted by:

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