The Benefit of Having a Long Term Recovery Group Before the Disaster

Presented by Sheila Lowe with Bastrop County Long Term Recovery Team
Bastrop County 2011 Complex Fires

• Destroyed 1691 homes, 38 businesses, burned over 34,000 acres and killed 2 people.

• Largest Fire in Texas history, the third largest in US history and per capita was the largest fire ever to occur in the US (the population of Bastrop county was only 75,000 people). By comparison, the second largest fire in Texas history destroyed 168 homes and occurred in April, 2011 at Possum Kingdom.

• Based on FEMA data there were approximately 276 homes destroyed which had no insurance. Based on a survey completed by United Policyholders 52% of the homes destroyed were underinsured by an average amount of $75,000.

• Based on data obtained from FEMA 747 homes which were destroyed were low income as defined by HUD.
As a result of the 2011 Complex Fires, the Bastrop County Long Term Recovery Team was formed.

Through our volunteers we coordinated projects on over 1400 properties and assisted literally thousands of fire survivors with their recovery. Volunteers worked in conjunction with our organization and worked over 250,000 volunteer hours on everything from debris cleanup to the rebuilding of homes.

Other projects included the building of storage sheds, decks, handicap ramps and skirting for those that replaced their manufactured homes and assisting ranchers with rebuilding fence for their livestock.

Bastrop County Long Term Recovery Team rebuilt 133 homes after the states most devastating fire.
Mission
The mission of the Bastrop County Long Term Recovery Team is to assist low-income uninsured and underinsured individuals and families with recovery from ANY natural or man-made disasters.
This mission is accomplished by having affected individuals and families work closely with a case manager to identify their unmet needs and to assist with obtaining the resources necessary to meet these needs.
Our objectives are to:
• to provide residents with spiritual and emotional care management for rebuilding
• community care through case management
• home repairs according to unmet needs funding
The Bastrop County Long Term Recovery Team (BCLTRT) helps disaster victims with recovery assistance.

The Executive Board and Committees examine all resources available and connect the client with non profit organizations and other local resources needed to complete recovery.

Assistance is available for individuals and families with unmet needs and is coordinated using a process of case management, including the development of a recovery plan based on personal responsibility and accountability.

We always invite any and all organizations who are willing to provide financial, material, and/or volunteer resources for the recovery and rebuild process to join others who have become part of the Bastrop County Long Term Recovery Team.
Communities are always in one phase of a disaster cycle, but most people tend to think of disasters as a line of activity rather than a circle and for most that line starts with the *incident*.
Recovery

Two phases occur within recovery:

**Short Term** - Most emergency and relief work is completed, infrastructure restored, community identifies local resources to form a long term recovery team and planning for permanent housing begins – *occurs in weeks usually months*

**Long Term** – Transition from national organizations to State and local community, disaster case management and recovery initiatives are administered by the local community, construction activities for homes occurs and daily “new normal” life resumes – *often takes years*
WHO NEEDS A LONG TERM RECOVERY GROUP?
EVERY COMMUNITY NEEDS A LONG TERM RECOVERY GROUP

Per the TDEM 2015 publication - Texas Long-Term Recovery Guide here are the key benefits of a LTR program:

1. Community Driven
2. Empowerment
3. Organization
4. Holistic Community Recovery
5. Focus
6. Hazard Mitigation Actions
7. Community Healing
8. Look Beyond Tomorrow
9. Partnerships
10. New Participants

EVERY COMMUNITY NEEDS A LONG TERM RECOVERY GROUP

• Community Driven - involves and engages the community in the process.

• Empowerment - provides an opportunity for the community to take control of its future and facilitate its recovery.

• Organization - the program provides a consistent approach to LTR and promotes cooperation and coordination among federal, state, and local officials.

• Holistic Community Recovery - attempts to incorporate all elements of the community as part of the recovery process, encourages consideration of the interrelationships of various sectors, such as commercial, environmental, etc., and encourages community, federal and state partners to look at long-term implications of decisions.

• Focus - provides a clear path for recovery.

• Hazard Mitigation Actions - provides an opportunity to incorporate hazard mitigation concepts as part of the recovery effort to eliminate or decrease exposure to damage in future disasters.

• Community Healing – provides opportunity for residents to join together and function as a community to vent their concerns, meet with one another, and be involved in defining and creating their future.

• Look Beyond Tomorrow - takes the community and federal/state agencies beyond response and into the recovery process.

• Partnerships - fosters cooperation and coordination among federal, state, and local agencies and organizations, both public and private.

• New Participants - creates an opportunity to bring in new participants and new leaders from non-traditional sectors within the community.
ORGANIZE LONG TERM RECOVERY GROUP IN THE PREPAREDNESS PHASE

Assure that your community:

- Is educated about the process and resources for recovery
- Maintains local control by joining the county Emergency Management Plan
- Keeps donations (material/cash) local
- Decreases reliance on state and national resources for case management
- Shortens steps between short and long term recovery phases
Some Things To Consider

- Decisions need to be made without emotion. This can only really be done in the preparation phase.
- Preplanning will save your community time and resources. When decisions are made objectively in the preparedness phase, it will be easier to move forward once the incident occurs.
- Including the LTRG in the Emergency Management Plan assures that the necessary decisions are made beforehand.
OUTCOMES OF HAVING A LONG TERM RECOVERY GROUP PRIOR TO A DISASTER
What BCLTRT Has Learned

- Is the Bastrop County Long Term Recovery Team a part of their county’s Emergency Management Plan?
  - YES!

- Has Bastrop County Long Term Recovery Team always been a part of the county’s Emergency Management Plan?
  - No, BCLTRT was only formed in 2012. Until 2011 with the Complex Fires we were like most communities and didn’t feel like there was a need to have a group designated to disaster recovery.

- What has the experience of working collaboratively with our local OEM been like?
  - Beneficial for both.
What BCLTRT Has Learned

- By working with the OEM staff we have been able to learn from each incident and plan for the next, by documenting what worked, what didn’t and what could have been better.

- BCLTRT has been able to count on the county to be responsive to the concerns of the residents that we hear from. During this last flood we implemented a hotline furnished by the OEM. The phones were manned by volunteers for the LTRG. In addition there was a request for a line designated for businesses. In the event of another disaster, the OEM will be providing the new line and again it will be manned by volunteers of the LTRG.

- Because the information we receive during these events are used for the reporting of the OEM to the state and federal agencies, they prepare the questions they need answered and we include the questions to capture information we will need to begin recovery.
Tip for a successful LTRG

The success of your local LTRG will be judged by how well it locates resources (money, facilities, volunteers, personnel, in-kind donations), and how well it serves the community (survivors helped, homes repaired and rebuilt, measurable impacts, etc.)

At the most basic level the long term recovery process involves:

• Identifying individuals and families with unmet needs in your community

• Providing case management in order to prioritize how those needs will be met

• Delivering goods, services and funds to meet those needs
Setting Up The Structure Of Your LTRG

• It will become clear after a first meeting that some kind of organizational structure will be needed in order to be successful. The form that the LTRG takes can be highly structured (formal organization with board of directors, management team, and staff) or less structured (group made up of representatives from local agencies involved in the recovery). There are challenges and benefits to each approach.

• The key is to identify stakeholders who are committed to the recovery of their community, and to the long term recovery process. This group should then deliberate the challenges and benefits and decide on the structure that works best for your community.
Suggested Long Term Recovery Committee Positions

- Positions recommended to create a long term recovery committee:
  - Committee Chair
  - Case Management Chair
  - Construction Management Chair
  - Communications Chair
  - Volunteer Chair
- It is strongly suggested these be local people. State organizations will join the group and assist these positions.
OUTCOMES OF NOT HAVING A LONG TERM RECOVERY GROUP PRIOR TO A DISASTER
Some Scenarios of Not Being Prepared

- There has been no education about the process and resources for recovery
- There is no message prepared regarding the organization of response
- If there is not an LTRG in place then (material/cash) donations will be taken in and controlled by entities outside of your community. It will be a struggle to receive these funds/donations if they are ever recouped. Your community may be required to apply for these donations and still there is still no guarantee or there may be strings attached.
- You will have to rely on state and national resources for case management. Guidance is good and invaluable in most situations, but you most certainly want the people that assisting your families to be from your community.
- Reliance on strictly outside entities will lengthen the steps between short and long term recovery phases. This happens because you are on their clock. If your community is part of a regional incident most definitely you will find that the volunteer organizations and the federal/state agencies will prioritize and those in most need will take precedence.
PARTNERSHIPS IN
LONG TERM RECOVERY
Volunteers/Funders

- Religious Based Disaster Organizations
  - Mennonite Disaster Services
  - Christian Aid Ministries
  - Harvest Call Apostolic Church
  - Episcopal Diocese of Texas
  - Austin Disaster Relief Network
  - Alert Academy
  - Lutheran Social Services Disaster Response
  - United Methodist Church SWTX
  - First United Methodist Church Bastrop
  - Presbyterian Churches USA
  - Catholic Charities
  - Local Ministerial Alliances

- Fraternal Organizations
  - Rotary Club
  - Lions Club
  - Knights of Columbus

- Foundations/Companies
  - Meadows Foundation
  - Austin Community Foundation
  - Bluebonnet Electric
  - Aqua Water

- Governmental/National Organizations
  - AmeriCorps
  - American Red Cross
  - Salvation Army
  - Bastrop County
  - Texas General Land Office

- Many other churches, civic organizations and businesses throughout the state and United States
Resources

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