



City of San Antonio
Developing an Emergency Plan for People with Disabilities
Wednesday, March 14, 2018

The tenth community meeting was held at the Willie Cortez Senior Center, 5512 W. Military Dr.

- I. **Introductions:** Deborah Scharven, Accessibility Compliance Manager facilitated meeting. City staff included Olivia Gaitan, Christine Zuniga and Abraham Robles (who provided Spanish translations) from the Disability Access Office and James Mendoza and Samantha Haynes from the Office of Emergency Management. ASL Interpreters were provided by Vital Signs. There were a total of sixteen (16) citizens who participated in the community meeting.
- II. **Presentation:** Deborah Scharven explained that the purpose of the community meetings is to obtain community feedback to help develop the City's Emergency Plan for People with Disabilities. A tentative time line for the plan development was provided:
 - Phase 1- Community Engagement: February-April
 - Phase 2- Draft and Community Input: May-Aug.
 - Phase 3- Second Draft and Community Review: September-October
 - Phase 4- Final Draft and Community Review: November
 - Phase 5- Emergency Plan Released: December 15, 2018
- III. **Discussion Topics:** The attendees were broken up into small groups to discuss each topic then share their findings with the larger group. Issues/concerns/questions and recommendations are listed with the individual topics.
 1. **Notifications and Alerts**
 - Marketing of Alert SA, attendees either did not know about the program or did not know how to use the technology to follow through on self-registry. The program covers a tri-county area, Bexar, Comal and Guadalupe. Seniors will probably not register on their own, but will be more likely to if staff is helping with the process.

- Questions arose about technology and loss of power- how will you get notifications/alerts/information on smartphones or computers if electricity is out?
- May not have to go door –to-door in all neighborhoods; police/fire could have megaphones going down the streets alerting people to either evacuate or to stay in place.
- Have different alarm sounds for specific emergencies, for example in Mexico there is a specific sounding alarm for earth quakes. This would be helpful to many people, but would not work for individuals who are Deaf,
- Using simplified language and/or more visual graphics could be helpful for people who are Deaf or have Intellectual Disabilities.
- Make sure that senior centers have information on alerts, emergencies, evacuations, etc. available as many seniors get all there information form the centers.
- More education provided to media outlets, have interpreters for all news briefings; make sure they are in frame, slow down scrolling captioning and make font larger during news alerts.

2. Evacuations

- Self-preparedness is very important; individuals should have emergency kits ready in case of an evacuation. Vital items should be identified including medication, medical supplies (including any needed chargers or batteries) pet supplies, etc.
- Transportation- what do you do if you have no transportation? You should also be aware of multiple routes out of neighborhood in case of evacuation.
- What if there is construction on your evacuation routes? What other routes can be taken.
- How do people in wheelchairs or have trouble walking evacuate if elevators are down and they have to use the stairs? First responders have specialized stair chairs/sleds they can use.
- The attendees want a list of pre-determined shelter locations in case of evacuations; shelters locations are not determined before an emergency/natural disaster occurs. Because the location of the emergency is not known until it occurs, shelters are set up in areas far from the emergency zone.
- How to reach people who do not have access to technology? Fliers, mail outs may still be beneficial to some populations.

- How to build networks with neighbors to help each other during emergencies- can the city assist with bringing people together?
- It was mentioned that the City needs to work on drainage issues; how can people evacuate if the streets are flooded?

3. Shelters

- Shelters should have refrigeration areas for medicines, pharmacists available to help people obtain needed medication.
- It is important to know the names of the medications you take, have a picture on your phone or keep the prescription information sheet in your emergency kit in case of evacuations/shelter stays.
- Sensitivity training for shelter staff/volunteers is requested.
- Do shelters have Wi-Fi? Shelters will provide Wi-Fi, but in most cases it can take about 24 hours before the systems are set up.
- Charging stations for cell phones, extra batteries for hearing aids, shower chairs, accessible beds/cots that are sturdy for wheelchair transfers.
- If individuals have specialized diets, will there be food they can eat available in the shelters?
- Federal guidelines say that shelters are not to be segregated; all shelters are to be accessible.
- Shelters are for immediate help; providing dry clothes, food water, they are not for long term housing (usually not open for more than 30 days) or resources.

4. Recovery

- Those in shelters need advocates. How are resources found? How do you connect with the available services?
- Access to video phones if personal ones have been damaged.
- Access to counseling, spiritual health after the traumatic experience of the natural disaster/emergency.
- Family reunification- how to find family that has been separated?
- Many agencies require original documentation (no copies accepted) before they will provide assistance; what happens if original documents get lost or damaged?
- More education for seniors to learn how to use technology, computers, internet, smart phones so they are able to access more information.

IV. Additional Information/Comments

- For those who live on the outskirts of San Antonio would like additional evacuation routes and signage to show where the routes are.
- The participants of the meeting would like City staff to present to the center more often and bring information about how to be prepared for emergencies.

V. Next Meeting

- The next community meeting will be held on Saturday, March 17, 2018 at the Central Library, 600 Soledad.