



City of San Antonio  
Developing an Emergency Plan for People with Disabilities  
Thursday, March 8, 2018

The seventh community meeting was held at the McCreless Library, 1023 Ada St.

- I. Introductions: Deborah Scharven, Accessibility Compliance Manager facilitated meeting. City staff included Olivia Gaitan, Abraham Robles (available for Spanish translations) from the Disability Access Office and Leigh Middleton and Samantha Haynes from the Office of Emergency Management. Rachel Cywinski from the City's Disability Access Advisory Committee was present. ASL Interpreters were provided by Vital Signs. There were a total of nine (9) 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.

- Questions arose about technology and loss of power- how will you get notifications/alerts/information on smartphones or computers if electricity is out?
- Citizens should have numerous ways to get notifications, neighbors, weather alerts from the National Weather Service, emails, Alert SA, etc.
- Those in the Deaf community have historically felt that they are not given the same services as other people with disabilities. These individuals feel they have to provide advocacy for themselves, would like to be more included. Much of this could be addressed with a system of alerts that will provide important information in ASL in real time.
- Those who are Deaf may have difficulty communicating with the City's Customer Service line, 311. The City has currently released a Request for Proposal (RFP) looking for companies who can provide accessible communication features.
- Concerning the homeless population, those who are staying at Haven for Hope will be notified of all alerts; evacuation or sheltering in place. Those who are not at the facility may not receive any notifications/information.

## 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.
- Because it is not common for first responders to know ASL, they could possibly have a premade video on their smart phone/iPad in ASL that explains they are a first responder, you need to evacuate/shelter in place, etc. Printed cards with visuals may help with communications, for people who are Deaf and with Intellectual Disabilities.
- 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.
- 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.

- Identifying community and personalized needs; utilizing agencies that have lists of citizens with disabilities to identify areas of needs.
- How to build networks with neighbors to help each other during emergencies- can the city assist with bringing people together?

### 3. Shelters

- Shelters should have refrigeration areas for medicines, pharmacists available to help people obtain needed medication.
- 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.
- 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?
- Help finding new living arrangements, access to home repair, relocating elderly family members, gaining power of attorney.
- Access to counseling, spiritual health after the traumatic experience of the natural disaster/emergency.
- Assistance with automated calls to pay bills, those who are Deaf are not able to use these types of systems.
- City will provide interpreters when individuals are working with city programs, once individuals leave a shelter, the agency/organization that are assisting would provide the interpreter, not the city.

## IV. Questions/ Additional Information/Comments

- No Barriers Communication (NOBACOMM) can help people who are Deaf advocate for interpreters when they are not being

provided. The group helps to educate the public on the rights of people who are Deaf.

- Caregivers need access to information, where to find resources for the individuals they care for, how to connect to these resources.

V. Next Meeting

- The next community meeting will be held on Saturday, March 10 at the Hardberger Urban Ecology Center, 8400 NW Military Hwy.

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