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S.O.P. # : TACTICAL OPERATIONS MANUAL #25

SUBJECT: Emergency Sheltering (formerly DRU)

DIVISION: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

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Objective: To outline the duties and responsibilities of the Sheltering Unit within the incident command system (ICS).

Section 1: Purpose

- A. The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures for the Baltimore County Fire Department (BCoFD) to assist in supporting the Baltimore County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) evacuation and emergency sheltering operations.
  
- B. The Shelter unit leader coordinates the efforts of the Fire Department in transitioning the care of displaced residents to the American Red Cross (ARC), Health and Human Services, and other entities in accordance to the emergency operations plan.

Section 2: Definitions

- A. Fires and other isolated incidents often result in residents being displaced from their homes for both short and long term durations. These incidents may involve a single family or a large number of families, depending on the type of incident. Large disasters may be beyond the scope of this SOP and should follow the guidance provided in the Baltimore County Emergency Operations Plan Annex for Mass Care.
  
- B. Shelter - A place of refuge that provides life-sustaining services in a congregate or non-congregate setting for individuals who have been displaced by an emergency or disaster.
  
- C. A displaced resident - a person who cannot access their residence or place of shelter, regardless of their ability to independently locate alternative housing.
  
- D. Access and Functional Needs – Individuals who need assistance due to any condition (temporary or permanent) that limits their ability to act. To have access and functional needs does not require that the individual have any kind of diagnosis or specific evaluation.
  
- E. Mass Care - The actions that are taken to protect evacuees and other disaster victims from the effects of the disaster. Activities include providing temporary shelter, food, medical care, clothing, and other essential life support needs to those people that have been displaced from their residence because of a disaster or threatened disaster.
  
- F. Shelter In Place – Advising people to stay secured inside their current location. Only used if the safety of the citizens can be assured if they remain or if evacuation will cause a higher potential for loss of life.

Section 3: Response

A. The Incident Commander (IC) or Unified Command (UC) shall establish a Sheltering unit as necessary. The Sheltering unit leader shall report to the Operations Section Chief (OSC), or the IC/UC if the incident does not have an OSC.

Section 4: Shelter Unit Leader responsibilities

A. Assess incident scope and complexity

1. Determine the number of displaced residents.
2. Consult the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) via ADO immediately if the nature or size of the incident, number of displaced residents, or special needs of displaced residents indicate the potential for a complex, multi-agency sheltering response.

B. Request American Red Cross (ARC) response whenever residents are displaced – even if only temporarily – due to damage to their residence from fires or any other causes. The ARC can provide non-sheltering assistance even when families are able to return to their residences. The ARC normally responds to an incident within two hours.

1. To request ARC response, contact the ADO via phone or on the ADO talk group with the following information:
  - Location of the incident
  - Initial estimate of number of displaced residents
  - Location of designated assembly area
  - Name of DRU leader

2. ADO shall ensure HSEM notification.

C. Designate a safe refuge area for displaced residents and evacuees.

1. This may be a temporary area that can be used for spontaneous, no-notice, evacuations before an official evacuation center can be established if needed.
2. Suggested locations: rental office or community room of an established apartment complex (With cooperation from property management representatives), a neighbor's home, or any other suitable location indoors. The on-call HSEM member is available to assist in locating an area of safe refuge if necessary.
3. When possible, the established location should have a sitting area, rest rooms, and phones.
4. Make the location of the safe refuge area known to the OSC or the IC/UC if the incident does not have an OSC.
  - Personnel should canvas the incident area to identify displaced residents and direct them to the assembly area.
  - Attempt to identify residents who may have been displaced by the incident but are not currently at the location.
  - For apartment complexes and rental units, work with the property management company to obtain contact information.

5. Consider any medical needs the displaced members may have and request EMS assistance if needed.
- D. Document the following on the Displaced Resident Unit worksheet, form 505.
- Contact name for each unit
  - Mobile phone number
  - Family size
  - Ages of children
  - Addresses
  - Functional needs support services (FNSS)
  - Pets
1. All residents who are displaced, whether or not they are present during the event or in need of shelter or support services, should be recorded on the DRU form, form 505.
  2. At the conclusion of the incident, the form 505 is to be emailed to the on call HSEM team member.
- E. Relocation of Displaced Residents – The BCoFD provides support to the ARC and HHS in evacuations and relocations. The following options may be available for relocating residents. Do NOT wait until the arrival of Red Cross personnel to initiate this process.
1. Self - relocation of displaced residents
    - Encourage residents unable to return to their residences to self-relocate with friends or family.
    - Identify residents with renters or homeowners insurance and have them contact their insurance company for possible alternative housing and support services.
    - Identify residents unable to self-relocate independently for referral to Red Cross.
  2. Property Management Companies
    - Companies managing apartment complexes occasionally make vacant residential units available to displaced residents, or provide hotel accommodations. Discuss these options with a property management representative when possible.
  3. American Red Cross (ARC)
    - Provide a situational awareness report to ARC representatives immediately upon their arrival. This should be accomplished in private or away from civilians and residents.
    - Provide ARC representatives with a copy of the DRU form 505. Keep copies and provide them to the IC.
    - Introduce ARC personnel to apartment management representatives if any are on location.
    - Consult the on-call Emergency Management staff person if the ARC requests that Baltimore County establish an emergency shelter facility to shelter residents.
  4. Evacuations occurring in a hazardous environment will be led by the BCoFD and coordinated with the DHHS.
- F. Retrieval of personal items from affected units.
- Residents often will ask to retrieve medicines, important documents, or other important personal items from their residences.
- Instruct residents not to re-enter residential units unless advised to do so by the IC/UC.

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- Accommodate requests using fire department personnel as escorts when practical and safe and in consultation with the IC/UC.
- Utilize police to ensure individuals are residents/owners.

G. Demobilization of Shelter Unit

1. Terminate Shelter operations when:

- All displaced residents have been relocated and no further immediate assistance is necessary, or
- ARC personnel are on scene and have assumed full responsibility for providing services for displaced residents and have advised the DRU unit leader that no further assistance is required.
- The IC/UC will determine if assisting agencies have any unmet needs and assign resources to provide support as available

2. At the conclusion of the incident, the form 505 shall be emailed to the on call HSEM team member.

HSEM is always available to assist in any incident or answer questions regarding evacuations and/or sheltering. They can be reached by contacting the ADO.