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Emergency Preparedness in the City of Laramie and Albany County, Wyoming A report by the League of Women Voters of Laramie, Wyoming

Members of the League of Women Voters of Laramie gathered information for this report from January –July of 2007. The respondents and the date on which they were contacted is Appendix A. The goal of the report is to learn what is being done regarding emergency preparedness in our area, and what issues civic and governmental leaders place as highest priority in planning for the post-9/11 and post-Katrina world.

Background

There is evidence from recent US disasters that natural events, accidents or terrorist acts are capable of causing large numbers of casualties that quickly overwhelm the ability of official first responders to assist. The LWV's investigation was especially focused on the role of city, county, state and federal governments in reacting to large-scale disasters in Albany County. Private corporations and agencies can be victims of emergencies, but they may also be able to assist first responders through fleets of vehicles, communication equipment and the like. Therefore we have spoken with a sampling of these agencies in compiling this report.

History

Early emergencies in Laramie tended to blizzards, fires or contagious diseases such as the blizzards of the winter of 1886 -1887 in Laramie, the 1918 pandemic flu and the Johnson Hotel fire in 1955. By 1945, some non-flu diseases had either become treatable with new drugs or had been eradicated through vaccines. Attention turned to the dangers of nuclear attack. In 1955 there was an "Emergency Welfare Director" for Albany County, Miss E. Bernice Brown. An article in the Laramie Republican and Boomerang on May 12, 1955 contains a form for residents to fill out for her to keep on file indicating the number of people that could be housed and/or fed in area homes, should an evacuation of Denver be necessary. "Laramie's share of Denver's evacuated population would number 20,000 in the event that Denver were bombed", Miss Brown was quoted as saying.

However, Laramie itself had a citywide emergency in 1955, when the main gas line serving Laramie broke. It was around 12 degrees on January 23, 1955 when the rupture north of town was discovered. The University of Wyoming (UW) had then, as it still does, another heating system; the University opened the Union and the College of Agriculture buildings to city residents. A woman north of town who had propane heat invited parents to bring children with mumps to her house as she had one youngster with the contagious disease already. "12 mumps patients accepted her invitation", the paper reported the next day. The Red Cross and Reserve Officer Training Corp (ROTC) cadets at UW and the Wyoming National Guard set up a food kitchen in the ROTC armory at the UW Half-acre gym. Though the break was fixed within 12 hours, all gas meters had

to be manually turned off so there would be no danger of explosions before gas could be turned back on. A similar emergency occurred again in September of 2000 when 10,000 customers were without gas service, some for up to three days. Consequences were not so severe this time because the weather was not as severe.

A rough compilation of about 90 disasters in and around Albany County from 1948 through 2000 was made for a county committee planning emergency preparedness policies and procedures. The Albany County Public Library coordinated the development of this compilation. The list includes one avalanche, eight blizzards, four civic disturbances, two building collapses, seven derailments, one quarantine of the UW campus (rubella outbreak in 1985), three earthquakes, two explosions, 36 fires, seven floods, one gas service interruption (in 2000), five plane crashes, five hazardous spills, three tornadoes and one high wind episode. Through these events, there were 101 deaths recorded, including 66 in one plane crash in 1955 of a United Airlines plane on Medicine Bow peak (actually in Carbon County). From 2000 to June of 2002 there were 29 other disasters added to the list, including seven wildfires of either forest or prairie around Laramie.

For over a decade, the Laramie Chamber of Commerce Director was also the part-time Civil Defense (CD) Coordinator for Albany County. It was mainly a planning and coordination service with written plans for various types of emergencies. Emergency rations (mainly left-over Korean War MRE's), water, and radiation detection devices were stored in bomb shelter locations at UW and the Courthouse basement. The Civil Defense funding has ended, with responsibilities taken over now by the County Emergency Response Coordinator who also serves as Laramie Fire Chief.

Public Heath officials worldwide continue to make plans for the best means of protecting communities from pandemic diseases. While Laramie has been relatively unaffected, officials know that when it comes to planning for pandemic outbreaks, it is not a matter of "if" an outbreak occurs in the future, but rather "when" it happens, that they will need to be prepared. There were three pandemics in the eighteenth century, four in the nineteenth, and three more in the twemtieth century. Another outbreak in 1997 was narrowly averted when public health officials worldwide converged on Hong Kong and developed successful strategies to contain an epidemic of bird flu that involved the slaughter of all poultry there before it became a pandemic. Some scientists have likened influenza to a terrorist – single-minded, traveling light, always switching disguises – and it is taken seriously enough to have inspired worldwide surveillance.

Industrial accidents can also have huge consequences for the public. Wyoming's energy industry deals with commodities that burn and can explode under the right conditions. Wyoming had an office of Emergency Management (WEMA) for many years, which was directed at planning, safeguarding workers and the public, and preventing industrial accidents that might occur at oil wellheads and pipelines in the state. The Wyoming Legislature changed the functions of that agency in 2005, however, when WEMA ceased to exist and their functions (and staff in some cases) were incorporated into the new Wyoming Office of Homeland Security.

Over time, as the Federal Government has gotten more involved in emergency management, local planning has been encouraged nationwide in order that local leadership and structure is in place before the disaster happens. Funding for these efforts has come through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the newer, over-arching Department of Homeland Security (HS) and a number of other federal agencies, not to mention local governments themselves. In addition to funding planning efforts and some equipment needs, federal departments provide some response and recovery assistance following a disaster, once the state declares that an emergency exists. Most citizens focus on the latter function, not realizing that most of the immediate responses will come from residents themselves and the "first responders" who are already in their communities. "FEMA deals with State, State deals with locals and FEMA carefully observes that protocol," says a report from Campbell County official Dave King of Wright, Wyoming, a community devastated by a tornado on August 12, 2005.

Emergency Planning Today

Planning responses to emergencies has four aspects: prevention, first-responders, second responders with treatment strategies, and recovery operations. There are three types of emergencies based on what triggers them 1) terrorism, 2) man-made accidents, or 3) natural disasters. Plans tend to be specific for the type of incident, regardless of what caused the event. For instance, a hazardous material spill will be treated the same way regardless of whether it was an accident or intentional act. In the case of terrorism, prevention efforts are mainly the responsibility of the federal and state governments, though local communities are encouraged through grants available from HS, to provide increased security for sensitive targets like water treatment plants, a precaution that the City of Laramie has taken. Prevention plans are generally not part of local emergency response strategies, with the exception of Public Health, which has had much experience in preventing outbreaks of infectious diseases through vaccinations. Nationwide they are credited with lessening the impact of what might have been far more serious disasters.

In Albany County, various governmental and private agencies have plans that focus on first responders, second responders, or on recovery operations, depending on the main function of the agency. For instance, first responders are from the Fire and Police Departments and Public Health. They will be first on the scene, if the disaster isn't so widespread that they cannot be everywhere at once. They will determine whether an evacuation is needed or other drastic actions involving the public. If so, plans for second responders actions will go into effect for all affected agencies to assist, such as opening an emergency shelter, and private agencies, principally the Red Cross, will assist with operation and funding the shelter and help coordinate the recovery phase. The LWV has examined emergency plans for a number of agencies in Albany County and can say, in general, that plans are well-designed and coordinated among first and second responders. Agency heads understand the value of training exercises, though their frequency varies among agencies. A significant finding of our study is that all first responders are talking to each other; they include people from other agencies as response plans are developed, and clear lines of authority are established. A question remains as to whether all

employees of an agency, or the general public, are aware of what the plans are and who will be in charge. Two weaknesses of these plans are: 1) they are not generally available to the public, and 2) they do not include much planning for the recovery phase except for Red Cross involvement..

The most transparent of emergency plans in Albany County is the one issued in 2004 by UW. This 27-page document is available in PDF form on the web page of the Risk Management Unit at UW. It outlines what employees and students of UW should do in the event of a variety of types of emergencies from riots to chemical explosions. The chain of command, headed by the Vice President for Administration, is designed to implement the plan, coordinate responses, and determine when buildings can be occupied again. Other local agencies have plans that encompass an equally wide variety of possible scenarios. Ivinson Memorial Hospital's Emergency Plan is available to the public in the director's office, though parts of it are not disclosed for security reasons. It is not on the hospital's web site.

The American Red Cross (Red Cross), through their local branch office, has an array of publications for the public on emergency preparedness topics and information about their organizational goals on their national web site. A Disaster Action Team (DAT) manual is being developed for Wyoming Red Cross in summer, 2007. It will have chapters for each county. The Wyoming chapter does not have a web site and there are no plans to make this manual available to the public except in the branch manager's office. The branch manager says that the Homeless Plan, which is part of the Albany County plan, has been completed. Other parts of the city/county plan are expected to be available soon. The local DAT team includes representatives of other first and second responder agencies such as the Laramie Fire Department, and Interfaith-Good Samaritan, who have helped to prepare it. At the national Red Cross level, there are plans for local responses to specific types of emergencies, with differering plans depending on the type of disaster, ranging from forest fires to hazardous material spills.

First and Second Responders

Those who respond to local 911 calls and emergency situations are professionals trained in techniques depending on the situation they observe and the developing changes on site. They tend to be police, fire and highway patrol officers. They secure the site, put out fires, do search and rescue, assess the need for additional personnel and equipment reinforcements, and document their actions. Second responders are those who come on the scene hours or days later, or they are the places, such as hospitals, where victims are treated. Second responders may be from the state or federal governments (including the military), or they may be private contractors hired to do clean-up operations. An issue of who will pay for the secondary responders is paramount – there are clear chains of command that may require emergency declarations by the Governor and then by the President, in order for them to be activated and payment authorized.

Overall emergency responses in Albany County are coordinated through the Laramie Fire Department, and their lead person with the title of "Emergency Response Coordinator".

That person is responsible for planning within Region 3 of Wyoming, an area which includes all of Albany County and parts of Carbon County including the communities of Laramie, Rock River, Centennial, Albany, Rock Springs, Baggs, Dixon, Elk Mountain, Medicine Bow, Riverside, Hanna, Saratoga, Encampment, Savery and Sinclair. The area encompasses about 10,000 square miles, with a population of 40,000.

The emergency planning process is mandated, with input from the federal level to the state level directing how communities plan for emergencies and utilize equipment. If Region 3 planners don't meet their deadlines they are not eligible for grant funding. An emergency plan has been written with participation of all local, state and federal agencies that would have jurisdiction should an emergency of any type occur. The types of emergencies covered in the plan range from biologic such as a pandemic flu outbreak, to aquifer and water supply contamination. Catastrophic forest and prairie fires, pipeline ruptures, toxic railroad or highway spills, snow emergencies, floods, road closures and other events are each covered with a specific plan. Hostile or terrorist activities are part of the plan's response protocol. An incident command structure is utilized that addresses how agencies will work together. Once a particular type of emergency is noted, the plan is activated and individual and agency responsibilities assigned.

The Emergency Operation Plan (EOP) is a two-volume manual that delineates all aspects of emergency responses in the two-county area. Every state, federal and local agency that is part of the plan has the manual, and it is revised as changes are published in the national response plan that HS and other agencies periodically issue. The City of Laramie has the plan in electronic format and can forward relevant parts as PDF files to any other agency that needs it in an emergency, and to the general public as well. The plan has many sub-categories, with a different plan and guidelines for each type of emergency; for example, a 2004 Hazard Mitigation Plan is available as a PDF file download from the Fire Department's section on the City of Laramie's website. The plan is not kept secret, though there are details, such as what to do in the case of an emergency involving the transport of radioactive materials, that are highly classified and not released to the public. (Local law enforcement does know when those shipments are coming, however).

The plan was written with guidance from HS and its Wyoming Office (WyoHS). The plan was written locally, utilizing a committee of representatives from all cities and towns in Region 3, the Union Pacific railroad, Wyoming Department of Transportation, pipeline operators, utility companies, plus federal and state agencies. The Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) is composed of Region 3 residents who have expertise and training in dealing with all types of emergencies. It is a fluid planning committee that writes the plans and designs the training exercises. Its chair is elected. Chair in 2007 is the Albany County Sheriff. The LEPC meets yearly with the utility companies, and these private companies share their plans with emergency personnel.

Another section of the emergency plan covers all medical emergencies. The medical section addresses responsibilities, stockpiling of medicines and medical supplies, interagency coordination and sharing of resources, general planning, and treatment plans for

any disaster with medical consequences. This section was written by the Community Medical Coordination Committee (CMCC), which has representatives from the hospital, nursing home, County Health Director, UW, Peak Wellness Center, County Coroner, and a pharmacy representative, among others. Chief organizer/facilitator for the CMCC is a Public Health Nurse with the Albany County Public Health Office. Although the medical plan has been published in the EOP, sections of it are constantly being revised as new information comes along. The CMCC continues to meet monthly to share and coordinate information. They are involved with the "tabletop" and simulated field emergency training that is carried out periodically.

In addition to the Emergency Operation Plan, other agencies have been undertaking projects that will assist the community in times of emergency. For example, the County Planning Department has been developing a rural signage plan which will have all county and private roads in the county named, marked with road signs, and all residences will have posted address numbers for ease of directions in the case emergency personnel need to reach them. The system has not been installed as of summer 2007, but sign-making equipment has been purchased by the County Planning Office, a standardized system has been agreed upon, using the system of numbering that the City of Laramie uses, with the railroad tracks and University Avenues as the dividing lines. Emergency personnel will be able to tell from addresses how far the location they are headed to is north or south of University Ave., and how far east or west of the UPRR tracks.

At the direction of the County Commissioners, the Planning Office is assigning road names that are in common usage wherever possible. The project is grant-funded and has been underway for two years with signs due to be installed by the end of summer, 2008. The Planning Office has identified 1,216 named roads in Albany County, not counting the 5,000 Forest Service roads, but estimates that there are 600 additional private roads that need to be named and marked. The right of the county to establish names and erect signs on private roads is in dispute, though since this is a problem that all counties in Wyoming have experienced, the Planning Office expects that a solution will be found soon. Road signs will be horizontal green and white signs much like those used in most of Laramie. Maintaining them will be the responsibility of the County.

Leadership

Leadership in the event of an emergency depends upon the type of incident. The chain of command for the city and county first responders is spelled out in the EOP. For most types of emergencies, the lead individual would be the Emergency Response Coordinator. In the event of a medical emergency such as a pandemic, the County Health Director would be the lead person to order schools to be shut down and other medical emergency plans to go into effect. The County Health Director would immediately inform the Director of the Wyoming Department of Health and Social Services, and the Emergency Response Coordinator would notify the Director of WyoHS when major emergency situations exist in Albany County. The latter protocol was followed in February of 2007 when the Emergency Response Coordinator decided that an emergency snow removal situation existed within the town of Rock River, in Albany

County. He contacted WyoHS, which contacted the governor, who, in turn, got a presidential declaration of an emergency. As a result, the Wyoming National Guard was called out to clear Rock River streets of snowdrifts. All of this happened within a four-hour period, demonstrating that the system can work quickly.

Leadership for the treatment and recovery phases of emergency planning is less clear-cut. Certainly for medical emergencies, Albany County Public Health and the County Health Officer would be in charge of treatment strategies, in conjunction with the various health care agencies such as Ivinson Memorial Hospital and Community Care Center. These medical treatment responses are spelled out in the plans of the various agencies. When nearly the entire town is sick, as might be the case with a pandemic flu outbreak, the plan does address priorities and chain of command. The CMCC anticipates that Albany County's standard medical treatment resources would be quickly overwhelmed and addresses alternatives. Flu vaccines must be created annually, as they have a short shelf life and there are so many strains that it is important that this year's vaccine treat this year's most likely pathogen. Therefore, stockpiling vaccines is not possible, but all agencies have a plan in place in which health workers are given the vaccine first, then the most vulnerable, children and adults, and eventually, the general population

Leadership for recovery plans after a disaster has occurred is a complicated issue that has not been addressed adequately. Assumptions are that existing service agencies and businesses such as insurance, banking, mental and physical health care would be functioning and would take over in assisting individuals and families. In previous US disasters, however, families have learned that they do not have access to their cash savings, insurance claims are slow to be filed and adjusted, and some services are so overwhelmed that weeks if not months of waiting is required. Experience has shown that relying on the Federal government through FEMA is not going to be a good early recovery strategy, though they are a ready source for temporary housing, potable water and other basic necessities once a federal disaster emergency is declared and they have had time to bring their equipment to the site. It is at the recovery stage where leadership is sorely needed, but where that leadership will come from is not clearly spelled out. Early stage recovery will mainly fall to the Red Cross, which is set up in Albany County to operate shelters, provide client assistance cards (credit cards with a fixed limit issued to tide families over when there is a lack of access to funds), and to handle disaster welfare inquiries. Handling these inquiries is an immediate need as friends and relatives call to check on the welfare of loved ones within a disaster area.

Training and Exercises

Training is done for those agencies covered by the EOP through yearly full-scale field exercises and tabletop exercises (hypothetical scenarios) that are done more frequently. The yearly interagency exercises involve personnel from both Albany and Carbon Counties. A subcommittee of local responders prepares the exercises, many of which involve changing the scenario during the exercise so that participants don't have advance notice regarding the type of emergencies they will be dealing with. Personnel who write the exercises and do the training are given those responsibilities along with all their

former duties, no new staff has been hired; it is a matter of each person doing more. National Incident Management System (NIMS) guidelines are used as the framework for the training. Cross training is easy using the NIMS procedures, so cross-training is routine. Those guidelines also describe what other agencies need to be contacted. NIMS guidelines are available on-line at the City of Laramie's website under the Fire Department's Emergency Management heading.

Each agency involved is responsible for paying for the training of its own members; providing release time for them to attend meetings and training exercises. There is some minor grant support from time to time. It is more difficult to fund volunteers who choose to participate in the training exercises though they are welcome, said the Emergency Response Coordinator. This may explain why the Red Cross has done no full-scale disaster training in Albany County since 1998, according to the Branch Manager. However, the Red Cross is constantly involved in training professionals and citizens in emergency first aid, pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and other topics through regularly offered courses.

In cooperation with the first responders of Albany County, the school district conducts exercises every eighteen months that test the ability of the other agencies as well as the schools to adequately handle incidents. "The last one was an exercise at Whiting High School where there was a simulated chemical laboratory explosion," says Mike Bowman, who directs emergency planning for ACSD No.1. "We had casualties and all kinds of outside agency response to that exercise, which was a great success. We have tabletop exercises in the schools also, and personnel are trained to know our policies and how to respond to emergencies," says Bowman. "Policies cover everything from a lockdown situation to evacuations, and we think we are doing a good job of testing our plans."

Experience with emergencies nationwide has indicated that the first people on the scene of a disaster are probably going to be neighborhood residents or colleagues at places of employment. When there is a community-wide emergency, first responders cannot be everywhere at the same time. Therefore, in the 1980's, the Los Angeles Fire Department began a training program for neighborhood volunteers, mainly to respond to earthquake disasters. Since then, this program has become national, under the designation Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), which was brought to Albany County through the efforts of ourSheriff. The Sheriff was able to get funding for the county program from FEMA. CERT-trained individuals take charge of their immediate family and then their neighborhoods until the official first responders are able to appear on the scene. They are instructed to document what they do, organize volunteers, do light search and rescue and prioritize victims for treatment. Though it is not a first-aid course, CERT-trained individuals are instructed on three critical first-aid treatments that can be done to save lives before professionals arrive: 1) relieving obstructed airways, 2) stopping serious bleeding and 3) treating cases of shock. Albany County's CERT program is unique in that it is organized and directed by volunteers. The Albany County Director of CERT is with the Search and Rescue team, (an active volunteer group that works with the Albany County Sheriff's Department).

In any incident, some first responder personnel would be assigned to security work to keep the public away from danger and to secure the scene for other first responders. The particular team who would do that would vary depending on the type of emergency but all first responders should be aware through their training of what their role would be.

Safety of emergency personnel and their families is addressed in the EOP. Region 3 has exchange agreements with the City of Ft. Collins (Colorado), and Cheyenne, Wyoming that they would provide additional assistance to each other should it become necessary. There is no agreement about having this interagency cooperation should it be necessary to assure the welfare of the immediate families of first-responders, however. In fact, it is not legal for Wyoming departments to engage in that type of contract. This is an issue as a result of the experience in New Orleans, where police and fire departments were reduced greatly in force because officers needed to take care of their own families and rescue themselves let alone do their jobs for the city.

There is an Emergency Response guide with every law enforcement or first responder vehicle that translates what the hazard markings on all truck trailers mean. Those markings are required on all four sides of the vehicle so that even if part of the vehicle were smashed, somewhere the hazard condition can be noted. The regulations are rigid with regard to those that should not be approached until certain conditions are met; USDOT and WYDOT have tried to set good standards. A concern, however, is that they apply only to the highways. Wellheads and mines are exempt but the same materials may be involved in emergencies there.

Funding

Funding emergency management plans has become a priority for a number of federal agencies and the Wyoming Legislature. Most of the funding for upgrades in WYDOT's upgrades and increased capabilities has come from the legislature. Albany County officials have used money from the Wyoming State Land and Investment Board, The Department of Energy, FEMA, the Forest Service as well Homeland Security. Albany County generally avoids matching grants because they do not have funds available for the match. "Emergency planning is very typically under-funded in city and county budgets", stated the Emergency Response Coordinator.

The on-going rural signage program was funded by an \$184,000 grant in 2005 to the Albany County Planning Department from the State Land and Investment Board. The County maintains a G.I.S. office which serves all county offices including the Assessor's Office and Planning Department. This computerized mapping service can assist in locating rural residences, pipelines and other possible sites of hazards. That office is primarily funded by the Albany County general budget as determined by the County Commissioners.

The Wyoming Governor has a \$500,000 fund that can be used for emergency assistance when needed for disasters. That will be the source of funds should hay drops be required in the region for stranded cattle and horses, but it can also be the source for other

emergency needs like evacuations. The governor must first declare a state of emergency to make those funds available.

Emergency Equipment

Since 9/11 the City of Laramie has spent \$5 million on emergency equipment. Most of that went for radios that are at the "Project 25" (P25) industry standard. That means that regardless of the manufacturer, they are all compatible and they can link to other similarly equipped agencies and to the state government without using the equipment of a private utility company. P25 standards were developed by a group of telecommunication organizations to achieve cost-effective emergency/safety communications solutions.

The City also purchased a Sno-Cat replacement for search and rescue work, and has provided hazardous materials kits for all law enforcement vehicles and ambulances in the county. Fencing was purchased for the city water plant. Portable transmitters that can be brought by trailer to emergency command posts have been purchased for city and county incident command to use. The non-governmental groups still need that kind of portable equipment, which is expensive. The Dispatch Center in Laramie is one of three locations in the county that can dispatch to everyone who needs to be contacted, yet it still needs to have its equipment upgraded to P25 compatibility. This is a top priority for future spending.

A priority need for the CMCC (medical component) was a refrigerator for vaccines. This was purchased through grant funding to Albany County Public Health, and is located at the Ivinson Memorial Hospital, where backup generator capability is available.

Communications and Outreach

Most people the LWV interviewed said that communication and outreach is a great concern to them. In particular, the ability of first responders from different agencies to be able to talk to each other is critical and has been hampered because each was on a different communication system. This has been a nationwide problem and the radio communication industry has responded with the "P25" standards for radios that are capable of communicating in many different ways. Though the City of Laramie Police and Fire Departments have these radios, they are very expensive (over \$1,000 each), and to be effective, every first responder vehicle should have one. WYDOT has equipped some of their maintenance vehicles with P25 radios and intend to extend coverage statewide as budgets allow; now snowplow operators will be able to talk to all other agencies that are so equipped. There is a new statewide communication system called WYO-LINK that WYDOT is migrating to which is P25 compatible, and they expect that all parts of District 1, which includes Albany County, will be on that system by the end of 2007. The Highway Patrol is still using their older system, though they can communicate digitally with personnel on WYO-LINK systems with a temporary link that has been established and they still have mutual aid capabilities with other law enforcement agencies. A new dispatch center would be required for the Highway Patrol to be capable of being upgraded to voice communications on the new WYO-LINK system.

Outreach to citizens is needed to convince them of the need for personal planning for emergencies and to inform them of what to do in the event of an actual emergency. For immediate notification, in Albany County there are plans including cable interruption on TV, radio broadcasts, mass e-mailings, and sirens. New sirens have been installed in Laramie and Rock River. The power for these sirens is redundant and it is a radio signal that activates them out of central dispatch so they should be able to function even with a power failure, as they only need a small amount of power. They are tested once a month. Although no area in Region 3 has a reverse 911 system, emergency response personnel believe it would be useful in a hazardous plume area. Reverse 911 would allow the Fire Department to dial many businesses or residences within a certain boundary simultaneously and have them hear the same emergency message. Hard-line (standard telephone) contact is the only capability now for reverse 911, but vendors that provide this type of system are working on wireless as well as voice-over IP capabilities which would allow voice communication over the internet.

A statewide plan for the Emergency Alert System (EAS), which is the new designation for the old Emergency Broadcast System, was adopted in 2002. The plan, which is available online (see bibliography) outlines agreements between local, Wyoming, and federal emergency coordinators on how decisions will be made about emergency broadcast interruptions of regular programming and specifies who has authority to do so. With the exception of "Amber" alerts about missing children, which are issued by the Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation, all emergency announcements originate either with the National Weather Service, the Wyoming Governor, the WyoHS, or local public safety officials. WyoHS would probably telephone the national Weather. Broadcasters who chose to be part of the network (like KUWR in Laramie) monitor a national broadcast line that is dedicated to that use only. They also monitor the National Weather Service broadcast channel, and are hooked in to a Wyoming emergency broadcast system. All these lines are tested weekly and monthly. In the case of an emergency alert, broadcasters who are not part of the emergency notification system must leave the airways.

KUWR Radio, FM 91.9 at the University of Wyoming has been designated as the emergency alert station in Albany County. Each county in Wyoming has a similar "Local Primary Alert" (LP1) station. If there was a power failure, KUWR has backup power for 2-3 days at both its studio at Knight Hall on the UW campus, and at the transmittal tower on Pole Mountain. A concern is that the transmission tower would run out of propane if the power emergency were more than a few days, and the site is inaccessible in bad weather except with specialized equipment they would have to borrow. The LEPC is working with them on setting up a second studio and transmission site in Laramie in the event that their primary sites go down. KUWR has an emergency plan that would involve keeping essential personnel (engineer and on-air broadcaster) on site even if there were an evacuation ordered or to go to a backup location for transmission. Testing of the EAS is done weekly on air, with a test of the state/national system received monthly but not necessarily broadcast.

The Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) District 1 office in Laramie has an email address list of over 150 agencies, school districts, media and private organizations like AAA which they utilize on a routine basis to immediately notify those who use the highways of emergency situations like road closures. WYDOT also maintains a web site for highway information, which contains real-time photos of current road conditions in critical locations. Citizens can call "511" from any phone or "888 WYO ROAD" for updates on road conditions.

Both radio station personnel and the Emergency Response Coordinator are supportive of a plan to put National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) VHF radios in every home and workplace. These radios broadcast on dedicated frequencies, and relay information from local National Weather Service Offices plus emergency information that is given to them by local emergency coordinators. A concern is authentication of those calling in with emergency notices — a system is needed to verify that the person giving the announcement is authorized to do so and that it is a bona fide emergency.

Channel 11 on cable TV is available, but if the city offices have to be shut down, the person who puts notices on Channel 11 would not be available, and if the power were off, the cable TV would not be useful either. In the event of a 2-3 day period where the electricity was off, there would be major problems with communications in Region 3. There is general agreement that battery-operated radios would be the most helpful in an emergency based on currently available technology and general widespread use in Albany County.

The plan does call for using the cable interrupt system to direct people to what they need to tune to for information for information about the emergency (usually weather). Bresnan Cable Television also broadcasts an EAS test weekly and airs local Amber alerts as needed. However, this approach would only reach those who happened to be tuned into TV, and would not be effective at times of day when few people are tuned in.

There are no plans to put into place a 311 call system like Denver currently has. This option is a way for folks to get a pre-recorded message and allows them to call in with questions or report non-emergencies. For a community the size of ours, this is not cost-effective, and most people can get through to an individual in the City Hall or Courthouse anytime they need to talk to someone, as stated by emergency personnel interviewed.

Public Utilities

Gas and electric lines can be targets for terrorists, human activity can cause ruptures and downed lines, and storms can put both distribution systems under stress. Therefore the emergency planners pay close attention to where these distribution lines are and what the plans are of each service company when there are emergencies. The natural gas company for Laramie (Sourcegas) participates in the county emergency planning process under the leadership of LERC, so their information is shared with all first responders. The company

priority is to protect their workers first, the public second, and their equipment third. There are detailed maps of the gas distribution lines and the area shut-off sites; the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for Albany County has copies, along with the company emergency plans. Everyone who works for the gas company has copies of these distribution maps. These employees are trained for emergencies and are expected to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week if needed. Information for the general public is included with bills, explaining how individuals can shut down their own household gas line. Company spokespersons also are available for public education programs on this topic.

The electric company serving most of Laramie is Rocky Mountain Power, (a part of PacifiCorp) which is owned by MidAmerican Energy Holdings Company, headquartered in Des Moines, Iowa. Since this is such a large electrical utility, they have the ability inhouse to send crews across country (say from Portland to DeMoines), should a need exist. In the event of an even wider emergency, they do have mutual assistance reciprocal agreements with other electric utility companies to send emergency response crews. This is done through the Western Energy Institute, consisting of about 30 companies in Canada and many western US communities. Rocky Mountain Power routinely puts crews on alert in the event that storms are forecast, putting more people on standby than on a typical shift. Crews undergo training for normal jobs and for emergencies. Seasonal considerations affect the company's planning, however they recognize that outages in both winter and summer can cause household and commercial customers rapid distress. The corporate radio system allows all service trucks to communicate truck to truck and to a central company dispatch in Portland, Oregon, using the company's in-house radio communication system, not P-25 radios. In the event of a county emergency, 911 dispatch from Albany County can reach central dispatch in Portland, which would then send the crew closest to the problem area. There is a local service center in Laramie, and a local operations manager who is responsible for the Laramie-based crews. First responders in Laramie know how to get in touch with that office in the event that the fleet of trucks or crews would be needed for some type of local emergency. Rocky Mountain Power has a plan for responding to emergencies that would go into effect once a request was received. There is an emergency services coordinator in Portland responsible for planning for emergencies in Albany County and some other Wyoming counties. Informational programs are available from Rocky Mountain Power on how to safely deal with electricity in typical emergencies. These can be requested from company headquarters in Salt Lake City or in Portland.

Carbon Power and Light is a small rural electric cooperative serving mostly Carbon County and a small portion of southwestern Albany County. They have approximately 24 employees headquartered in Saratoga, Wyoming. They also have crews stationed in Laramie and Rock River. Their web site (see bibliography) does not mention their emergency preparedness plans and they were not available by phone when the LWV tried to contact them, but it can be presumed that they are involved in the LERC planning process as are other utility companies.

Transportation

Winter residents are well aware of the constant interplay with Mother Nature and our highway systems in Wyoming. The management of state highways in Albany County is under the direction of WYDOT, District 1 Office, with headquarters in Laramie. District 1 covers a rectangular area from the Nebraska line to just east of Rawlins, and from the Colorado border to approximately 50 miles north of Laramie.

The District 1 Maintenance Engineer believes that the entire city of Laramie could be evacuated within 3-4 hours assuming normal road conditions and full cooperation from all affected. WYDOT does not visualize a need to convert divided highways so that both directions would lead out of town. Closing opposite lanes would take longer to accomplish, in his view, as WYDOT personnel would be diverted to the task of clearing the interstate and coordinating one-way traffic.

WYDOT itself is not a "first responder" per se, but is often the first on a scene first because they are on the road with plows and their personnel are present when hazardous spills must be dealt with. While State Highway Patrol officers who are part of the WYDOT system have minimal HAZMAT kits in their patrol cars, their primary job is to secure the area and keep it and victims safe as other first responders arrive. WYDOT has a contract with R.M. Cat Co. of Denver, which could be called if any hazardous spill were over the reportable quantity. This company can arrive within two hours and is staffed around the clock. In some instances the companies who are responsible for a spill will elect to use their own clean up companies and WYDOT merely monitors their clean up efforts as opposed to calling someone of their choosing.

Highway infrastructure is paid for in Wyoming, as in all states, through a tax on gasoline and diesel fuel. According to the American Petroleum Institute, in January 2005, gas taxes in Wyoming were 14 cents per gallon. In our neighboring states of Nebraska and Utah, the rate is over 24 cents per gallon. As a result of this and the revenue cap that the legislature has set, WYDOT's fleet of snowplows, graders and rotary snowplows are aging and could be out of service at times when they are critically needed. There has been progress with the conventional plow trucks and motor graders in the last few years in some areas of the state and older trucks have been replaced. In some instances additional trucks have been purchased to help increase levels of service on I-80. A constant dilemma for WYDOT is maintaining experienced equipment operators when there is competition for drivers in Wyoming's booming energy industries.

Educational and Recreational Facilities

Albany County School District No. 1 encompasses the entire county. Each school has its own emergency plan, which includes a safe place that children can be evacuated to if necessary. Recently the Slade Elementary School had an emergency situation (natural gas leak) that required evacuation. Children were escorted three blocks to the First Baptist Church, which had been notified in advance to expect them. Although their plan

did give the Laramie High School as a possible evacuation site, school officials chose not to do that so as not to disrupt the High School, which was not under emergency alert.

Emergency procedures for Albany County School District No. 1 District Crisis Management and Building Crisis Management Teams are on the school district's web site as part of Chapter VIII of "Other Policies; Emergency Preparedness", a PDF file that can be downloaded on the school district's web site (see Bibliography, web sites). The actual plans are not on the web site, though parts can be reviewed at the superintendent's office and/or at individual school offices except certain sections which are kept confidential.

Accredited preschools and day care facilities in Laramie are required to have monthly emergency evacuation practice drills. Severe weather drills are held regularly. Specific staff are required to help with evacuation of children with mobility or emotional issues in a time of emergency. Staff is required to have emergency contact numbers for all parents of children when they are leaving the facilities for any reason.

Laramie County Community College (Laramie Campus) has an emergency plan that is currently being updated by a staff member who lives in Cheyenne. The Dean of the Laramie campus is considering hiring a night security person for the Laramie campus. The 700-800 students do not reside on campus, but classes are offered throughout the day and evening. Protection of the student body from violent acts like those on other college campuses recently is foremost in their minds as administrators revise their plans. Any new plan is likely to request a public address system so announcements can be made to all rooms at once. Custodians are currently putting doors on auto-lock, so they can be locked from the inside immediately without a search for keys. The Emergency Response Coordinator for Albany County has a copy of their building plan, and law enforcement personnel have gone through the building to familiarize themselves with the new structure. The Dean recognizes that as they sit on high ground over two miles from the railroad tracks, they could serve as an evacuation center should there be an emergency situation. They would be willing to take people with pets also, as they have plenty of outdoor space. They have not had a drill or other training, but plans are underway to discuss it during in-service training for instructors, and to figure out a way to get students involved.

The University of Wyoming has a web site with most parts of their extensive emergency management plan available on-line to the public as well as to faculty and students. There are many buildings on campus, and UW does not have its own fire department, but relies on the City of Laramie for fire prevention and suppression services. UW has its own police security force as well as night watchmen. A problem which some faculty have noted is that false alarms are frequent enough that many faculty and students tend to ignore them and continue working in their labs or classrooms despite the very loud alarms. These alarms are the main way in which occupants are alerted that an unsafe condition exists and they should evacuate. Self-closing fire doors have been installed in all campus buildings where appropriate. Emergency plans are revised continually as new technology and information becomes available. The lead person at the university is the Vice President for Administration, who chairs the Emergency Management Team. That

team is composed of senor administrators from various units of UW, and is charged with writing plans and reacting to emergencies. In the latter case, the team evaluates the incident, coordinates response and support services, and provides emergency information. One staff member, the director of Risk Management at the University, is responsible for maintaining the records of emergency management policies and soliciting input from students and faculty.

The Laramie Recreation Center is a city-operated facility that may have a number of children and adults on premises during the hours of operation. They require that all children under the age of 12 be accompanied by an adult when using the facilities. Emergency plans for weather-related issues (thunderstorms, tornados) are in place, with designated shelter areas. Only the day care portion of the facility requires emergency contact information for children, and it is the only portion of the Center where children must be signed in and out.

When schools and offices are closed, it is up to the individual agency or group to develop a plan for notifying the public. There is no one central place to go for closure announcements in Albany or Carbon Counties. Emergency officials suggest that all agencies should keep a list of fax numbers of all radio, TV and cable companies that they will send an announcement to about the closing.

Libraries and Cultural Collections

The LWV did not find any museums or cultural property holders in Albany County, including those at UW, that had scheduled full-scale drills with first responders to protect their holdings in the event of a disaster. Some, like the UW Geology Museum, have not begun internal discussions on this issue. Others, like the UW Art Museum and Archaeological Depository, have internal plans for dealing with emergencies that threaten the collections and have made staff aware of the plans. For the most part, the planning that has been done, like that of the Albany County Public Library and the American Heritage Center, focuses on the treatment phase after a disaster has occurred. Most directors told us that their administration is sympathetic with the need for emergency planning, but the top priority would be to get people out of the building in the event of a disaster, rather than saving the collections. As the Geology Museum director points out, their collections are rocks and bones that are not especially vulnerable to disasters, and there are copies of some of their specimens in other collections. Several museums, including the private Laramie Plains Museum, have security systems with motion detectors, though these systems are dependent upon their being electrical service to the building at the time of the disaster. Prevention of looting in the event of a disaster is an issue that some museums consider as they write their emergency plans, especially in a scenario where the normal community police and sheriff's deputies are unavailable due to the scope of the emergency.

The archeological depository at UW is unique in that it is part state and part federal, so its manager is under mandates from both to consider and plan for emergencies. This agency is about to move into a new facility on the UW campus (summer, 2007) and when they

are settled in, they are considering hosting an emergency preparedness training session designed specifically for cultural property holders in the area.

A unique aspect of terrorism and libraries is that it may be possible to find out what a potential terrorist may be interested in by investigating who checks out certain books, though this surveillance could cause some law-abiding citizens to be drawn into a net of suspicion due to the type of book they happen to use. Libraries across the county are reconsidering the amount of data that they keep on file about patron's borrowing histories. The UW library purges a borrower's record immediately when a book is returned; the Albany County Public Library is on a statewide system that is purged after two weeks.

The County library has a five year plan that includes anticipating problems that might come up should there be a pandemic and school closings, which they think might increase patrons wanting to borrow books and use their internet and telephone resources. According to the Library Director, they are working on another plan that would be more comprehensive for emergencies that will be issued in late 2008 or 2009. Staff is trained to know that in the event of an evacuation order, they are to go to rooms where children would be first, then see to the safety of the rest of the patrons.

The UW Libraries have emergency procedures in place to safeguard important cultural collections that go beyond the UW general emergency planning. These plans are internal documents, not available to the public though staff is aware and trained on the plans. They include a "calling tree" for notifying staff of emergencies, and cover fire, flooding, public threats and the like. In issues of life safety and building safety, the library and other cultural collections at UW are covered by the University's general plan for emergencies.

The County library recognizes that flooding is their most particular concern since water could damage most library materials beyond repair. While much of their holdings are commercially produced and could be replaced, the contents of the Wyoming Room are rare materials that are not generally available and would require the most protection. They have purchased an emergency storage container where any wet items could be placed and then taken to a freezer for quick freezing and later treatment which is a recommended technique for salvaging wet books and papers.

Museums and libraries in Laramie are large buildings with lots of space and bathrooms, and they could become emergency shelters should a need arise. The county library is investigating standards for shelters to see if they may have a resource to offer. They will also compile local and other information about emergency preparedness and be sure that they have these on file and available for borrowers.

Special Needs Populations

Laramie has one nursing home, Laramie Care Center, one assisted living center, Spring Wind Assisted Living Community and three senior housing complexes: Regency

Retirement Residence, Eliza Swain Senior Housing and The Ivinson Home. Altogether there are approximately 200 people in these residences, with some residents in the first four in wheel chairs. There is also one organization in Laramie, ARK Regional Services, which operates eleven different housing units in Laramie for adults with developmental disabilities. Approximately 100 people live in these units, some are in wheel chairs, all have some physical difficulties that would make it hard for them to follow emergency commands unless a trained and/or trusted individual were giving directions.

There are other individuals in Laramie living in their own homes that have disabilities. They range from those on oxygen, to those who are blind, deaf or in wheelchairs. There is no central list telling emergency providers where these special needs populations are. Although some churches have thought about distributing stickers for windows or doors announcing that someone inside needs assistance, they have hesitated to do so since there are civil liberty privacy issues and it might put those persons at risk from those who would take advantage of them. The EOP does have a system in place for dealing with nursing homes, such as evacuating the one in Laramie, but it does not cover those in assisted living or senior housing units yet.

The assisted living unit, Spring Wind, reports that they do have regular fire drills that fire department personnel run for them. Residents have been informed to tune to KUWR or the TV after they hear sirens. Evacuation has not been a priority for their planning; they expect the Fire Chief to give them directions on what they should do in an emergency.

Emergency responders are particularly concerned that with recent Federal privacy act guidelines, it is not possible for oxygen suppliers to release the names and addresses of people who have oxygen concentrator prescriptions and who would be in need of replacements if there were a 2-3 day loss of power. They are working on alternative ways of getting at that information.

In some circumstances, people with pets are a special needs population, as experience with Katrina evacuees has shown that many people are reluctant to leave if their pets must be left behind. Furthermore, if the pets survive the disaster they become a huge management issue for the recovery phase. Veterinarians are organized to become a "triage for pets" first responding agency, and at the national level they have emergency plans that have been put to the test in the Katrina disaster. Recognizing this, Homeland Security has now mandated that all local emergency plans must include plans for evacuating pets. A conference was held at UW in 2007which examined this topic in great detail with a national focus; local veterinarians attended and spoke about the various types of assistance which they and their facilities can provide in the event of a wide scale emergency. Staff and volunteers at Laramie's Animal Shelter have been preoccupied for the past three years with planning for an expansion to the shelter, which is due to be completed in late summer, 2007. Once the building is finished, attention will turn to other planning issues such as emergency preparedness. One component that they have discussed is to stock the shelter with enough animal carriers that could be delivered to residents of at least a portion of Laramie, should an evacuation be mandated. Informal reciprocal agreements are already in place with animal shelters in Cheyenne and several

cities in Colorado to help out when one shelter is full. Animal shelter personnel have had one training exercise with representatives of the livestock board, which involved a simulated Brucellosis outbreak.

Non-governmental Involvement in Emergency Preparedness

Amateur Radio Operators: These 80-100 amateur radio volunteers, also known as "hams", are organized in Albany County. They have all passed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) technical tests to receive their license and the unique call sign the FCC grants each operator. Each radio operator has a goal of communicating information from one point to another. Because they have a wide range of radio frequencies available to them, and can use battery power, they can operate when other landline, cell, or satellite systems are "down". Therefore they become very useful in certain types of emergencies.

There are two nation-wide emergency assistance programs that they may choose to affiliate with, the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES). ARES has very flexible rules within FCC guidelines and allows amateur radio operators to transmit under any emergency circumstance to relay messages. RACES is much more restrictive, and operates with FEMA guidance and technical assistance. To be certified for RACES membership, special training under FEMA is required. There is a national Memo of Understanding (MOU) between the American Radio Relay League (ARRL), which is the major national organization for Hams, and the national Red Cross to allow the local or state Red Cross to request help from RACES. Generally, the local Red Cross calls the ARES/RACES Emergency Coordinator in Laramie and activates this system. RACES could also be activated through state or federal government should a state/regional or national emergency exist. Amateur radio operators pay for all their own equipment and are strictly a volunteer organization. However, in the event of an emergency in one part of a region (for example, a 1980's flood in Cheyenne overburdened the capacity of the volunteers there), those in another area will go there to assist. In Albany County, they have been activated to assist in search and rescue operations through the Sheriff's Office, where one operator is with each search team so they can communicate with each other. They also have been called in twice to Ivinson Memorial Hospital to relay information from one office floor to another within the hospital when all of their other telephone communications equipment failed.

There is another "Ham" organization in Albany County, the University Amateur Radio Club, to which most Hams in the area belong. This group is hoping to get a radio system and a mobile unit tower that makes them especially useful in remote locations. Since there is considerable overlap in membership of that group with the radio operators who are trained for ARES/RACES work, they can coordinate activities for instances when the remote transmission would be needed. A continuing issue with the radio operator's leadership is to be sure that all local emergency coordinators are aware of the services that these volunteers can provide. As responsible people change for rural fire districts,

government agencies, etc., the Ham radio clubs must begin again educating the new people to service capabilities of ARES/RACES volunteers.

Motels: If there were a functioning motel association, they could figure out a way to poll their members and find out if they are filled up when roads have to be closed. They could designate someone to contact the Dispatch Center to let them know where stranded travelers should be directed. The Sheriff or Emergency Commander cannot call all motels in Laramie to find out who still has room before directing that an emergency shelter be opened. On Jan. 7, 2007, a shelter was opened at the Albany County Fairgrounds to feed people who were on two stranded busses. Following the EOP, the Red Cross in Cheyenne was contacted by phone to authorize the expenditure of their private funds in Laramie to purchase food for the stranded passengers because the Laramie Red Cross is not set up to open a feeding station. The Emergency Response Coordinator reported that he often hears after the fact from irritated motel owners who are upset that a shelter was opened when they still had rooms available. There has not been a functioning motel association for several years in Laramie.

Red Cross: This private agency has long had a Disaster Action Team in Laramie under the direction of a volunteer coordinator. Generally, their assistance has been in response to a single incident like a house fire rather than a community-wide emergency. They are on call to respond when requested by either the local dispatch center, or by their own state and national organizations. They are secondary responders as their expertise is in the phase when treatment and recovery assistance is needed. They have a van with mobile radio connections that can serve as an emergency communication site, though the radio equipment may need upgrading and it has not been tested lately to determine that all systems are working. Mainly the van would be used to haul equipment to needed sites and it could serve as an emergency food distribution station. Red Cross has a national mandate to respond to the site of airplane accidents to deal with family disaster welfare inquiries and other family and public relations functions. The Red Cross also has a community advisory committee that keeps them informed of issues that need to be addressed as they coordinate emergency planning. Red Cross is also connected closely with the Armed Forces Emergency Services to handle inquiries on welfare generated by or about military personnel. San Diego, California is the location of the AFES 1-800 number call center that operates around the clock. The Laramie Red Cross routs all inquiries involving military personnel there.

Red Cross employees and volunteers have had special training in operating shelters and in quantity food disposition. They have forms to record the identity of all people in a shelter so that victim welfare inquiries can be handled efficiently. The forms have a space for a confidentiality waiver so information about their whereabouts can be given out to those who inquire, but the individuals will still receive services even though they may choose not to sign the waivers. In the case of a major disaster in Laramie, the local branch can call upon the Casper and Cheyenne branches for computers, blankets, cots, water, and food. There is a larger van in Casper they can call in that is more specifically set up as a food dispensing station. There is a supply of 49 cots in Laramie stored with the Red Cross, but they would need to call in additional cots from Cheyenne Red Cross if

a large number of people had to be quarantined or housed in a temporary shelter.

<u>Churches:</u> Some Laramie churches such as the First Baptist on 15th Street are designated as shelters, should a near-by school need to be evacuated. Churches are a particularly good resource for being sure that disabled parishioners are cared for in an emergency, as they alone are likely to know where they live and will know which parishioners lack other family that would care for them in the event of a quarantine or evacuation. However, no churches the LWV has interviewed have been specifically asked by anyone in local government to help coordinate emergency notification among their members as part of a community-wide emergency plan.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) is particularly active in emergency preparedness and has long urged members to have at least a three-month's (if not a year's) supply of necessities on hand that they could live on, should it be necessary. According to one of the five Ward Coordinators in Albany County, members are also encouraged to have a 72-hour kit (including drinking water) for each person in the household, which could be taken should an immediate evacuation be necessary. "One of the hardest things to do is to keep on hand an emergency supply of prescription medications," said Ward Coordinator Kay Pratt. The church international web site (see Appendix A) has a list of the recommended items in both the emergency kit and the longer-term stockpile. A full tank of gas and a well-maintained vehicle are among the guidelines, along with a supply of cash in the event of a quick evacuation. The LDS church is also organized into local congregations (wards) with a leadership structure that is activated to notify members (from phone lists) in the event of emergencies. This system was used in New Orleans to urge LDS members to evacuate two days before Hurricane Katrina. Each ward maintains a list of members with equipment available for emergencies, such as snowmobiles, 4wheel drives, trailers, portable generators; as well as a list of members with specific expertise such as medical training and members who could house more people. They have not activated the network specifically to check up on disabled members in the event of an emergency, but could easily do so if needed.

Oxygen Suppliers: Given the ever-increasing number of people in Albany County who are on oxygen, this presents a serious consideration when dealing with electrical outages or road closures that might make it impossible for the fleet of trucks the oxygen delivery systems use to reach homes with a fresh supply. One Laramie Company maintains that if a 911 call from someone needing oxygen is received, the Fire Department will respond with a new tank, and the supplier will switch tanks with the Fire Department later. Oxygen suppliers cannot release the names of their clients, even in an emergency, as a result of Federal HIPPA policies. One company does maintain an internal prioritized list of patients, according to their need, to use if oxygen were in short supply.

<u>Faith-Based Ecumenical Groups</u>: St. Matthew's Cathedral in Laramie provides a kitchen and small dining room for an ecumenical Soup Kitchen that serves a hot lunch Monday through Saturday. An average of 50 people per day are fed, with primarily donated commodities, according to the Manager. In the short term they could feed 75 people if daily grocery store donations remain the same. If the stores were closed because resupply

trucks were unable to reach town, the Soup Kitchen resources would be stretched to the limit. Depending on the number served, the Soup Kitchen would be forced to call other food pantries (Interfaith-Good Samaritan and Salvation Army) and community members for supplies.

Interfaith-Good Samaritan provides many services to needy people in addition to their food pantry. It serves as a clearinghouse for services, and, when notified by any authorities, they immediately begin marshalling local resources to solve the problem. There is an internal policy at Interfaith for handling emergencies, with a checklist for those responsible to consider when responding to the situation. The chain of command is spelled out so that the functions would be covered regardless of who becomes the lead person at the agency in a disaster. Interfaith has supplied the police, sheriff and highway patrol officers with lodging vouchers to use when they come upon people on the highway who need somewhere safe to rest and don't have the funds to buy lodging. In addition, Interfaith has pass-through funds from FEMA to assist with emergency situations. This Emergency Food and Shelter grant is administered nationwide through United Way. Interfaith will also do health and welfare checks for individuals when inquiries come in. Many of their clientele do not have telephones, but Interfaith staff usually has an idea of where these folks live, and can arrange to get in touch with them. Interfaith has resources to assist in recovery from a disaster ranging from supplying food and bedding to coordinating local agency response.

Disaster Recovery Plans

Recovery from disasters, ranging from the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906 to the Wright, Wyoming tornado of 2005 has been documented. Lessons learned are remarkably similar, and can be helpful for all citizens and government officials to understand. One of the best summaries is an essay "A Matter of Choice: Historical Lessons for Disaster Recovery" mentioned in the bibliography, and an unofficial report from Wright, Wyoming. Most emergency plans deal with first and second responders. The rebuilding process that comes later is often neglected but slow recovery from both terrorist and natural disasters in the United States illustrates the need for planning. Some of the findings from those who have observed disaster recovery are summarized below:

- 1 Document everything that happened, everything that first responders do, and photograph the situation before recovery efforts begin. This is critical for insurance and liability protection and may be needed to demonstrate to others the need for a disaster declaration.
- 2 Don't wait for outside help to come in before you make decisions and take action. Act as if no help will be coming and you are on your own. Ask for and accept help when needed and offered.
- 3 Involve legal counsel early. Citizens are covered under a "good Samaritan" rule in most circumstances when rendering aid, but they need to know the limitations and other liability issues that affect professionals in responding to emergencies.

- 4 Hold town meetings and keep media informed with accurate information to prevent rumors and to give folks a chance to ask questions.
- 5 Develop a recovery plan early in the process and base it on lessons other communities have learned the hard way.
- 6 Utilize employment opportunities to help those affected move to self-sufficiency and improve their employment prospects while accomplishing necessary reconstruction work.
- 7 Protect those vulnerable to private-sector actions and market forces. Declaring a moratorium on FHA-insured mortgage foreclosures, for instance.
- 8 Promote and foster improved housing options for low-income families
- 9 Reduce the likelihood of such events occurring in the future. Emotional destruction is a side effect affecting recovery of lower Manhattan as well as Wright, Wyoming. Officials should recognize this impact as they contemplate the implications of rebuilding.

The LWV sent a questionnaire to all Laramie banks asking about their disaster recovery plans, both in-house should the bank be affected, and for depositor's access to their funds. Four responded, stating that bank regulations require an "extensive" disaster recovery plan. One bank has other locations in Wyoming and Colorado that could be used by customers to access their funds, another has contracts with an outside service provider to bring a modular unit with the appropriate systems and services to their site in the event of a disaster. Maintaining daily records off-site is another security technique used, and one mentioned that back up power is available. One bank stated that they have an alarm system that would notify the police department from an offsite location in the event power is cut to the bank's system. Banks do not share their plans with first responders due to the confidential information in the plan, but they have or are considering putting in place plans to interact with first responders in the case of an emergency.

Issues in Emergency Preparedness in Laramie and Albany County

In many ways, Albany County and the City of Laramie are far ahead of other areas in planning for emergencies, thanks to the initiative shown by the Sheriff and the City of Laramie through the Fire Department. For the most part, administrators we talked to were not complacent, and are eager to talk about this subject and to have more citizen input as they put together the best plan they can for dealing with threats. Specific issues that various administrators brought to our attention are:

Public notification. Nearly everyone we talked to agreed that communicating with the public is a top priority, and one that is not adequately met with existing

- equipment and plans. The need for greater diversity in methods of reaching the public was a frequent theme. The plan being discussed most seriously by the LEPC is to apply for a grant to obtain NOAA radios statewide, putting one in every household. NOAA operates the National Weather Service.
- 2 Training exercises are important. Organizations and agencies with small staffs and many volunteers tend not to have done actual hands on training exercises. But the value of this approach is well documented, and first responders have indicated to the LWV that they would be glad to be invited to participate in such an exercise.
- 3 Staff training and communication with the public on emergency plans. Plans are no good if they sit on a shelf. When new staff are hired, they need to be trained in emergency procedures. The public needs to know what these plans are, especially with regard to schools and places where large numbers of people congregate.
- 4 Communication among first responders. Police cars are now equipped with P-25 radios, but the command center at the County Corrections Center on Ivinson Avenue have yet to be upgraded, which means that the dispatch center may not be able to communicate with all first responders simultaneously.
- Citizen initiative. The County Health Director stresses that most people do not realize that in an emergency situation it may be dangerous to their health to run to a store for food and medical supplies, and stores may run out of these critical supplies quickly if weather or power failures delay the trucks with new supplies. People should always have a three-day supply of medications on hand in their emergency kit, which would be with them even in the event of an evacuation. There should be adequate water on hand for every family member and pet for at least three days, and the same for food.
- 6 Clear lines of authority for first responders. The Red Cross branch manger noted that in Colorado there is a provision for mandatory evacuation, but no such authority is given in Wyoming.
- Increase the availability of emergency cots in Laramie. Several respondents noted that emergency cots in the possession of the Red Cross have been moved to Cheyenne. While that is partially true, a supply of 49 cots is stored in Laramie with the Red Cross, a number that would be inadequate in most emergency situations where an emergency shelter or quarantine location had to be set up. The plan assumes that Red Cross would be able to quickly get these cots and other supplies here from Cheyenne when needed, which troubles some officials.
- 8 "Special needs populations" need special plans. Although the Emergency Response Coordinator is mandated to find out where people with special needs live, this has not been accomplished yet. Residents who are blind, deaf, mobility impaired, etc. would need to be contacted in a one-on-one basis, but no organized

method of reaching them exists. Clearly the actions of CERT volunteers could help if there were trained volunteers in every neighborhood, but there are not that many available. Churches and clubs could be sensitized to the need to reach members they know are impaired in some way, but they have not been asked to develop plans to do so.

- 9 Dealing with animals in an emergency. There is a need to develop plans and consensus among first and second responders on how pets will be evacuated or treated at a shelter. Evacuating pets and especially service animals is part of the guideline for community emergency plans, but there is reluctance on the part of some first responders to take up valuable space with pets, especially when a "pet" in Wyoming could be a very large animal.
- 10 Protecting valuable cultural resources in our community. Museums, libraries and other cultural property holders need to become educated about the need for emergency planning, and learn how to lessen the devastating effects of various types of disasters upon their collections.

In conclusion, the interviews with over 30 officials locally have indicated that our public officials and most private agencies are making plans to deal with possible emergencies that everyone hopes will never happen. Key agency personnel are talking to each other often enough that it is likely that if and when there is a problem, the chain of command will be in place. There is considerable variation in the level of planning that individual entities have attained when it comes to planning for emergencies. Laramie is fortunate to be in a climate and geographical location where there is little risk. However, the world is not the same place as it was before September 11, 2001.

Appendix A

- Albany County Commissioners. Interviewed March 20, 2007 by Foncey Taylor and Marian Showacre.
- Allais, Jean, M.D. Albany County Health Director. Interviewed February 12, 2007 by Judy Knight
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