
SEATTLE OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

2019
ANNUAL
REPORT



Photo courtesy of Tim Durkan

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The Seattle Office of Emergency Management Annual Reports are always written in December as a way to recap our major events, milestones, etc. for the year. But it is written in December – mid-winter - when we are still on alert for floods, windstorms, and snow. I find myself in that, “hard to look back while obsessively looking at the weather forecast” state of mind as I also close out my 14 ½ year career as Seattle’s OEM Director. So, I write this not just to our wide and varied group of emergency management stakeholders, but also to my successor.



In January, the 2001 Nisqually earthquake-damaged Alaskan Way Viaduct came down in an engineered way instead of a devastating seismic way and OEM celebrated that feat by hosting twice daily coordination calls among the dozens of departments and agencies that needed to collaborate their operations. Shortly after that, the Emergency Operations Center activated for the snowiest February Seattle has seen in 50 years. We activated in a scheduled manner for May Day, the annual Pride Parade, and the annual Torchlight Parade as well as at a moment’s notice for a construction crane collapse. Each incident allowed us to review our practices and procedures and we used each to learn and improve our response and recovery.

It may not be as evident as EOC activations, but our Staff Duty Officers also monitored or, in some cases, provided active interagency coordination for more than 65 incidents related to storms, disease, protests, infrastructure incidents, power outages, etc. Our Staff Duty Officers do this in addition to their regular jobs planning, maintaining operational readiness, educating the public, etc. We updated plans, trained hundreds of employees and volunteers how to function in the EOC, designed and participated in exercises, and applied on behalf of the City for grants that mitigate the effects of our hazards.

Here is what will keep our City-wide emergency management program busy in the coming year(s):

- Being assessed by subject matter experts for re-accreditation through the Emergency Management Accreditation Program*
- Partnering with other City Departments and the State Legislature to address the risk posed by Unreinforced Masonry Buildings*
- Preparing for Cascadia Rising Earthquake Exercise v.2 scheduled for 2022 which will include City-specific exercise activities before 2022*
- Assembling leadership for, and facilitating further planning on, our Post-Disaster Recovery Framework*

Transition to a new Seattle OEM Director, who will inherit an accredited emergency management program, outstanding staff and department/agency partners, tremendous Mayoral and Council support, and more plans to be updated, after action items to be addressed, community members who need to be prepared, and stakeholder agencies with whom we should partner. The Mayor who appointed me wanted Seattle to be, “the best prepared City in the nation.” The last Mayor I will have had the pleasure to serve continually wants to see proof that we’re getting there. So ... keep up the good work!

Sincerely,

*Director Barb Graff
Seattle Office of Emergency Management*

Alert & Warning Annex Revision

In 2019 the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) lead a revision of the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan Alert and Warning Annex to clarify procedures for issuing alerts and warnings so they can be understood by all, including those with access and functional needs and limited English proficiency. The revised document incorporates lessons learned from recent incidents across the nation and mainstreams accessibility considerations throughout. It also documents the City's current capabilities for issuing life safety messages in multiple languages, a capability which the City continues to work with the community to build.

Isolation Workshops

A catastrophic earthquake could leave the City of Seattle isolated from outside help due to a combination of transportation vulnerabilities and extensive regional impacts. Many of the City's planned earthquake response actions rely on outside resources, both material and personnel, which might be delayed or diverted. OEM hosted a series of workshops which asked City departments to consider how response plans would need to change if the City were isolated from outside assistance. The workshops identified strategies related to Mass Care, Public Safety, Infrastructure, Outreach and Logistics that would enable the City to stretch available resources to meet the greatest need after a catastrophic earthquake. These strategies will be incorporated into the revision of the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan Earthquake Annex which will be finalized in early 2020.

Unreinforced Masonry Buildings (URM)

OEM, along with its partners inside and outside of City government, has continued work to promote the retrofit of Unreinforced Masonry Buildings (URMs). In recognition that funding poses a significant barrier to retrofit, particularly for privately-owned buildings, the City engaged the National Development Council (NDC) in 2018 to study funding options. NDC, along with experts in the field of construction, finance, and economics, estimated the range of retrofit costs, researched best practices in peer cities, and studied a comprehensive set of potential funding sources. Their final report, Funding URM Retrofits, was completed and presented to the City in May, 2019. The NDC report highlights that there is no one solution to funding retrofits, but that an array of options will be needed to address the financial needs of different types and ownership of URM buildings. The thorough analysis of the report helps to lay the groundwork for the development of a retrofit program.

Resource Request Tool

The Office of Emergency Management partnered with King County and the Washington State Emergency Management Division (WSEMD) to do a major upgrade to Washington's Resource Request tool. During big disasters, affected jurisdictions quickly run out of resources necessary for response and recovery. The tools and processes for requesting resources need to be integrated across the State because when a jurisdiction cannot find a resource it escalates the request to a higher level of government. The City of Seattle volunteered to design a new resource request tool for all of Washington. The new tool streamlines the request process and includes features that decrease the likelihood of mistakes and errors.

Wildfire Smoke Preparation

During the summers of 2017 and 2018 the City experienced periods of poor air quality due to wildfire smoke. Many buildings in the City lack air conditioning, making it a challenge to manage indoor temperature while keeping smoke outside. In early 2019, OEM coordinated with the Mayor's Office, Public Health Seattle King County, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Seattle Center, and Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, among others, to identify steps that the City could take before and during periods of poor air quality due to wildfire smoke. Together, this group developed procedures for operational coordination, and public messaging, and both Seattle Parks and Recreation and Seattle Center invested in improved air filtration capabilities for key facilities.

NEW STAFF - CHRIS CARMEN



Chris Carmen joined OEM as the new Administrative Specialist and has been described as a jack of all trades and master of none. Prior to being drafted by the City of Seattle, Chris had a long career in the field of records management with stints at the UW School of Dentistry and multiple healthcare facilities. Chris has a BS in Political Science from the University of Oregon where he ran long distance and cycled locally.

The Seattle EOC activated five times during 2019



FEBRUARY
Winter Weather



May
May Day



APRIL
Crane Collapse



JUNE
Pride Parade



JULY
Torchtlight Parade

Staff Duty Officer Coodinated Events

OEM staff duty officers monitored or provided coordination for 66 events during 2019. Notable events included:

- **Period of Maximum Constraint- Viaduct Closure (1/11-2/18)**
- **I-5 Charter Bus Fire (1/25)**
- **Century Link Fiber Outage (3/7)**
- **3rd Ave Bus Tunnel Transition (3/21-3/28)**
- **Natural Gas Leak- Rainier Ave S (4/22)**
- **UW/Harborview Radioactive Material Release (5/3)**
- **4.6m Earthquake East of Everett (7/12)**
- **Ballard Fire- NW Market St (10/7)**
- **Gas Main Break- NE 45th St (10/14)**
- **SR 99 Aurora Bridge Emergency Repairs (10/29-11-6)**



OEM led daily coordination calls with regional partners during the "Period of Maximum Constraint", the five week time frame between the permanent closure of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and the opening of the new SR 99 tunnel. More than 20 agencies from multiple levels of government participated on the calls which served to coordinate traffic management strategies, ensure the delivery of City emergency services, and coordinate public messaging.



On Monday October 7th, A fire swept through a commercial building on NW Market Street in the heart of downtown Ballard. Four adjoining businesses were a total loss -- La Isla Restaurant, Supercuts, Kitchen N things and Octo Designs & Jewelers. Another restaurant, Pho Big Bowl, was severely damaged. OEM assisted the fire recovery effort by hosting initial coordination calls between relevant City departments and external agencies. OEM and OED also worked together with State Emergency Management to see if SBA Economic Injury Loan Program could be made available to affected businesses.

Mitigation- Areaways Program

Many of downtown Seattle’s surface streets and sidewalks are built on areaways: open areas underground that once were the city’s “ground level” before the street levels were raised following the Great Seattle fire in 1889. The 100 year-old brick walls that form these areaways are known to be vulnerable to earthquake damage. As part of its on-going Areaways Program, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) implements mitigation projects for areaways that reduce risks to City facilities and the general public. OEM helped SDOT secure a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mitigation grant to strengthen the Columbia Street Areaway.

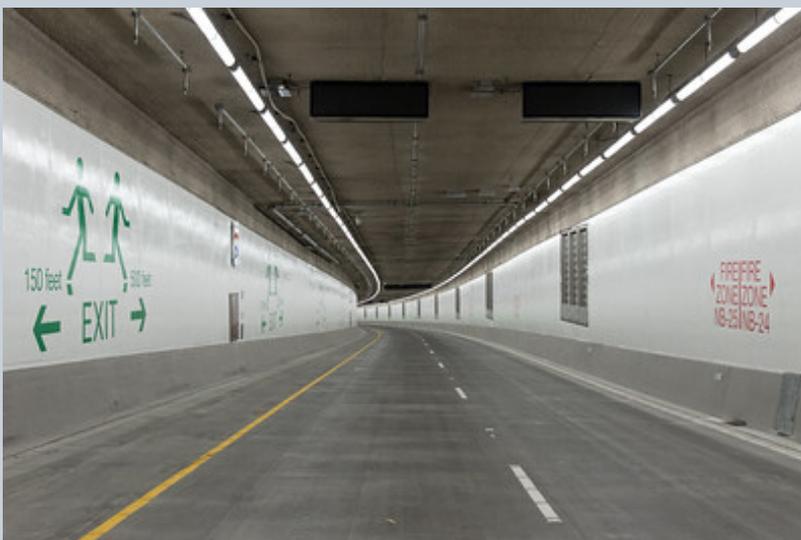
The repair involved filling the space with a light-weight concrete, which has proven to be a cost-effective technique for mitigating potential collapse as a result of an earthquake. The result is a safe gateway for walkers and drivers to the new downtown waterfront.



Columbia St Areaway with shoring being added



Completing above ground restoration of areaway



SR-99 TUNNEL

The two mile long SR-99 tunnel replaced the Alaskan Way Viaduct. Because of the viaduct's age and vulnerability to earthquakes, replacing it was critical to public safety. The SR 99 tunnel is one of the safest tunnels ever constructed, built to withstand strong earthquakes and equipped with smart safety systems designed to keep traffic moving and people safe.

139

Department representatives, agency partners, and volunteers completed the EOC FUNDAMENTALS course

117

Department representatives, agency partners, and volunteers completed the EOC IN PRACTICE course

12

Department PIOs completed JIC SUPERVISOR TRAINING

28

Department representatives completed training on the City's alert and notification system, ALERT SEATTLE

CONSOLIDATED NIMS/ICS TRAINING

During 2020 OEM developed a consolidated NIMS/ICS training program which economizes the efforts of individual departments into a collective, citywide training curriculum. This is done by leveraging instructors and facilities from across the City into a combined and common schedule open to all City employees. The mix of instructors and students from different disciplines and departments enhances the learning environment and provides greater perspective and better examples of interagency coordination and cooperation, a fundamental concept within NIMS and ICS.

OTHER TRAINING AND EXERCISE HIGHLIGHTS

- OEM designed and conducted a table top exercise for the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**, a critical partner organization. The exercise helped to validate components of the Gates Foundation emergency response and business continuity plans and identify areas where further planning may be necessary.

An "**Incident-within-an-Incident**" table top exercise series was conducted to plan for how the EOC would manage an emergency occurring during a downtown parade. Over 60 employees from a variety of City departments participated. The discussions were used to develop a set of objectives and tasks that will be used to guide initial EOC actions should an emergency develop during a parade or other major planned event.

- An **EOC Relocation Exercise** was conducted to practice operating in an alternate EOC at the University of Washington involving OEM staff, volunteers, and EOC responders from various City departments.

IN 2019



source: independentsector.org

SPOTLIGHT

VOLUNTEER



On April 16, 2019 Carl Leon received the WA State Governor's Volunteer Service Award

Public Education & Outreach

Volunteer educators deliver preparedness and skills training to a breadth of audiences throughout the city. Volunteers equip city residents with the skills and knowledge needed to keep their families and neighborhoods safe.



Seattle Auxiliary Communications Service



EOC Support

Volunteer responders report to the Seattle EOC during times of local and regional emergencies and events, and serve in roles that support mission-critical planning, operational, and administrative responsibilities.



In 2019, the ACS welcomed nine new volunteers and the team of 142 volunteers donated 7,405+ hours of volunteer service through various City and regional partner events. Events included five EOC activations, citywide field-training exercises, radio nets, major radio system improvement projects. Additionally, ACS supported several public service events - The Seattle Marathon, Fat Salmon Open-water Swim, Pride Parade, Torchlight Parade, Fremont Parade, RAMROD and the Seattle Marathon's 5/10K run.

NOTABLE OUTREACH EVENTS:

- OEM hosted an earthquake risk awareness event, "**Shift Happens**", at the Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI) during Free First Thursday in August. Over 1,500 people attended the event which was held in partnership with FEMA Region X, the Pacific Northwest Seismic Network, and MOHAI.
- OEM hosted the "Big Shaker" a 22 foot long earthquake simulator at the Seattle World School. Students and staff learned about emergency preparedness and got to experience an 8.0 simulated earthquake.
- OEM hosted a series of Disaster Skills Workshops in the South Park neighborhood during the fall of 2019. The classes were offered with Spanish interpretation and covered topics such as first aid, utility control, using a fire extinguisher, and how to control life threatening bleeding.



248
TRAINING AND
EVENTS

10,107

PEOPLE REACHED WITH
IN-PERSON TRAINING
AND OUTREACH



1071
ATTENDED
DISASTER SKILLS
TRAINING



ALERT
SEATTLE

INCREASED ALERT SEATTLE
PUBLIC SIGN UPS BY

5,887

248

ATTENDED A HOME
RETROFIT CLASS



COMMUNITY SAFETY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

The Community Safety Ambassadors (CSAs) program serves English as a second language populations in the greater Seattle area. The Ambassadors are multilingual leaders in the community that provide culturally appropriate outreach education on Disaster Preparedness, Hands Only CPR, Disaster Skills, and 9-1-1 education to their language community. The CSAs do outreach through numerous events such as health fairs, community and cultural events. They also conduct classes at non profits and in their neighborhoods.



4,000+

PEOPLE REACHED WITH
IN-PERSON TRAINING AND
OUTREACH IN 14
LANGUAGES

NEW PARTNERSHIP!

In 2019 the CSA program expanded outreach through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Through this partnership we were able to connect and outreach around Disaster Preparedness with emerging refugee populations in the greater Seattle area, such as the Nepali speaking Lhotsampas community through the IRC's New Roots Program.



Stop the Bleed

The Stop the Bleed program prepares people to save lives by teaching them how to recognize and treat life threatening bleeding.

400+

PEOPLE TRAINED ON STOP THE BLEED



Having bleeding control supplies accessible in public places will also help to save lives. People with the skills and knowledge to treat life threatening bleeding will be able to do so more effectively if they have quick access to tourniquets, gauze and other supplies.

30

SEATTLE PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES RECEIVED PUBLIC ACCESS BLEEDING CONTROL KITS PURCHASED WITH UASI HOMELAND SECURITY GRANT FUNDS



Staff at the Rainier Beach Community Center with their bleeding control kit after receiving Stop the Bleed training

SEATTLE OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



Seattle
Office of Emergency
Management