



SPUR

SAN FRANCISCO
PLANNING + URBAN RESEARCH
ASSOCIATION

THE HUB CONCEPT: INFRASTRUCTURE FOR A COMMUNITY DISASTER RESPONSE

SPUR REPORT

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SPUR believes that San Francisco can be a resilient city whose residents accept as inevitable an earthquake of significant magnitude and are prepared to respond and sustain themselves and their communities until help arrives. Preparation for such a comprehensive emergency response must engage each individual, each community and the myriad of organizations that make up these communities.

The Department of Public Health for the city of San Francisco obtained a federal grant funding a proposal to create Community Disaster Response Hubs or field-based disaster coordination centers throughout San Francisco. The Hubs can provide the infrastructure for community response to major emergencies. By identifying local resources, developing a plan to integrate and coordinate those resources with each other and with the city, and practicing communication through their Hubs, communities can develop an effective response.

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SUMMARY OF SPUR RECOMMENDATIONS

SPUR encourages the adoption of the proposed Community Disaster Response Hub plan and makes the following observations and recommendations that it believes the city of San Francisco can do to strengthen the plan and sustain the program.

Program Oversight and the Chain of Command: The grant funding the initial Community Disaster Response Hub plan and two pilot programs in Chinatown and the Bay View expires on December 31, 2008. SPUR recognizes that under the city's Strategic Emergency Response Plan the Department of Emergency Management (DEM) has responsibility for overseeing and managing emergency response. SPUR encourages DEM's active partnership with the Department of Public Health (DPH) to complete successfully the pilot program, develop a final framework for the Hub concept, and draft orientation/training guidelines to establish and maintain Hubs. If the San Francisco Public Libraries are designated as the Hub sites, as has been proposed, the Libraries should participate in the early planning stages.

DEM should include the Community Disaster Response Hubs in its overall responsibility for disaster strategic response activities and oversee the management of the program, including: identify leaders and organizations in each community, issue invitations to initial planning sessions, facilitate planning sessions, advise Hub steering groups as to city resources, assist in sustaining programs by providing personnel to help keep records, and run practice drills and staff-activated Hubs.

Funding: At the conclusion of the grant period, SPUR believes that DEM should take the responsibility for obtaining funding to assure that the Hub plan becomes an ongoing program. A successful Hub program will enable the city to take advantage of resources that already exist in local communities, so the city will, in essence, be gaining resources for little outlay.

Staffing Hubs: DEM should review each designated Hub plan to determine which department or departments should staff the Hub; DEM should then develop criteria for staffing, designating command and alternate command, and identify duties, responsibilities and the organizational structure for each major response function within the Hub. If libraries are to be designated as the Hub sites, library personnel must be trained to act as Hub personnel in the event of a disaster.

Locating the Hubs: If libraries are not selected as the Hub site, DEM should consider the optimum use of each other potential city-run site during emergency response, and then confer with communities when selecting the optimum sites for the Hubs.

Coordinating with Community Emergency Response Teams (NERT): SPUR considers NERT the most reliable tested and proven citizen preparedness and neighborhood response program and, as such, SPUR believes the city should consult with local NERT teams in initiating and sustaining Hubs.

Publicity: SPUR believes that fostering a culture of preparedness to create a sense of individual responsibility is essential to community emergency response. To assist residents to become aware of the resources that will be available in their community after a disaster, DEM should widely disseminate aspects of the Hub program, including the location of the Hub site within each community.

Supplying the Hub: The city should provide a dedicated non-perishable supply cache, including not only emergency supplies necessary to sustain the city’s Hub workers, but also the administrative supplies necessary to maintain records at each Hub. DPH is already staging medical supplies at community facilities and SPUR believes that providing supplies to Hubs should be included in overall planning.

Inventory of Resources and Record Keeping: The prime responsibility of each Hub will be to identify available supplies and human resources available for and needed in emergency response. Record keeping will be essential during response and for FEMA reimbursement. DEM should assign city staff to help Hubs maintain records.

Volunteers: DEM should address the advisability of covering the pre-identified volunteers who will be representing community organizations at the Hubs to provide the same liability protection as NERT volunteers.

Communications: DEM, with input from the Department of Telecommunication and Information Services, should develop plans to provide adequate communication equipment and training.

Security: DEM, with input from the San Francisco Police Department, should develop plans to provide security and commitment for police response.

Vulnerable Populations: SPUR believes that maintaining a comprehensive local community list of the more vulnerable among us would be an ideal function for a highly developed Community Disaster Response Hub and could evolve into one of its prime responsibilities.

Pre-Disaster Coordination Drills and Exercises: SPUR believes that the only way to achieve effective response leading to timely activation and useful coordination and communication is through pre-planning, updates, drills and practice. DEM should staff and facilitate continuing drills and practice of the hub functions at each Hub.

INTRODUCTION: COMMUNITY DISASTER RESPONSE HUB PROPOSAL

Emergency planners in San Francisco recognize the responsibility of government to meet the needs of the residents where they live and work after an “expected”¹ damaging earthquake occurs. Yet, in the immediate aftermath of an expected earthquake, government responders will be overwhelmed; the impact

¹ For purposes of this paper, a damaging earthquake or “expected” earthquake is defined as a 7.2 quake occurring on the Peninsula section of the San Andreas Fault. At this time, specific policy guidelines for existing buildings and emergency procedures are designed for the “expected” earthquake.

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of the earthquake will interrupt many regular services from transportation to utilities to medical care to the availability of food and shelter. As a result, government recognizes that communities and individuals will be on their own for some time and it must plan accordingly.

Residents must recognize, as well, that an effective plan for comprehensive emergency response engages each individual, each community and the myriad of organizations that make up these communities. Along with individual and community self-sufficiency, effective emergency response will require extraordinary cooperation not only within communities but also between communities and the city. Emergency planners must help create awareness of this eventuality, assist communities to prepare, and integrate community resources with the city's emergency response resources.

The city's Department of Emergency Management, the Department of Public Health, first responders and representatives from community organizations have developed a draft proposal to create field-based disaster coordination centers or Hubs² throughout the city. Initially, the hubs, termed Community Disaster Response Hubs (Hubs), were to be located at DPH facilities within San Francisco's 10 Emergency Districts; currently, the city is considering basing the Hubs in the twenty-five library sites located throughout the city.

The function of Community Disaster Response Hubs is limited. Hubs will act as the city government's portal within each specific affected community, not as service centers or command centers, but as communication centers to facilitate the exchange of information between the EOC and the local community regarding available and needed resources and available and needed services. The Hub will have two primary functions:

1. **Information Coordination** – to collect and disseminate disaster information between community entities about who is responding and what that response involves and, then, to serve as an information conduit between the city's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and the community entities.
2. **Resource Coordination** – to identify and assess available resources and shortfalls and, where shortfalls exist, to communicate those needs to the EOC to facilitate resource deployment to the appropriate community site.

Hubs activate immediately after the emergency event. At the same time, the city's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will activate its own Community Branch section to be a liaison with the Hubs. The Hubs will operate in the communities as field-based extensions of the EOC. They will be city-run entities, staffed by employees of the City and County of San Francisco.³

SPUR believes that if adequate pre-planning and preparation between city government and communities has taken place, San Francisco can begin to meet the goal of "the resilient city" where residents and communities accept the inevitability of an "expected" earthquake and have prepared to respond and sustain themselves and their communities until help arrives. Despite its limited function, SPUR believes

² The "hub" concept is a popular form of administration in a variety of circumstances and is particularly useful in administering emergency response. In case of a major disaster in San Francisco, a variety of organizations and public entities will rely on the hub model to direct response activities. For example, the Red Cross will use the hub system to coordinate shelter and other services; the Department of Public Health will use a similar model to direct medical care. All references to hubs here are to Community Disaster Response Hubs activated by the City and County of San Francisco as a conduit between City government and the communities.

³ Upon a declared emergency all employees of the City and County of San Francisco shall be designated Disaster Service Workers and may be directed to posts throughout the City based on need.

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that the existence of a hub plan in a community can be a valuable tool in embedding emergency response awareness deeply in the culture of each community, providing a framework for that community to begin its own plans for local emergency response.

The Hub will not replace any emergency operation in the Strategic Plan; rather it will be an “add-on,” taking advantage of resources that already exist in local communities and radiating out into each community to help match identified needs with city resources, including field clinics, shelter and feeding sites, and staging areas for bulk supplies. Ironically, although the city will initiate the Community Disaster Response Hub program and the city will facilitate its planning and assist in sustaining it, the leadership and commitment to maintain and sustain the program must come from local communities or the program will fail. Success depends upon active community involvement and continued commitment by the city of San Francisco.

CITY GOVERNMENT:

San Francisco engages in comprehensive planning to prepare response to and recovery from an earthquake. The city’s Strategic Plan provides for the city to engage all its public entities to restore lifelines, manage structural assessment, and supply mass care, including shelter, food and emergency medicine. The city’s command structure will be an Incident Command System (ICS) following the National Incident Command System (NIMS). In the event of a major disaster, Departmental Operation Command Centers (DOCs) and the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) will activate immediately. Participants in the EOC will include representatives from all departments with a major disaster response role and will become the focal point for coordinated command and control of citywide response efforts. The EOC operates as a multi-agency, multi-department coordinated command, providing support and communication to control citywide response efforts.

COMMUNITIES:

At the same time, a variety of non-governmental organizations, including local businesses, faith-based organizations, community associations and medical facilities, make up local communities throughout the city. Many of these organizations have considerable resources at their command, including expertise, able personnel and volunteers. The strength and variety of these groups and their resources vary from community to community. The extent to which organizations and leaders within local communities in San Francisco have identified these resources and developed a coordinated local response plan also varies. Specific entities from faith-based organizations to businesses to non-profits have developed their own internal earthquake plans. Other groups, such as SFCARD⁴, CAN⁵ and NEN⁶, along with some community associations, have taken initial steps to coordinate the activities of prepared individuals and prepared entities with each other and with the city. Even in the most organized communities, though, as in Chinatown for example, leaders recognize that their preparedness remains inadequate.

⁴ SFCARD (Community Agencies Responding to Disaster) (<http://www.sfcard.org/>) works with human service agencies serving in San Francisco to ensure business continuity after a disaster. SFCARD assists agencies providing extensive disaster preparedness training, including on-site agency visits. It has undertaken a variety of coordination initiatives to support the capacity of local agencies and the vulnerable populations that they serve.

⁵ CAN, SF Coordinated Assistance Network, is a collaborative group of nonprofit and faith-based agencies working together to utilize a shared client and resource information database to enhance services to clients after a disaster.

⁶ NEN, Neighborhood Empowerment Network hopes to facilitate the capacity of neighborhoods to collaborate with government and non-government organizations to improve the quality of life of their residents. Initially, the program will involve community leaders in fairs and workshops to expand knowledge about available resources and methods for community organization.

In examining the Community Disaster Response Hub concept, SPUR has looked to the success of programs to organize local response in other jurisdictions, both national and international. Japan, geologically unstable, has a long tradition of emergency response but its experience in the Kobe earthquake of 1995 revealed the weaknesses in individual and community preparedness.⁷ Since 1995, Japan has embarked upon an extensive emergency response program to strengthen the resilience of local communities through an organizational plan based on the hub model, albeit more extensive than the Hub plan discussed herein. In this country, Washington State⁸ has embarked upon an ambitious emergency response program promulgated by an interactive website that includes, among other elements, a means to map a neighborhood to identify skills, equipment and vulnerable populations.

GETTING STARTED: THE SAN FRANCISCO COMMUNITY DISASTER RESPONSE HUB PROPOSAL

The city developed the Community Disaster Response Hub concept over the last two years through the Community Disaster Planning Workgroup, under the excellent leadership of the Department of Public Health, with the advice of the Department of Emergency Management and various stakeholders, both public and non-profit. During the first year of planning, a facilitator/consultant assisted the planners in drafting “The Concept for Operations.” During 2008, the second year of planning, DEM will work with the administration of the San Francisco Public Libraries and the Library Commission to finalize an agreement to identify the city’s libraries as Hub sites. The consultant firm, Circlepoint, will work with DPH to complete the framework for the Hub – a “How-To” template to initiate, develop and sustain the Hubs. At the same time, DEM will develop a standardized orientation/training program for all libraries and stakeholders. DEM and the other stakeholders intend to complete this phase by November 2008. In the meantime, the city intends to run a pilot program in two specific communities – Chinatown and the Bayview – culminating in a drill. A two-year Federal grant funded the initial drafting and implementation of the plan in the two pilot communities. The grant expires on December 31, 2008.

The proposal⁹ is still in the discussion phase. When completed, some responsibility for Hub planning will belong to the city. For example, the city will conduct initial outreach to communities, designate city-owned sites and assign staff, assist communities in the maintenance of data by identifying supplies and developing record keeping protocol, and conduct educational and practice drills involving both city workers and community representatives. Some responsibility for Hub planning will belong to the communities. For example, each community must first finalize a plan specific to the needs of its residents, and identify its local resources and vulnerabilities, albeit consistent with the guidelines provided by the city as to what it can realistically provide. Once finalized, the community, with city assistance, must sustain the plan by updating and maintaining data and keeping designated organizations working together.

Establishing a Hub for community response will be accomplished in stages, first by the city, then by the city and communities working together, as follows:

⁷“The Kobe Earthquake,” Washington University in St. Louis, <http://artsci.wustl.edu/~copeland/kobe.html>

⁸ Washington Military Department, Emergency Management Division, “Map Your Neighborhood,” <http://emd.wa.gov/myn/index.shtml> (MYP)

⁹ All references to the “Proposal” are to the October 2007 draft of the “Concept of Operations for Community Disaster Response Hubs.”

- **Geographical Boundaries for Hubs:** Now, the proposal envisions that the Hubs may operate from each of the 25 San Francisco Public Libraries. If the Hubs do not operate from the Libraries, they will be located in another city-owned and maintained site.
- **Selecting Communities:** The city will initiate planning for Hubs, neighborhood by neighborhood, first identifying the city's most vulnerable communities, i.e. those on unstable ground and with dense populations.

Some communities will have unusual requirements; some already have developed a community organization; some have trained NERT teams, others do not. The Financial District, for example, has a large commuter population during the day and residents housed in high rises during the night. The Business Owners and Managers Association (BOMA), supporting the largest offices in the city, encourages NERT training and disaster preparedness and would be a vital resource in forming a Financial District Hub.

- **Invitation:** The city will issue an invitation to community-based entities to introduce the Community Disaster Response Hub concept.

To secure broad representation within a district the city must include each community's unique non-profit, faith-based and community organizations, schools and interested residents. In addition, each of the communities surrounding the libraries is made up of smaller neighborhoods, often organized around local shopping districts. The city will need sources within the community to identify which community/district leaders and organizations it should bring to the table.

- **Community Planning/Steering Group:** Ideally, a community planning group will grow out of the initial meeting.

The community-planning group will develop its own emergency response plan specific to the character of its own community using the city-prepared template. The city will facilitate the planning and offer other support and overall management, but the community must provide the leadership. The city and community steering group should develop the ground rules for organizing each Hub and developing each community's plan early and with great care to encourage collective objectivity.

- **Identification of Vulnerabilities and Strengths Specific to the Local Community:** In order to refine the Hub model to meet the needs of its community the planning group should initially create a list of community vulnerabilities and strengths. Potential vulnerabilities could include large numbers of elderly residents, schools and day care centers, unreinforced masonry buildings, and/or restricted open space. Potential strengths could be accessible open space and/or adequate medical facilities.
- **Inventory of Resources:** Representatives from the city will possess knowledge of the city's resources and emergency response strategy. Community representatives will reflect the concerns of their community and present the needs and wants of their constituency. The planning group will then develop a list of its own community resources, including facilities, available supplies, local expertise, and potential volunteers.

STRENGTHENING AND SUSTAINING THE DISTRICT HUB PROGRAM: SPUR RECOMMENDATIONS

SPUR recognizes that the ambitious Hub plan is in its infancy. Based on its examination of the evolving Hub plan, SPUR has considered what communities will need to sustain a successful emergency response program and what the responsibility of the city will be to help communities. SPUR now makes the following observations and recommendations:

PROGRAM OVERSIGHT

SPUR recognizes the work done by the Department of Public Health in spearheading the Hub concept. Without DPH's leadership, the city might not have obtained the federal grant, completed drafting the initial proposal, and organized and run the pilot program.

The Department of Emergency Management, though, is the lead city agency for coordinating disaster preparedness. The Hub will be communicating across city departments and between the EOC and the communities. Coordination will not be exclusive to emergency medical response and relief, but will range from health and human services, including shelter, food and water supplies, to interaction with NERT. DEM should now oversee integrating the plan into the overall Strategic Plan and assist communities to develop individual plans by 1) initiating planning in each community; 2) helping to sustain and maintain the district program; and 3) conducting exercises and practice drills within the community.

While other departments should continue to be involved in the planning, preparation and activation of the Hubs according to their roles in disaster response, if DEM and the San Francisco Public Libraries agree that the libraries will be the designated hub sites, the library should be responsible for orientation and training of its staff and to perform the role of "Hub Coordinators."

FUNDING

At the conclusion of the grant period, SPUR believes that DEM should take the responsibility for obtaining funding to assure that the Hub plan becomes an ongoing program.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

The current proposal calls for the Hubs to communicate directly with the EOC to a section activated for that purpose, the Community Branch. The Community Branch will in turn refer matters from the Hubs to the appropriate sections within the EOC or directly to the departments. As departmental command centers become operational, they will communicate directly with the Hubs, as well.

In case of a disaster, Hub personnel are to self-activate (not wait for a call down from headquarters) to pre-assigned sites. Activation will occur simultaneously with the activation of the city's EOC and Emergency District Coordination Centers and be running within six hours of a declared emergency or major disaster.

Although the Hub concept is for a coordinating operation not a control or service operation, the Hub operations still must fit into the Incident Command System (ICS). The ICS commander will be reporting through the Community Branch to the command of the EOC overseen by the Department of Emergency Management. Each Hub must have a clearly defined and identified Incident Commander capable of

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understanding the relationship to the disaster response as a whole and able to examine response needs within the Hub community. The staff of each Hub must also be trained in the ICS. In addition, because disasters can occur in any time, alternate ICS commanders need to be prepared to assume responsibility as well.

STAFFING

Employees of the city will staff each District Hub. Although the Hubs will have no permanent employees, the city will have initiated the establishment of the Hub, facilitated its planning, and assisted in maintaining its organization. In order to function in their emergency response role as District Hub staff after an emergency, city employees should have met frequently with the steering group of their assigned Hub, be familiar with their Hub's plan, and have participated in the drills and table top exercises.

The initial proposal called for Department of Public Health employees to staff and run the Hubs. SPUR recognized that many DPH employees would be among the city's most valuable first responders in case of a major disaster. DPH will be responsible for medical response for the residents of the city in any incident or disaster from treating mass casualties to mass immunization in the case of an infectious disease outbreak. Administering, coordinating and communicating resource requirements might not be the best use for an employee with direct medical training or expertise in medical management.

In addition, the Department of Public Health itself acknowledges that, in case of widespread catastrophe, its staff will be stretched thin executing emergency medical response activities. The proposal anticipated that if DPH workers were unavailable, the city would assign other city employees. (There would be a detailed Manual at each Hub so that any trained Disaster Worker could step in and fill the coordinating function.)

SPUR recommended and the Department of Public Health and the Department of Emergency Management are now reviewing the proposed staffing of the Hubs. With the understanding that the city would be the best served if DPH employees were available for medical emergency response duties, they are now considering whether the San Francisco Libraries or other departments should staff the Hubs.

Staffing needs may vary from district to district. Although the Hub will not be a service center or even a referral service, individuals will come to the Hub for advice or assistance, and the Hub will need staff to handle the influx. In addition to the Incident Commander, SPUR has identified other potential staff functions, including staff to intake information, coordinate with the city, handle walk-ins, direct services and provide back-up security. SPUR advises that the Department of Emergency Management review the Hub plan for each community, identify duties, responsibilities and the organizational structure for each major response function, and from that, develop criteria for staffing and designating command and alternate command.

LOCATING THE HUB

At this time, the proposal calls for District Hubs to be located physically in city-owned Department of Public Health sites, community clinics or mental health clinics throughout the city. Sites must maximize assistance, communication, command and control. Initial criteria for locating the physical site from which the Hub will administer its operations include: 1) logistics support, i.e., accessibility to the open spaces planned for NERT staging, for accommodation of refugees, and for providing various emergency medical and social services; 2) population vulnerabilities and density; and 3) seismic stability of ground and seismic retrofitting of selected structure.

Designating Department of Public Health facilities as Hub sites had many advantages, including that medical emergency response and relief will be a key part of disaster response, the clinics are well

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dispersed throughout the city and have substantial emergency equipment and professional staffs. Notwithstanding the Hub plan, though, communities will need medical emergency facilities to supplement hospitals or field care clinics and they will look to local city-run clinics as a medical resource. The Community Disaster Response Hub does not function as a service center, making the use of city-run clinics as Hub sites inconsistent with their role as needed medical facilities. SPUR believes that some city-run clinics should continue to focus on providing medical services and expand their ability to provide emergency medical services in case of a major disaster¹⁰ and are not the right locations from which to coordinate other city services.

SPUR encourages the selection of the libraries as the operating centers for the Hubs. Libraries are spread geographically throughout the city, many have been retrofitted to new seismic standards, and they are recognized by members of the community as a resource for information.

Whichever city-owned and maintained site the city chooses, though, SPUR believes sites should be pre-determined and the location known in the community. Nevertheless, SPUR also recognizes that pre-designating a Hub can only work if the community is highly organized and has a well-established Hub plan. In communities that have not been so organized, the Hub should operate out of the field-care-service-centers and/or staging areas. In other words, the Community Disaster Response Hub proposal must be flexible so it can respond to needs, as they exist in each community.

COORDINATION WITH COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS (NERT)

NERT, a program of the San Francisco Fire Department, organizes and trains residents to prepare individually for disasters and to become first responders themselves to assist others in their community when city rescue services have become overwhelmed.

When a community has an active NERT program, the city should include local NERT representatives in the initial district planning meetings. Presence of active NERT teams where communities are planning Hub programs would supplement and enhance planning in those communities from the beginning. Communities with active NERT programs already have committed volunteers who are pre-identified, prepared and willing to respond in case of a disaster. In addition, NERT organizes around the same Emergency Districts as the proposed district Hubs using established fire battalion communication lines.

The establishment of a Hub program in a community could enlarge the volunteer base of a community's NERT program, as well, through increased community commitment to disaster preparedness and knowledge of the program.

SUPPLYING THE HUB

The Hub will be the administrative location for communication and coordination in the community from which the Hub Incident Commander and staff will direct area communications and resources. As such, each Hub site must be equipped with the appropriate supplies to carry out its activities and maintain its own staff during the time of recovery. The Department of Emergency Management should supply the

10 The recent Community Disaster Response Hub proposal refers to the need for Hubs to “establish a site for medical care with their community as soon as possible....” In future papers SPUR plans to address the managing mass casualties and the need for the primary care clinics in the City to be involved as first responders to a medical emergency.

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Hub site itself with a **dedicated non-perishable supply cache**, including not only medical supplies and emergency supplies necessary to sustain the city's Hub workers, but administrative supplies necessary to maintain records.

The city should develop each Hub a list of perishable supplies noting where the Hub staff can obtain them.

INVENTORY OF RESOURCES AND RECORD KEEPING

Record keeping will be essential for triage, service availability, supply needs, social services and FEMA reimbursement.

The Department of Emergency Management will need to work with the community-planning group to pre-identify the resources that each group has and which each group may need in order to assist in disaster response. For example, some faith-based organizations may have kitchens adequate to prepare food for large numbers and a corner grocery may have the necessary food supplies. Once committed organizations share lists of available resources, the planning group should create a local resource inventory. The participating organizations should sign pre-disaster agreements, so the planning group can rely upon the resources that each leader/organization will make available.

During disaster response, responders will need to know what supplies both the city and community organizations are providing and using, how much is remaining and what supplies they need. In order to maintain a comprehensive inventory of community resources, community-planning groups will need support from the Department of Emergency Management. SPUR believes that San Francisco should include in its budgetary planning for emergency preparedness staff support to maintain and keep current this information.

Ultimately, if the impact of the disaster reaches a scale of a federally declared emergency, FEMA reimbursement and private funding will be available for volunteer expenditures. The records that help communities track their resources are mandatory to seek reimbursement. The city could create an environment of Good Will by helping volunteer organizations to understand that by participating in the Hub program and identifying resources they are prepared to make available to the community, they could be eligible for reimbursement. Such knowledge could, in turn, trigger participation in the Hub program.

VOLUNTEERS AND RECORD KEEPING

Based on its familiarity with the resources and abilities of individuals and organizations within the community, the Hub steering group can develop the criteria required for specific volunteer duties within the community, identify individuals and/or groups and prepare a list of volunteer resources. Many communities have residents and organizations with expertise that would be critical to recovery in the community during the immediate aftermath of a catastrophic event. A community could expedite its recovery if the community had pre-identified residents with useful expertise and they had practiced how they could assist. Useful expertise includes medical knowledge, food preparation, telecommunication skills and knowledge of community building sites. The latter includes architects and contractors familiar with not only the basic principles of structural stability, but with specific essential structures within the community.

Communities should have a means for pre-identifying and maintaining a list of expected participants in their Hub plan. In addition to residents and organizations that will be acting as responders, it is imperative for the community to know who will staff the Hub from the city and whom each organization designates to coordinate activities and communicate information. During a disaster, there will be much confusion and responders will naturally ignore many procedures. In order to control who is a volunteer, the city

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should issue ID badges to identify volunteers. Pre-identified volunteers could receive their badges ahead of time, be trained and pre-assigned. To avoid a situation where spontaneous volunteers dispense information and give orders, the city needs to develop a plan to verify, identify and supervise walk-ons.

The city officially swears-in NERT volunteers, which includes them under the city's worker's compensation plan in case of injury. The Hub proposal has not included this for volunteers involved in the Hub program. The Department of Emergency Management should address the appropriateness of following this procedure with Hub volunteers.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Hub will be the administrative location for communication and coordination in the community from which the Hub Incident Commander and staff will direct all area communications and resources. As such, the Hub sites must be equipped with the appropriate communication equipment and training. Training should include the development of communication protocol, and the use, location and availability of equipment, including batteries, repairs and spares.

As the program develops, the city, along with each Hub, will need to decide how community organizations will collect and distribute real time information to the EOC, various departmental operation centers and the field care sites within its community, the extent of communication that this will require, what electronic means are available, and what back-up plans are needed. At this time, the Hub plan appears to call for reliance on "runners" among the local sites, the METS¹¹ lines within fire stations for communication with the EOC and departments, Ham Radio Operators certified by the FCC and identified through the NERT program, plus whatever communication availability exists in the pre-designated City-site to augment the METS lines.

Ideally, the Hub should have state-of-the-art communication equipment at its command. At this time, the city has not dedicated communication equipment to Hub use. SPUR recommends that the Department of Telecommunication and Information Services provide input in how to develop plans to provide adequate communication equipment and training.

SECURITY

During the aftermath of a disaster, law enforcement will be over-extended and not available. Before and during a disaster, the Hubs' caches of stored supplies will need to be secured as well. Once again, the Hub should pre-identify anticipated security needs for each location and design security provisions.

Although volunteers will have no law enforcement powers, each Hub will need a "gatekeeper" because individuals will approach the hub for services or referrals. The hub will need staff to patrol and "meet and greet" service seekers and, if necessary, help deter unacceptable behavior. Department of Public Health employees or representatives from non-profit organizations familiar with crowd control who are accustomed to interacting with residents under stress should be among those the city pre-identifies as potential security staff personnel. Private security companies can also provide expertise on security within a community.

SPUR recommends that the San Francisco Police Department provide input in how to develop plans to provide security and commitment for police response.

¹¹ Multicore Emergency Telephone Systems.

VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

In the past, the Department of Public Health has maintained a list of disabled and/or vulnerable residents who volunteered to be included on a list of those the city should contact after a major disaster and assist, if necessary. The city is discontinuing the Disaster Registry. The Department of Human Resources will maintain a list of vulnerable residents, but this list will include only residents receiving city-run In-Home Supportive Services.

The elimination of the Disaster Registry Program concerns SPUR. Vulnerable populations need an emergency response plan for wellness checks to provide assistance when needed, whether it is supplies for sheltering in place, in-home medical care and/or evacuation as necessary.

The establishment of an active Community Disaster Response Hub program in a community could expand the city-run program to include vulnerable residents with whom local organizations are familiar, but do not fit into the restricted city definition. Hub planning groups could maintain a list of pre-identified residents and assign volunteers to check up on their status. Then all who may need help will at least get someone to visit them.

SPUR believes that maintaining a comprehensive local community list of the more vulnerable among us – the disabled, elderly and children -- would be an ideal function for a highly developed Community Disaster Response Hub and could evolve into one of its prime responsibilities.

PUBLICITY

City government through the Department of Emergency Management has embarked upon a public relations campaign called 72hours.org to encourage self-reliance among its residents, but the public needs to know where to go within its community to get specific assistance, as well. Each community Hub should pre-identify and widely distribute within the community a list of community resources and a map showing pre-designated sites for resources and services. Widespread knowledge of available resources can free personnel at the Hubs from responding to individual inquiries so they can concentrate on their communication and coordination functions.

In addition to other community organizations, schools located within each Emergency District must be involved in planning for the Hub and in the distribution of information.

The city will need to reach a balance between release of appropriate information and an avoidance of a security breach, understanding that the Hub plan will only be as successful as the level of community participation and that publicity can increase awareness and participation.

PRE-DISASTER COORDINATION DRILLS AND EXERCISES

Even if local communities and the city have successfully carried out every task discussed in this paper -- organizing communities, individuals and groups, identifying and categorizing resources and establishing sites -- neither the city nor communities can be prepared without frequent exercise and drill to practice how they will function together when a disaster occurs. SPUR strongly recommends that the Hub steering group hold monthly meetings to address issues that will arise or to make decisions regarding logistics for response.

City employees assigned to a specific Hub need to be familiar with the community and have met and practiced with the involved community organizations; community organizations need to know how well their plans will work. Drills should take place at least once a year by the city and all participating

THE HUB CONCEPT: INFRASTRUCTURE FOR A COMMUNITY DISASTER RESPONSE

community organizations committed to providing service. Japan, for example, which is about the same size as California, has a national earthquake drill each year on the anniversary of its largest quake. The city could activate the Hubs and communities could participate in a practice drill each year on the anniversary of the 1906 earthquake.

Without this type of practice, a community cannot be considered prepared.

SUSTAINING COMMUNITY DISASTER RESPONSE HUBS PROGRAM

There is no guarantee that the Community Disaster Response Hub program will be ongoing when the grant expires. It is essential that the Department of Emergency Management make initiating the Hub concept and sustaining the program a priority. At this time, identification of vulnerabilities and strengths with city communities and assessment of resources and needs of these diverse communities is incomplete.

If the target pilot communities of Chinatown and the Bay View respond to the pilot plan and move forward with a Hub program, their success, enthusiasm and state of preparedness can encourage the adoption of the Hub program and provision of permanent funding. SPUR encourages the Department of Emergency Management to become an active partner with the Department of Public Health, the Department of Human Services and NERT in bringing the two pilot programs in Chinatown and the Bay View on line before December 31, 2008.

SPUR believes that the Department of Emergency Management should now take the responsibility for obtaining funding to assure that the Hub plan becomes an ongoing program within the city's Strategic Emergency Response Plan and manage the Hub program.