Chapter 1
Emergency Management:
An Introduction and Brief History

Today's public libraries continue to transcend the historical stereotypes of the past by embracing new roles and responsibilities stemming from the many challenges and opportunities they face in their local community. While their core purpose of providing access to information remains the same, many public libraries and librarians are engaging the community beyond their assumed role and participating in non-traditional activities such as hosting job fairs, aiding small business development, and providing maker spaces. In most of their community engagement, the librarians' current training and skill set supports their expanding role, but not always. For example, supporting local disaster survivors and emergency management professionals before and after a major crisis and during an emergency response, is one area of community engagement which requires a more specialized approach and training. Public librarians are being enlisted to respond more and more often to local disasters.

Specialized knowledge and training will help public libraries become more effective offering the full range of public library resources including staff, equipment, and facilities in support of responses to local emergencies and disasters. The specialized knowledge and training in this process should include:

- Incorporating effective strategies for pre and post disaster planning and analysis.
- Learning to predict the impact of a disaster and potential response needs.
- Engaging in required partnerships with community and emergency leaders.
- Abiding by the principles of emergency management preparation and training.
- Employing the essential tools and practices to ensure effective participation.

Engaging or participating in emergency response can be as simple as providing computer access or as complex as operating a temporary overnight shelter. To be completely effective, public libraries need direct knowledge and understanding of the principles and practices used by emergency management professionals when mounting an emergency response. This understanding must include a complete knowledge of disaster management history and process, the emergency management command structure, as well as an understanding of the essential disaster response basics and how they are applied.

WHAT IS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Emergency Management has evolved over time. Only recently has emergency management emerged as a professional discipline defined by principles and practices instead of political doctrine and philosophy. For decades disaster management happened as the result of *acts of legislation to render assistance* to individual disasters in the form of financial aid or access to federal government resources. Then in 1950 Congress enacted the Civil Defense Act. This act placed the burden of the civil defense at the state and local level. Although still driven by national policy, the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FDCA) reinforced the belief that disasters were only caused by military incursions and disaster preparation required a military approach. Since that time, emergency management has grown and developed beyond civil defense perceptions.

Today, emergency management professionals realize that a natural disaster is any event that severely disrupts essential community services such as power, water, transportation, and communications. In modern society, communities are not an island unto themselves. The interconnectivity, if interrupted at a critical point of infrastructure within and between the com-

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