

# Chapter 15

## Maximize Existing Resources with Your Public–Private Partnerships

**Julie Kachgal**  
Warner Bros. Studios, USA

### ABSTRACT

*Public private partnerships in emergency management provide a vital resource. First, this chapter introduces information on the State of California's effort to support public private partnerships. Then, the chapter presents suggestions for selling participation in these partnerships and for maximizing their effectiveness. As California has found, public private partnerships save time and money while providing invaluable resources.*

### CALIFORNIA BOOSTS THEIR READINESS

In 2008, the state of California revealed an innovative concept that seeks to improve their emergency response network. They finalized several memorandum of understandings (MOUs) with private sector entities to officially make them part of the state's emergency response system (Heylen, 2008). This included partnerships with non-traditional players in emergency response, such as the California Grocers Association and Wal-Mart Stores Inc.

These MOUs formalize necessary relationships for a communitywide response. Local retail stores hoard necessary survival items needed during

an emergency, such as food and water. The government does not. Furthermore, they have daily experience with delivering food and water from one location to another. Again, the government does not. The formal relationship was intended to allow for a more pinpointed and efficient delivery of emergency supplies to a community.

These entities have been invited to participate in California's emergency operations center (EOC) during actual events (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2012). With this inclusion, officials can direct resources immediately and begin coordination with key players who are now readily available. Other communities may have MOUs established with individual vendors, such as a bottling water company, to buy their product

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during an emergency. However, the community is then left to coordinate the logistics of the task, which can range from transporting the water to a location and then distributing to the public; a task that has proven difficult for the emergency service community time and time again.

California is at the forefront of figuring it out (California Office of Emergency Services, 2006). They have realized that they can save time and money, and plan for a better response by simply engaging those in their communities who stockpile food and water. By engaging the California Grocers Association, the state is now connected to a network of members who are capable of providing food, water and other provisions to emergency responders and evacuation centers. By partnering with Wal-Mart, they have opened up access to goods and supplies as well as a sophisticated logistics system to ensure that necessary supplies get where they are needed in the shortest time possible.

On top of the MOUs, the state has taken one more step and also created a statewide registry of private businesses and nonprofit organizations who may be interested in donation services or supplying items outside the scope of food and water. Having a list of possible services, goods, labor, equipment, resources or other facilities that may be needed during an emergency, further complements the formal partnerships with the private sector.

### **WAL-MART TAKES BOLD STEPS TO HELP EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

I had the fortunate experience of conferring about this very subject with the head of Emergency Management for Wal-Mart<sup>1</sup> during Katrina, just shortly after their acclaimed altruism in response to the catastrophic hurricane (Barbaro & Gillis, 2005).

Wal-Mart played an important role in the overall response effort to Katrina. First they reopened their stores in a timely fashion, which made food and water available to the public. Secondly, they

also donated and transported \$3.5 million in basic supplies, like diapers and toothbrushes, to relief centers and shelters.

Wal-Mart encourages all of their store managers to meet and build relationships with the local emergency management department in their communities. Some managers belong to the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). Like California's MOUs, this creates a relationship between the owner of emergency supplies and the government, who strives to distribute these supplies in the aftermath of an emergency.

From Wal-Mart's perspective, they will have a quicker response to their stores when they have inside contacts and inside information provided by the local government. For them, keeping their business running is the bottom-line. From a government perspective, they can direct members of the community to stores that are open for business and not have to worry about setting up Points of Distributions (PODS) for basic supplies. It's a win-win, and it is very surprising that it's not more common.

### **BREAK IT DOWN AND BUILD IT UP**

Most communities have at least some version of a public-private committee usually lead by the local emergency manager (Federal Emergency Management Agency, Public Private Partnership Models, 2014) (Federal Emergency Management Agency, Tools & Resources, 2014). These public-private committees are teams comprised of representatives from entities that have been identified as critical if and/or where a response is necessary. They typically include representatives from the local electric company, the local phone company, the local water company, the Red Cross/Salvation Army, and maybe there is an airport or hospital in the community who participates<sup>2</sup>.

Once formed these committees act as a work group accountable to the local emergency manager. The representatives tend to fulfill narrowly

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