



A Preparedness Message from CVDPN

What if a Major Earthquake Struck During the COVID-19 Pandemic?

First Responders All Over The World Are Asking The Same Question of Their Public Officials!

*CVDPN recently distributed a preparedness message entitled “Lessons We’re Learning from Our Response to COVID-19.” In that message, we tried to stress the importance of individual preparedness by describing the impact of a major quake on our basic needs, such as food, water, medical services, communication, and other support systems that are still in place, even with the conditions posed by this pandemic. What if those basic support needs were completely gone? Some of you were reluctant to distribute this message. Yesterday’s earthquake should have been a “wake-up” call that this scenario could in fact occur. **CVDPN believes that Individual Preparedness is still an effective strategy and should be stressed even more during this pandemic.***

Should We Activate Our Community Emergency Plan; and What Would Be The Posture of our Volunteer Responders if We Did?

If you’re a Building or Block Captain tasked with doing damage and casualty assessment following an earthquake; or a member of your Community Medical Team, would you do your job, even if it meant that you could potentially become infected with COVID-19? Ask yourself this question; “Is my fear of catching a virus stronger than my desire to help those that are trapped and injured by the earthquake?”

Earthquake Response during Pandemics!

- **What Can We Do To Prepare?**
- **Do We Activate Our Existing Emergency Plans?**
- **What About Activating our EOC?**
- **What Direction Do We Give Our Responders – and Will They Comply?**
- **How Can We Help Those That Are Injured During a Pandemic?**

All difficult issues that government officials “world-wide” are attempting to resolve RIGHT NOW!

*Two weeks ago, during the COVID-19 lockdown, a 5.5 magnitude earthquake struck Zagreb, the Capital of Croatia. There was at least one death and many injuries. Residents for the most part appeared to be more fearful of the quake than they were of the virus. They ignored social-distancing directives, abandoned their homes and gathered in parks and squares. The sentiment was, “Get out of your house first, worry about grabbing a mask later!” Croatia’s Prime Minister described it as “Two parallel crises that contradicted each other.” New Zealand’s Prime Minister said that she is “always planning for earthquakes in New Zealand, and during a pandemic, social–distancing protocols would clearly need to be sacrificed by first responders in a big quake.”**

**(Associated Press: Pandemic Hurts Ability of Nations to Face Natural Disasters - April 3, 2020 - updated April 4, 2020)*

The foregoing article published by Associated Press went on to state that leaders of some countries described the impact of two parallel and contradicting crises (an earthquake and pandemic) as “a scenario we hadn’t even contemplated.”

CVDPN Observations / Guidance:

Yesterday evening, we were reminded that the potential for a similar parallel event to occur here in the Coachella Valley, is very real. There is not a “one-size fits all,” universal solution to this problem. We offer the following observations and guidance for your consideration:

- *Embrace Uncertainty: Understand the need for flexibility and the ability to adapt to unpredictable conditions. It will happen. Expect the Unexpected.*
- *Expect Less Than a Full Response: Most likely, some of your designated responders will be there to assist, while others will not. CVDPN has urged HOAs to plan for the use of spontaneous volunteers. They will show up, even in a pandemic. Be prepared to assign them to fill anticipated gaps in your rosters.*
- *Emergency Supplies: When commercial stocks are replenished, be sure to add masks and surgical gloves to your supply kits. Be ready to issue them to responders who don’t have them.*
- *Assess Your Management / Command Function: This is a “tough one.” But you must understand that effective, dynamic, and consistent leadership is even more essential during a parallel crisis. If your designated Emergency Manager or Incident Commander is not likely to assume his or her duties because of the pandemic, then you must re-evaluate the leadership position.*
- *Utilize the “Windshield Survey” Strategy: In major disasters, first responders have been trained to conduct “Windshield Surveys” of their designated sectors or areas. Surveys consist of observations made from inside an emergency vehicle while driving through neighborhoods and commercial areas. Damaged areas are noted as potential areas to prioritize for responders. Areas that are*

undamaged are not likely to require as much attention. The same technique can be used inside your HOA, as an alternative to “door-to-door” assessments.

- Consider Using “Map Your Neighborhood” Elements: The utilization of predesignated “Rally Points” or “Gathering Places” for building or neighborhood residents can be a safer alternative. With advanced guidance, residents can be advised to self-evacuate with their home emergency kits and relocate at rally points or gathering places. They can self-monitor to ensure they have their masks in place and also maintain social-distancing while waiting for further direction. They can also let responders know if a resident is missing or their status is unknown. It is much easier for responders to maintain safe distancing if they can communicate with residents at a gathering place instead of going door-to-door.
- In Some Cases, You Can’t Avoid Personal Contact: Recognize that if someone is injured and you intend to help them survive, you cannot avoid personal contact. The best you can do is take precautions. Wear masks and gloves, and place masks on victims as well. This guidance comes from those who responded to the earthquake in Croatia, less than two weeks ago.
- Don’t Abandon Your Existing Emergency Plans: You put a lot of effort and thought into developing your emergency plan. Don’t set it aside because of the pandemic. Think logically and develop “work-arounds” to allow for as much separation and personal safety as possible.
- Conference Call or Web Conference with Your Emergency Committee: Arrange for a conference call or Web conference and begin discussions NOW. Go through your plan and discuss alternative strategies. Keep your community informed of your plans and procedures.

Summary:

If you are part of your emergency team and the earthquake last night was more formidable, would you respond and try to help? It’s the question we asked at the beginning of this message. And it is one you still need to answer. If the answer is “no,” please let your Emergency Manager or Incident Commander know so the rest of the team can plan accordingly.

This is NOT the time to panic or worry about “all the things that could go wrong.” The people in your community will be looking for strong, stable, and confident leadership. Focus on the emergency functions you can STILL do in spite of the pandemic and work together to carry them out as safely as possible.

CVDPN IS AVAILABLE TO PROVIDE PLANNING GUIDANCE AND RESPOND TO INQUIRIES

Email us through our web site at www.cvdpn.org