

# CITY OF BARSTOW

CALIFORNIA

**POLICIES and PROCEDURES MANUAL:**

**POLICE**

**Subject: NON-WARNING DISASTER**

## INTRODUCTION

To proceduralize a more effective and efficient guide toward the implementation of emergency responses by personnel of the Department, four primary functions are sequentially listed in this procedure. For successful operations, simplicity, flexibility, and initiative must be employed as the needs dictate.

## POLICE RESPONSE TO: NON-WARNING DISASTER INCIDENTS OF AIRCRAFT ACCIDENTS, EARTHQUAKES, EXPLOSIONS, AND TOXIC CHEMICAL LEAKS

The ultra-critical duties of the first officers to arrive at a disaster scene cannot be overstated, particularly in those non-warning incidents such as identified in the subject matter. Through years of experience, the average police officer is conditioned to respond to injured victims, provide first aid, isolate witnesses, collect evidence, and write reports. It is unfortunate that many cannot free themselves from this conditioning when they are among the first to arrive at a disaster scene. It has been frequently noted that police officers who apply standard police thinking and techniques at disaster scenes often increase the fatality rate, lengthen the treatment time span for victims, and increase the total amount of property damage.

Initial arriving officers must be trained or train themselves to disregard the injured, ignore the dead, and execute other vital functions before becoming involved in any rescue or first aid activities.

## FIRST FUNCTIONS

The first officer on the scene must attempt to obtain as complete observation of the disaster as possible. He must not view the incident merely from a single position. In some cases it may be necessary to drive to a number of observation points. Not until the first officer or officers have completely observed the disaster can they execute the second step.

## SECOND FUNCTION

The officer or officers must then estimate the extent of the disaster and attempt to anticipate additional hazards created by the situation. The failure to properly and quickly execute these first two functions will complicate disaster response in many non-warning type incidents.

Reference:

Effective Date

Revision No.

Section

March 01, 1988

Page 1 of 5

328

# CITY OF BARSTOW

CALIFORNIA

POLICIES and PROCEDURES MANUAL:

POLICE

Subject: NON-WARNING DISASTER - continued

## THIRD FUNCTION

The third function is prompt and thorough reporting of the incident to the station. Officials of an area involved in a disaster will be waiting to put their emergency response plan into effect. Until the receipt of a comprehensive and accurate report from the first field units at the scene, officials must rely on telephone reports from citizens and others who may not provide accurate and complete information. Under more severe conditions, officials may not have other information available due to disruption of the community's telephone services.

The reporting officer should not only transmit data regarding severity, scope, and extent of the disaster, but should also advise the station of other potential hazards created by the disaster and make suggestions regarding road closures, cordoning or evacuations.

Finally, the officer should stay near the radio following his report so that he will be in a position to answer questions and provide additional information.

## FOURTH FUNCTION

Following the execution of these three functions, the first officer arriving at the scene must then exercise command over survivors and volunteers to initiate self-help and first aid activities. It must be realized that much of the early effective work in life saving and property protection will (can) be done by volunteers and victims affected by the disaster.

Volunteer workers are, traditionally, not too effective and may actually be counter-productive by working at cross purposes in some situations or may even worsen a situation by conducting such activities as improper debris removal. Most case studies reveal that volunteers and survivors report themselves to uniformed officers at the scene and expect coordination and supervision.

The police or fire uniform, coupled with calm demeanor, labels the responding officer as a leader. The proper response is to organize and direct volunteer disaster workers toward productive ends.

Reference:

Effective Date

Revision No.

Section

March 01, 1988

Page 2 of 3

328

# CITY OF BARSTOW

CALIFORNIA

POLICIES and PROCEDURES MANUAL:

POLICE

Subject: NON-WARNING DISASTER - continued

## SUMMATION

The four primary functions of the first officers at the scene of a disaster are observation, estimate of the situation, reporting or communications, and one-scene command. Only if these four functions have been completely and thoroughly executed should arriving officers become involved in actual life-saving first aid or other related activities.

When appropriate officials arrive on the scene, those officers having executed the four primary functions will brief them on changes in the situation and activities that have been initiated.

Officials will verify that those functions have been thorough and accurate and will then proceed to establish a chronological list of sequence of events up to this point and a running log of subsequent occurrences.

Other systems will go into effect from the off-site Command Post based upon the information received. Specifically, these will be manpower, recall, notification, mutual aid, evacuation, and resource facilitation.

## DISASTER RESPONSE

1. Notify Dispatch of incident, location, preliminary extent of conditions, and immediate need for assistance (additional units, fire, ambulance, etc.).
2. Establish a secure basic perimeter at site of disaster.
3. Advise Dispatch of need for requisite notifications: on-duty supervision, appropriate off-duty personnel, Chief of Police, etc.
4. Determine broader scope and extent of the incident and report additional assessments.
5. Organize the assistance of volunteers as needed.
6. Maintain continuous communications and advise of conditional changes.

Reference:

Effective Date

Revision No.

March 01 1988