



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2016.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: _____

Program Title: _____

Program Category: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Complete Mailing Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Website: _____

Email: _____

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Chesterfield County, VA – Library as Lifeboat

Brief summary:

In times of emergency, a county is challenged with meeting a wide variety of citizen needs, from medical crises to power outages. Prior to 2011, Chesterfield County employed a standard emergency management approach that placed the primary responsibility for the community's emergency response on police, sheriff and fire departments. However, libraries have a variety of resources that are useful in an emergency – large, climate-controlled buildings; communication equipment; and experience handling large numbers of daily visitors.

In 2011, Chesterfield County Public Library staff members began to work with local emergency management personnel throughout Hurricane Irene to shelter displaced daytime residents, distribute meals and disseminate disaster information and updates to residents throughout the county.

The cost of this program was minimal - the bulk of the resources came from daily branch library operating cost – but the benefit to residents was substantial. By increasing cooperation among county departments and thinking creatively about county resources, Chesterfield County was able to maximize the use of existing resources in an emergency.

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Overview:

Prior to 2011, Chesterfield County employed a standard emergency management approach that placed the primary responsibility for the community's emergency response on police, sheriff and fire departments. Other agencies with the requisite equipment and skill, such as Parks and Recreation, were charged with clearing roads and debris from public roadways and structures. While not a first responder or a department with skill and equipment in debris cleanup, Chesterfield County Public Library (CCPL) staff were called upon in 2011 to work with local emergency management personnel, throughout Hurricane Irene to shelter displaced daytime residents, distribute meals and disseminating disaster information and updates to community residents throughout the county, actions that had not previously been tried by the county emergency management. This extemporaneous role was so successful that CCPL emerged as a key player in the local response to Hurricane Irene and a permanent player in providing temporary daytime shelter, access to emergency meals and distribution of emergency information. By increasing intergovernmental cooperation, CCPL and Chesterfield County are better able to serve citizens in a disaster.

Problem or Need for the Program

Hurricane Irene arrived in Chesterfield County beginning early Saturday morning August 27, 2011 and continued through early Sunday morning August 28, 2011. The hurricane was the ninth-named storm of the 2011 Atlantic Hurricane season and turned out to be more powerful than many communities had expected. Because of their newly assigned responsibilities with volunteer coordination and donation management, CCPL leadership attended the EOC daily briefings during Irene. During the briefings, Emergency Management Staff reported early on that Irene was, in fact, worse than expected.

County leaders were cautious and prepared, although they did not expect Irene to make a significant impact. The storm eventually blocked 799 roads, caused power outages to 70% of the County, damaged 232 homes and caused one fatality. Locally there was \$1.7 million in damage to public facilities and \$3.8 million in private property damage. In the end, 56 deaths and approximately \$15.6 million in damages were incurred throughout the path of the storm along the Atlantic coast.

Acknowledging that during past emergency situations customers flocked to the library for relief, library staff was asked to report the number of people using the libraries, during the daily EOC briefings. This type of information had not been delivered in the past; EOC staff and county leaders were surprised at the large number of residents visiting the library and not quite sure what to do with the information.

Since 70% of the county was without power, activating the ESF Mass Care function was discussed during EOC briefings early on. During one particular EOC briefing, the Emergency Management Director broached the subject of how to handle mass feeding with human services division staff and leaders who were responsible for this particular task. Library staff volunteered any branch of the Library and any of its staff for mass care feeding duty. Social Services staff was a little hesitant to accept the offer of help. They expressed concern that the volume of residents who may come to the library for mass care service might be too much for the staff and the facility to handle. A discussion ensued about the volume of customers who regularly use the library on a daily basis, let alone during an

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emergency. A comparison was also drawn between checking out books vs. handing out prepackaged meals. Once the connections were made and the picture became clearer, libraries were enlisted in the mass care process as feeding stations.

Description of the program:

Red Cross vehicles were dispatched to the LaPrade Branch Library and word was distributed to the needy communities that meals were available at this particular location. Over the next four days, 2000 meals were distributed by the Red Cross at this Branch at predetermined times. Freeze dried Meals Ready to Eat (MRE's) were also left at this branch and other branch locations, for library staff to distribute across the circulation desk for those who couldn't meet the Red Cross truck schedule. Because the volume of library visitors staying at this branch during the day was unusually high, emergency management leaders assigned law enforcement officers to coordinate traffic and crowd control at the branch.

With so many residents flocking to the libraries before, during and after the hurricane, CCPL Branch Libraries were also seen as an obvious place for mass communication. EOC staff elected to have daily briefing bulletins posted on the library electronic announcement boards in each branch library, every day.

A week after county residents began to resume a normal life; CCPL began its assigned role of coordinating volunteers and donations by assembling work teams to clean up debris. Approximately three dozen locations throughout the county received clean up assistance through the coordinative assistance of library staff. In the wrap-up EOC meeting, it was acknowledged that CCPL had played an important role in a variety of ESF areas, including public communication and mass care.

The official report submitted by CCPL Administration included some of the following observations about the library's expanded involvement in Hurricane Irene:

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- The library, with its multiple branch locations, expanded its role as an emergency responder.
- The buildings themselves became community centers where citizens could charge their phones and computers, connect to the Internet, and continue to conduct personal, work, school and business related to their lives. In addition the essential comforts of the facilities such as restrooms, HVAC and adequate furnishings provided visitors the ability to relax in comfortable surroundings.
- Over 44,000 people came through the doors of the library branches during the five days after the storm. The parking lots were full, as were the tables and reading tables inside.

During these circumstances, library staff adjusted their personal lives to meet the needs of the changing conditions. In addition to executing their standard library duties, they also participated in meal distribution, monitored the use of power strips and continuously answered critical questions related to the event clean-up and power restoration. Electronic announcement boards at the library were updated regularly to display county storm updates and information. Customers were notably pleased to have access to the library during their time of personal distress. Many customers complimented staff and voiced appreciation that the library had become their personal life boat.

Due to the success of our new-found capacity, library administrators and department managers agreed to continue their expanded role by updating their emergency plans and providing staff with emergency management training, including Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training for all library leaders. Specialized CERT training was offered by certified county Emergency Management Personnel. The training covered disaster preparedness, emergency communications, disaster psychology, CERT organization, terrorism awareness, fire safety, medical operations, and light duty search and rescue. A mock disaster drill was included as a graduation exercise. While all library staff who participated in the training received a CERT certification obligating them to respond when called, an agreement to not mobilize library CERT volunteers away from libraries during disasters was put into place.

Ten months after Hurricane Irene, CCPL staff and resources were enlisted to render its unique brand of mass care again after a freak storm passed through the area the week of June 25, 2012.

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According to news reports, power was knocked out intermittently for short periods of time in various areas throughout the county for several days. Seasonal high temperatures created an unhealthy ozone level causing dangerous air quality levels, especially for those with acute or chronic respiratory health care concerns. The circumstances created a need for mobilizing some mass care resources, although the resources required were actually minimal. EOC staff, consulting with various county leaders, considered several strategies to meet this particular emergency need without activating mass care level resources. It was noted during these strategy sessions that library staff had updated their response strategies to become part of the mass care ESF including providing temporary day time shelters for all residents and night time shelters for small groups if needed. It was also noted that several library staff had been recently CERT-trained adding to the allure of the library as a possible shelter.

A decision was eventually made to open two branch libraries outside of normal operating hours as a temporary daytime shelter for the public during the 4th of July holiday weekend. This particular strategy would provide a place for those still without power and who might need a cooler place to stay during the day time. CCPL agreed to provide a daytime facility as well as a possible temporary overnight shelter if the needed. Because the library was opening beyond normally scheduled hours, the EOC arranged for CERT volunteers to supplement library staffing at the open branches. The CERT volunteers assigned were pleased to be part of the process and were pleasantly surprised to learn that many of the library staff working were also CERT certified.

Currently, libraries are the lead department in the county's newly developing Family Assistance Center Plan. Particular libraries, strategically located across the county, have been identified as the location where a family assistance center will be established in the event of a mass fatality incident. The facility will be managed by library staff, working in coordination with all other emergency management departments and partners. Library staff members are currently receiving extended training in disaster psychology in order to fulfill the additional function of manning the center's reception area.

Award criteria:

Chesterfield County's use of libraries as emergency facilities demonstrates a high level of governmental cooperation. In times of emergency, both large and small, CCPL is able to apply organizational strengths – well-equipped facilities; resources for accommodating large numbers of people; and communication resources – towards helping county residents. Chesterfield County has found that making the library a part of emergency planning can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the county's emergency response with minimal cost. This innovative approach shows how creativity and cooperation can result in significant improvement to services.

Financing and Staffing:

There was minimal capital cost to implement this program. The bulk of the resources came from daily branch library operating cost; staff, utilities, etc. The cost to operate a CCPL branch library is approximately \$3,100. There has been some discussion of outfitting branch libraries with power generators to guarantee access to the buildings, even in the worst scenarios. Our newest branch library has been wired to receive a permanent emergency generator at an estimated cost of \$150,000.

Results of the Program:

The Hurricane Irene experience and the unexpected event ten months later encouraged county leaders to amend the County Basic Plan ESF related to mass care to include officially identifying libraries as temporary day time and overnight shelters and as optional feeding station and public information distribution point for customers during natural disasters and emergencies. CCPL has taken its new role seriously and updated its own emergency operations plan to include more effective calling trees among staff and leaders, providing CERT training for all key leaders in the system, upgrading emergency kits at

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each branch to include more robust power strips and assigning more staff to county emergency management committees and work groups. Some stats and customer comments from the Hurricane Irene event:

- Over 44,000 people came through the library's doors during the five days after the Hurricane Irene.
- An older lady (who just had spent the night at St. Francis due to her asthma) came into the library. She said she couldn't sleep at her house as it was 90 degrees and she has no power, internet, etc. She hadn't been to the library in years but did manage to find her card.....long story short, she is now emailing family members.
- A LaPrade branch library regular customer checked on his 84-year old neighbor, and discovered he had not had a meal in over two days. Staff connected the customer with the Red Cross and a social services employee who were assisting citizens in the LaPrade parking lot. As a result, the neighbor received a visit from county social services, and the customer was able to deliver a hot meal to him for the next couple of days.
- "Thank you so much for opening tomorrow. you have been a real life saver for those of us without power. you just don't know how much we appreciate it."

During every emergency event since 2011, CCPL has been invited to be part of the prevent briefing with first responders. We have been put on alert five times since 2011 to render aid, and provided services during two of those times. We also participated in a table top disaster exercise. During the exercise, state emergency management personnel were surprised at county officials incorporating library facilities and staff as triage centers for victims of a terrorist attack. Again, the cost to mobilize was not beyond the daily operating cost of the branch.

It is rare that a new program can be incorporated within the existing operations and operating cost of established services and facilities. The cost for CCPL to participate in emergency management operations was/is minimal. The process is nothing more than opening the doors after a disaster, posting emergency briefing information on the libraries digital announcement board system and coordinating services with other county or emergency services agencies such as Red Cross meals truck. On the other hand, the impact on the community was substantial. During the initial event, 44,000 customers were provided a pleasant place to be immediately after the hurricane subsided and more than 2,000 received

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access to a hot meal. Many of these residents had no power at home for several days. The library provided them a place to charge cellphones, access email, news and information. And for some, the restroom facilities, air conditioning and a hot meal were essential for survival.

Supplemental Materials:



The LaPrade library after Hurricane Irene



Lines stretch throughout the Clover Hill Library in the days after Hurricane Irene.

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The Red Cross parks in the LaPrade library parking lot to offer hot meals in the wake of Hurricane Irene.