

# Richland County Emergency Operations Plan

## ESF 6: MASS CARE

**Primary Agency:** Richland County EMA

**Supporting Agencies:** American Red Cross  
Richland County Volunteer Agencies (CERT, MRC, RSVP)

### 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this section is to provide guidelines for the housing and care of persons who have been displaced or evacuated from their homes due to hazards or emergency incidents. This activity is generally referred to as “sheltering” and includes the tasks necessary to care for displaced persons, such as provision of food, basic medical care, and respite. This ESF establishes procedures for meeting the basic needs of displaced persons in the immediate, short-term aftermath of an incident.

### 2. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

#### a. Situation

- i. Local government has a responsibility to provide emergency sheltering to persons displaced from their homes because of a significant disaster or emergency event.
- ii. Many types of severe weather, unanticipated incidents, and other emergencies can create the need for emergency public shelters.
- iii. Emergency public shelters can provide temporary, short-term overnight accommodations for displaced persons or they can serve as evacuation centers where persons affected by an incident can receive information, support, food, and other resources but does not provide overnight accommodations. The term ‘shelter’ will be used to describe both types of facility throughout this section.
- iv. Shelters must be established quickly when an evacuation is ordered. The organizations, staff, and/or volunteers charged with managing shelter operations must be prepared to deploy rapidly and quickly implement shelter operations.
- v. Shelters will be utilized for overnight accommodations when the number of displaced persons is significant enough that it is more economically

feasible to establish a mass care shelter than to place displaced persons in hotels or other types of short-term housing.

- vi. Shelter locations must be safe and secure with reasonable monitoring and control of facility access, entryways, and parking areas.
- vii. Typical shelter operations include feeding shelter occupants; providing sleeping areas, restrooms, showers; support for special needs of occupants, such as first aid, clothing, toiletries; and access to resources and services that will help displaced persons recovery from the assistance. Administrative duties will include registration of shelter occupants and family reunification, if necessary.
- viii. Due to health and safety regulations, pets cannot be accommodated in shelters. When necessary, a pet shelter will be established at an alternate and nearby location to provide housing for displaced pets.
- ix. Some displaced persons may have functional needs that require the use of special medical equipment and/or supplies that are typically available to them in their home. This could include, but is not limited to, home oxygen tanks, concentrators, or other portable durable medical equipment. These functional needs will be accommodated in a shelter as much as possible.
- x. Evacuation and sheltering of persons living in residential congregate care facilities, such as nursing homes and assisted living facilities, is the responsibility of each individual agency. These facilities maintain evacuation plans and agreements with alternate facilities to provide temporary shelter locations.
- xi. Shelter sites may, knowingly or not, have shelter agreements in place with multiple parties, such as American Red Cross and one or more nursing homes. This may create a conflict if more than one organization requires use of the facility at the same time.

b. Assumptions

- i. In a typical incident involving evacuation, less than 10% of affected residents would seek shelter in a public facility. The vast majority would find shelter with relatives or friends.
- ii. It is highly unlikely the entire county or an entire jurisdiction would require evacuation.

- iii. Shelters will be established in locations as close to the communities affected by the incident as possible. Every effort will be made to identify a shelter location that is convenient to the affected population but safety issues and facility availability may affect the location choice.
- iv. Shelters will be located in facilities that meet current structural standards for access and use by the public, including those with disabilities.
- v. Shelter occupants will be allocated space according to the current requirements established by the organization operating the shelter.
- vi. Some displaced persons will bring with them to the shelter medical equipment and supplies they use on a daily basis.
- vii. Family units will be kept together in the shelter as much as possible.

### **3. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

#### **a. General**

- i. The ultimate responsibility for sheltering and mass care services rests with local government. The EMA has ultimate authority over mass care operations in Richland County.
- ii. American Red Cross is the agency identified to operate emergency shelters. The local ARC office, the Lake Erie/Heartland Chapter, operates out of Wooster, Ohio and includes Richland County in its jurisdiction. ARC is expected to manage shelter operations when needed in Richland County.
- iii. Other community and volunteer organizations have the capacity to support shelter operations when needed. These organizations can include, but are not limited to, CERT, MRC, and others.
- iv. At the request of the EMA, community agencies can be asked to support mass care operations by providing a specific and specialized service, such as mental health or medical services.
- v. ARC will manage family reunification and tracking of displaced persons with assistance from law enforcement and other agencies as needed.
- vi. Mass care operations will be coordinated between agency officials at the EOC to ensure collaboration and identification of the services necessary to meet the needs of the affected population.

b. Relationship Between Levels of Government

- i. The EMA has authority and responsibility for mass care activities in the county. Law enforcement agencies will work with the EMA to support evacuation operations when necessary. Fire and EMS agencies will assist by providing rescue and medical care for displaced persons. These efforts will be coordinated through the EOC and under the direction of the Incident Commander.
- ii. The EMA can request support from county agencies and organizations, as well as those in adjacent counties, if necessary.
- iii. When requested, the Ohio EMA will provide resource support and communications to assist the county EMA.

c. Phases of Emergency Management

i. Preparedness

The EMA is responsible working with ARC and other organizations to ensure the county has sheltering capabilities, including identified shelter locations, resources, and volunteers capable of operating a shelter should the need arise.

ii. Response

The EMA will ensure that shelters are opened when necessary to provide support to persons displaced by a disaster or emergency event and operated in accordance with the guidelines in this plan.

iii. Recovery

The EMA will coordinate with community partners to connect displaced persons with services necessary to support their to normal life following the incident. This can include support for housing, mental and physical healthcare, financial services, and others.

iv. Mitigation

Following an incident, the EMA will evaluate mass care operations and identify opportunities to reduce the need for these services or improve their delivery in the future.

d. Initial Action and Notification

- i. When an evacuation becomes necessary, the EMA and local representatives of American Red Cross (ARC) will identify appropriate shelter locations for the displaced community.
- ii. The EMA will utilize their public information system to inform the public of shelter locations and issue instructions for displaced persons who wish to utilize the shelter's services.
- iii. Public notification will include message distribution through local news media outlets, social media, emergency alert notification systems, and other channels as appropriate for the incident.

e. Evacuation Centers

- i. Evacuation centers are a type of shelter that provides short-term respite for persons displaced by an incident as well as food, information, and other services. Overnight accommodations are not provided in an evacuation center.
- ii. Evacuation centers can be established only for the immediate time period between the evacuation and opening of official ARC or community shelters or remain operational for the duration of an incident, providing information and resources, but not overnight accommodations, to the affected population.
- iii. In a large-scale or sudden evacuation, it may be necessary to quickly establish an evacuation center to provide displaced persons with a safe place to congregate. First responders or local officials may open the evacuation center initially before ARC or other community partners can establish an official shelter.

f. Shelters

- i. Shelter operations will generally be a joint effort between the EMA and local ARC representatives and volunteers. ARC will operate any shelters in Richland County, with assistance from other community partners as needed. This is consistent with tier authority and responsibility under federal law.
- ii. ARC will identify and train shelter volunteers, manage shelter operations, and return the facility to pre-incident conditions after the shelter is

closed in accordance with their policies, procedures, and shelter agreements.

- iii. The EMA and ARC will collaborate to determine where and when shelters will be opened. Whenever possible, a facility that is conveniently accessible to the population affected by the incident will be selected.
- iv. Shelter facilities will have the capacity for overnight accommodations, food service, recreation, and health services. Whenever possible, sites with generator power and shower facilities should be selected.
- v. Shelter facilities must be accessible to persons with disabilities and functional needs whenever possible.
- vi. ARC is expected to open a shelter for displaced persons within two hours of notification by the EMA.
- vii. ARC and the EMA can request support from other county and community organizations to provide resources and services to the affected population. This can include, but is not limited to, caseworkers, medical care providers, mental health services, children's services, and others.

g. Pet Shelters

- i. Shelters cannot accommodate household pets or small animals because of health and safety regulations.
- ii. When feasible, a separate pet shelter will be opened to provide emergency housing for pets displaced by the incident.
- iii. The county dog warden and local animal care organizations will be asked to support the pet shelter.
- iv. When possible, the pet shelter will be located in close proximity to other shelters, providing the displaced population with access to their pets.

h. Bulk Distribution/Points of Distribution

- i. A Points of Distribution (POD) is an organized operation to distribute bulk supplies or commodities to persons affected by a disaster or emergency incident.

- ii. Distributed commodities can include food, water, cleanup supplies, or other goods available that may be necessary to support the population during an incident.
- iii. PODs should be established at locations that are accessible and convenient to the affected population.
- iv. PODs can be organized as a drive-through or walk-up service, depending on the facility available, commodity being distributed, and population needs.
- v. The health department will generally manage POD operations if the distribution of medications, vaccinations, or other medical resources is necessary.
- vi. Volunteer organizations such as CERT, MRC, and ARC can support PODs by providing volunteers and managing the operation.

#### **4. ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY**

The agencies and organizations involved in providing mass care services in Richland County are assigned responsibilities as identified below.

##### **a. Richland County EMA**

- i. Identify the need for evacuation and coordinate with ARC to establish shelters based on the specific incident.
- ii. Provide oversight, coordination, and dissemination of public information regarding sheltering and mass care operations.
- iii. Determine, in coordination with ARC and other volunteer organizations, the need for distribution of commodities to the affected population.
- iv. Coordinate with Richland Public Health to ensure appropriate environmental, food service, and sanitation inspections are conducted at shelter locations.

##### **b. American Red Cross (ARC)**

- i. Identify potential shelter locations throughout the county and establish and maintain shelter agreements with those facilities.
- ii. Identify, maintain, and train volunteers and personnel to staff shelters.

- iii. Operate shelters and provide mass care services when requested and in accordance with current agency policies and procedures.
  - iv. Provide an ARC liaison to the EOC when requested by the EMA Director and/or Incident Commander.
  - v. Track and document all expenses related to the incident and submit to the EMA as part of the overall incident documentation.
- c. Volunteer Organizations (CERT, MRC, RSVP, etc.)
  - i. Provide volunteers to support shelters and mass care operations as needed throughout the county.
- d. Richland Public Health
  - i. Inspect and approve shelter locations for compliance with environmental, food service, and sanitation requirements.
  - ii. If the incident involves contamination by a hazardous material, participate in environmental monitoring and the decontamination process for shelter occupants, as appropriate.
  - iii. Collaborate with community healthcare organizations to provide support for shelter occupants with functional needs, including but not limited to, links to necessary services.
- e. Law Enforcement
  - i. Provide security and traffic control at identified shelter locations.
- f. Fire Departments/Emergency Medical Services
  - i. Conduct fire inspections at shelter sites, as needed.
  - ii. Assist in the transport of persons to shelter locations for those who are mobility challenged.
  - iii. Provide emergency medical care at shelter sites, as able, and emergency transport for patients with medical needs to local hospitals.
  - iv. If the incident involves contamination by a hazardous material, assist with decontamination for shelter occupants.



- g. Richland County Dog Warden/Animal Care Organizations
  - i. Operate pet shelters to house household pets and small animals during disasters.

## **5. DIRECTION AND CONTROL**

- a. The Incident Commander will issue orders for evacuations and shelter operations based upon the specific incident.
- b. A Mass Care Branch will be established under the Operations Section. This branch will address all sheltering and mass care needs and coordinate with the appropriate agencies to ensure these services are provided.
- c. Each shelter location will have a designated Shelter Manager. The Shelter Manager will coordinate with and report to the Mass Care Branch Director (or other appropriate position within the Mass Care Branch).
- d. All staff and volunteers in the shelter will report to the Shelter Manager.
- e. Safety personnel assisting outside the shelter will work under the direction of the safety and security supervisor. This position can be part of a separate branch, division, or group, or it can be a task force that operates under the direction of the Shelter Manager.
- f. The Public Information Officer (PIO) will work with the Mass Care Branch Director to providing press releases and other public information to inform the community about mass care services.
- g. The Planning Section should include mass care considerations in their planning efforts in the following ways:
  - i. The Situation Unit should monitor shelter population, escalation and de-escalation of shelter operations, and the likelihood for additional evacuations and/or displacements to determine the duration for shelter needs.
  - ii. The Resource Unit should assess the status of shelter resources, including personnel and supplies for the upcoming operational period and consult with the Situation Unit to project resource needs and/or shortages.
  - iii. For an extensive or ongoing shelter operation, a Mass Care Technical Expert within the Planning Section may be necessary.

- h. The Logistics Section must maintain awareness of the service and supply needs of each mass care function or shelter location. Each mass care service location should be assigned to a Service and Supply Unit. Depending on the incident, this unit may be assigned to only one shelter location or may support other incident locations.
- i. The Admin/Finance Section should include mass care and shelter operations in the cost and claim documentation.

## **6. ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTICS**

- a. ARC will provide the resources, equipment, and staff for shelters, including goods and food provided to shelter occupants. As stated in shelter agreements, ARC will repair any damage to the facility as a result of its use as a shelter.
- b. All partner organizations are expected to cover their own costs. These costs should be documented and submitted to the EMA as part of the overall incident documentation and cost tracking.

## **7. RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS FOR ESF**

- a. Volunteer organizations that support emergency public shelters must be able to provide cots, blankets, food, personnel, and other resources necessary to operate a shelter within 2 hours of an incident occurrence and subsequent request from the Richland County EMA or first responder agencies.
- b. The facilities identified as potential emergency public shelter locations must be willing to abandon or modify their daily operations to serve as an emergency shelter. Facilities must be maintained in good working order, as specified in formal shelter agreements.
- c. All organizations and officials identified in this ESF must communicate regularly so that they are prepared to quickly provide support persons displaced by unanticipated emergency incidents.
- d. The EMA will review this section annually and recommend changes as needed. The ESF will be reviewed by all primary and support agencies after a significant incident or exercise.

## **8. ADDENDA**

There are no addenda for this ESF.

## 9. AUTHENTICATION

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Date of Adoption

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Richland County EMA Director