



Memorandum

TO: City Council

FROM: Mayor Ron Gonzales
Vice Mayor Cindy Chavez
Del Borgsdorf, City Manager

SUBJECT: San José's Emergency
Response and Preparedness
Actions

DATE: November 4, 2005

Approved

Ron Gonzales *Del Borgsdorf* Date 11/4/05

RECOMMENDATION

We recommend approval of the following actions related to improving San José's emergency response and preparedness:

1. Direct the Vice Mayor to continue discussions with Santa Clara County partners to coordinate local emergency response efforts.
2. Direct the Mayor to continue discussions with San Francisco Mayor Newsom and Oakland Mayor Brown related to the Bay Area Regional Disaster Response plan.
3. Direct City Manager to complete a risk/threat assessment of the City's Emergency Operations and Response plan and our City's abilities to respond to a major disaster of unprecedented scale.
4. Further direct the City Manager to:
 - a.) Allocate \$500,000 for the risk/threat assessment and for immediate needs identified through the assessment, including infrastructure.
 - b.) Return to the City Council, following the appointment of the new Director of the Office of Emergency Services and in response to findings of the risk assessment, with recommendations to organize the Office and the City to improve our institutional and community preparedness.
 - c.) Revise the City's Emergency Operations Plan immediately, in coordination with the Mayor's Office, to reflect the actual roles of the Mayor and City Council during an emergency.
 - d.) Identify and examine state and federal level emergency preparedness policies as they relate to San José, and incorporate into the City's Emergency Operations Plan.

BACKGROUND

In the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, we've all seen the devastation a major natural disaster can cause to a region, the serious damage to the lives of communities, and the incredible challenges of recovery and rebuilding. This year has been a grim reminder that San Jose must continue to re-evaluate, plan, and prepare for a potential catastrophe that we already know can eventually happen in our own region.

Our ability to respond effectively to a major disaster, whether manmade or natural, requires many partners in a region as complex as the Bay Area. All levels of government, our neighboring communities, businesses and community organizations, and people ranging from first responders to elected officials must work together. We must continuously develop, update, and implement practical and realistic plans; clarify and strengthen roles and responsibilities in advance; identify likely risks and take steps to reduce them; establish robust systems for communication and coordination that can hold up in a disaster; and enlist our entire community to become more aware and better prepared through *San José Prepared!* and other programs.

We also need to support and participate in emergency preparedness policy discussions with state and federal agencies to support issues and changes that relate to the unique needs and vulnerabilities of San José and Silicon Valley. For this reason we are asking staff to return to Council with an overall discussion of these issues, including resource requirements for improvements to local infrastructure, to better understand how we can work with our state and federal agencies and our legislative delegation to achieve the level preparedness we need here.

Our recommendations include supporting the recent efforts to improve Bay Area regional preparedness by directing the Mayor to continue working with the mayors of Oakland and San Francisco for this purpose; improving coordination with our local county and city networks and partnering with community-based organizations; and testing our internal emergency preparedness procedures through a threat/risk assessment to identify areas where improvement is needed.

Revising the City's own Emergency Operations Plan to reflect the actual roles of the Mayor and City Council is another important step we can take. We have seen many examples over the years where the Mayor and councilmembers have played a critical role for intergovernmental coordination, media relations, and community relations in response to emergencies of all sizes. Our recommendation is intended to complement the clear role of the City Manager during a major disaster, provide appropriate policy support for the Administration, and ensure effective coordination with elected officials across multiple jurisdictions.

We hope to never have to put our emergency plans into use. If that time comes, however, we want to have the fundamental confidence that we, along with our entire community, our residents, and all our partners, are ready and have the tools and systems we need to save lives and recover from a disaster.