

EXAMINATION OF FEMA AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH A COMMUNITY AFTER A
DISASTER

by

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Abstract

This report examines the evolution of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Processes and procedures have evolved overtime and the agency is making strides in improving their reputation. Joplin, Missouri, is used as a case study to determine (1) if there are changes being made in the Federal Emergency Management Agency and (2) outlines the process to receive aid after a natural disaster. Interviews were conducted with officials and members of the public who worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency after the disaster and their impression of the agency was documented.

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Introduction

In past years, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has been under fire for the response to different disasters. The most criticized response was in New Orleans, Louisiana, following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Many people questioned the response time, the lack of evacuation planning and the funding that never arrived. Concerns were also present about the living conditions after the storm for the victims. The flaws in FEMA quickly became public and officials started questioning the credibility of FEMA and who to hold accountable for the lack of action (Sobel & Leeson, 2006).

There have been comments made by members of Congress in favor of closing FEMA and having communities fend for themselves after disasters. The most famous comments were made by Senator Ron Paul, from Texas. He thinks people should be forced to have insurance and funds from the insurance would be used to rebuild. Paul states that FEMA is doing the job that an insurance agency should be doing (Raznick, 2011). He goes on to criticize the “secret” budget and that in reality FEMA does not have a “penny in the bank” (Raznick, 2011). Paul is not alone on this idea, others have agreed. They do not see FEMA as assisting communities, but as an agency that is wasting tax payers’ dollars.

Communities that have been assisted by FEMA after disasters would have to disagree with Paul’s comment that FEMA is not an efficient agency and spends more than what is in the bank. FEMA offers support besides financial aid to communities. Its presence eases the tensions and fears of the community immediately after a disaster. Most city officials that deal with a natural

disaster do not have much experience in the recovery process. The officials from FEMA offer their knowledge from past experiences to these communities as they try to recover from a disaster. Governor Chris Christi, from New Jersey, has publically praised FEMA for its response to disasters, such as Hurricane Irene. He states that the line of communication between federal officials and the state was open and this allowed a number of concerns to be voiced and constant updates given to the state. Maryland's Governor Martin O'Malley, agreed with Governor Christi's comments and praised the response of FEMA to its disaster, which is Hurricane Irene in 2011 (Turkel, 2011).

The debate about the need for FEMA is an ongoing issue. Hurricane Katrina did show the flaws in FEMA, but since then it has been working on regaining the public's confidence. FEMA is trying to become more transparent in its efforts to assist in communities through better communication and clearer lines of command and control with the goals being improvement of its image and an increase in confidence of its ability to handle major disasters.

FEMA's role in the Joplin, Missouri tornado is the subject of this report. Joplin, Missouri, was hit with an EF-5 tornado May 22, 2011. This tornado killed 161 people and destroyed over 7500 structures - many of them were homes. To complicate matters, Joplin had to deal with severe storms and torrential rain for several days after the tornado during the critical period of search and recovery (State of Missouri, 2011). Joplin is considered to be a community that was well prepared for natural disasters, but the timing, path, and magnitude of the event overwhelmed the capability of the community to cope with the aftermath of the storm.

This report examines the relationships between communities and FEMA during a disaster. Joplin is used as a case study to track the interaction between community officials, FEMA and the ad

hoc community organizations that emerged after the storm. Community-led groups are often drivers behind the rebuilding process after large scale disasters and there is a need for FEMA to be involved in their projects and meetings. City officials and community groups were interviewed about their interactions with FEMA to obtain feedback about the effectiveness of this interactive process. The insights gained from these interviews will help determine if FEMA is making strides to promote better communication and control or if there are still many major issues to be resolved in its response to disasters.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

History of FEMA

The history of the FEMA can be traced back to the Congressional Act of 1803. This act was passed in response to fires in multiple New Hampshire towns in the 1800s (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], 2012a). In the early 1920s, different agencies were granted the powers to make loans to communities that were affected by a natural disaster. This included agencies that granted loans such as the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and Bureau of Public Roads. In the case of major floods, the US Army Corps of Engineers was responsible for grants and loans for relief and rebuilding (FEMA, 2012a). With no centralized agency responsible for disaster relief in the period prior 1979, it became very confusing which agency was responsible for what type of disaster. There was a need for a single agency to deal with all disasters.

In the 1960s and 1970s there were a number of major disasters in the United States, such as Hurricane Carla in 1962, Hurricane Betsy in 1965 and major earthquakes in Alaska and California throughout the 1960s (FEMA, 2012b). The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was designated as the lead agency in directing disaster relief beginning at 1963 (FEMA, 2012a). Because of a lack of “on the ground response” and no real formula for local recovery funding, it was soon became apparent that HUD could not effectively handle the responsibility of housing and development and disaster assistance. There was a consensus among agencies that one agency needed to be responsible for disaster relief.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency was chartered in 1979 by the presidential Executive Order of President Jimmy Carter (FEMA, 2012a). FEMA was created to centralize the United States' emergency relief efforts (May, 1985). FEMA defined an emergency as, “ Any occasion or instance for which, in the determination of the President, Federal assistance is needed to supplement State and local efforts and capabilities to save lives and to protect property and public health and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe in any part of the United States”(Bea, 1992).

In 2003, through the Stafford Act, FEMA was placed under the Department of Defense. FEMA is one of 22 agencies in the Department of Defense. This move was done partially in response to the terror attack of September 11, 2001 and partly to create a clear line of responsibility from the President and Secretary of Defense to Homeland Security and the Director of FEMA. This gave FEMA the responsibility to address all disasters, including terror attacks. After Hurricane Katrina, President George W. Bush signed in the Post-Katrina Reform Act. This Act addressed all the gaps in FEMA that become readily apparent during Hurricane Katarina (FEMA, 2012a). FEMA has a history of addressing short comings in the system and is currently making the agency more efficient. It has implemented measures that require communities to have emergency housing plans and has had discussions to reduced the amount of aid given in critical needs from \$2000 a person to \$1000 to become more efficient (FEMA, 2012a).

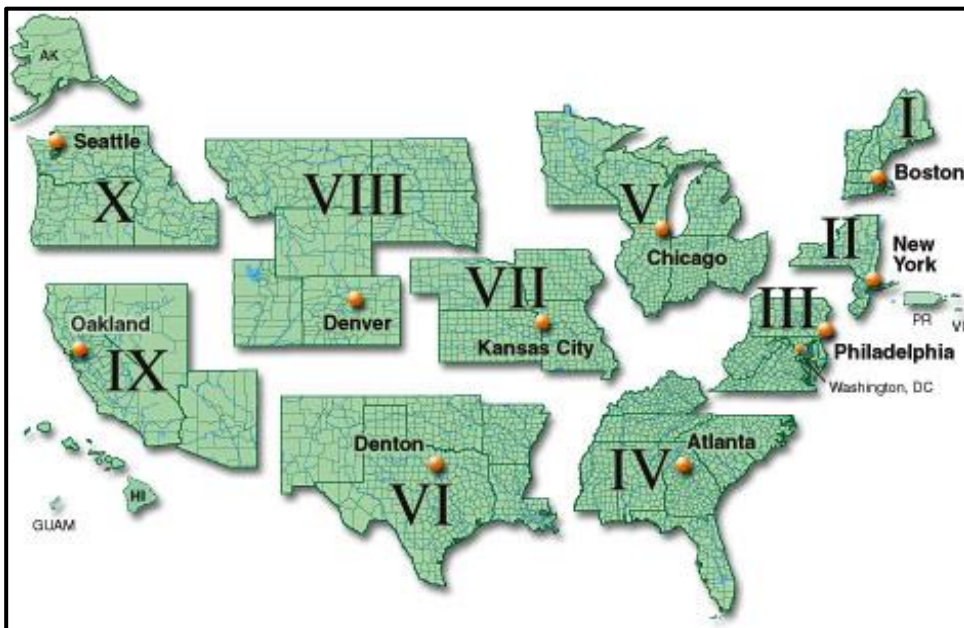
FEMA Structure

FEMA now operates within The Department of Homeland Security, as of 2003. There is an extensive organizational structure to FEMA. At the top of this structure is W. Craig Fugate, the administrator of FEMA. Fugate oversees all other departments in FEMA. The main departments are: Protection and National Preparedness, Response and Recovery, Federal Insurance and

Mitigation Administrator, Regional Offices, US Fire Administrator and Mission Support. Under each of these departments are numerous offices. Regional offices are the most visible to the public since they have more interaction with the public than to the other departments (FEMA, 2012b).

FEMA offices are located in ten regions throughout the United States. Figure 1 shows the location of the regions. In each region, there is a regional headquarters. The role of the headquarters is to be a liaison between that region and the national office and to help coordinate programs and respond to emergencies in their area (FEMA, 2012b).

Figure 1: FEMA Regions



Source: FEMA Regional Operations, 2012

The National Advisory Council (NAC) was created in August 2006 as a result of FEMA's poor response to Hurricane Katrina and the issues surrounding FEMA's role in the recovery (FEMA, 2008). This Council has become a vital advisory board to FEMA. NAC consists of government

officials at all levels, citizens and members of the private sector. These members are appointed by the Director of FEMA and represent all demographics, such as urban and rural communities (FEMA, 2012b). The council advises FEMA on many aspects of disasters such as disaster preparedness, agency goals, and the National Response Plan. The goal of this council is to give honest feedback on decisions made by FEMA and recommendations on how to improve the system (FEMA, 2012b).

Communication

Creating lines of communication is a critical process for any bureaucratic agency and each one must develop an effective method of contacting the public. FEMA has different approaches for different situations. It has developed a communication toolbox for communities that contains information of why it is important to have an emergency plan in place and the importance of practicing on a regular basis (FEMA, 2010). FEMA also has communication strategies outlining the process of rebuilding after a disaster.

FEMA also has a communication toolbox that addresses best practices and case studies for selected areas and has outlined strategies for community officials to deploy these tools. The main strategies behind this toolbox are the following: to increase public understanding of mitigation measures; document and promote effective mitigation techniques; convey the importance of identifying hazard risks; show that mitigation is both effective and affordable; and foster local, state, Federal, private and academia partnerships that promote mitigation. This toolbox is created for all that may be affected by a natural disaster, private and public entities (FEMA, 2010).

FEMA uses a variety of communication resources to alert the public on pending disasters and post-disaster recovery. FEMA identifies two types of communication sources, primary and

secondary. An example of a primary would be mainstream media outlets (local TV stations). Secondary sources include publications in journals/magazines. These are used as a tool to communicate to the public and can be used before, during, or after disasters. It is important to a city staff member on staff that is knowledgeable with working with the media (FEMA, 2010).

When a community begins the rebuilding process, it is important to have an effective communication plan in place. Communities affected by Hurricane Katrina are examples of communities that had a communication breakdown throughout the recovery process. This breakdown stalled the recovery efforts (Kettle & Walters, 2005). FEMA has developed ways to combat these communication breakdown situations, such as giving applicants a tracking number on their aid request and holding town hall meetings for community members.

When community members fill out an application to receive funding, each applicant is given a document number and a website URL through which the applicant to track their application progress. This is set up to reduce the number of calls and questions on applications (FEMA, 2010).

Town hall meetings are also very important in providing information. There allow those impacted by a disaster to voice their concerns and give FEMA officials an understanding of the community and the people that live there. There is usually a kickoff meeting right after the declaration is made and is FEMA's first interaction with the community. The town hall meetings are also an opportunity for updates on funding, construction, recovery of property, and temporary housing (FEMA, 2010).

Having an effective communication strategy is a FEMA priority. It has different strategies for preparedness, both during and after a disaster. With the creation of the communication toolboxes and the strategies used, FEMA is attempting to be more transparent for communities.

Different Types of Funding

There are two forms of funding assistance available from FEMA for communities after a natural disaster. The process to receive federal funding differs depending on the type and amount of funding needed. There are funds available to individuals, known as individual assistance and there are funds for communities known as public assistance (FEMA, 2011).

Individual Assistance

Individuals may seek assistance from FEMA after a natural disaster, mainly in the form of housing assistance. There are different housing needs that can be addressed, such as temporary housing, housing repair, housing replacement and total reconstruction (FEMA, 2011).

Funds can be used for repairing or replacing the following portions of the house.

- Structural parts of your home (foundation, outside walls, roof)
- Windows
- Doors
- Floors
- Walls
- Ceilings
- Cabinetry
- Septic or sewage system

- Well or other water system
- Heating
- Ventilating
- Air conditioning system
- Utilities (electrical, plumbing, and gas systems)
- Entrance and exit ways from your home
- Privately owned access roads
- Blocking
- Leveling
- Anchoring of a mobile home and reconnecting or resetting its sewer, water, electrical, fuel lines, and tanks (FEMA, 2011).

Individuals can also get assisted with medical bills for disaster-related injuries, burial accommodations for fatalities related to a disaster, clothing and housing items, fuel, moving and storage expenses and, damage to vehicles from a disaster. Requests for this type of assistance is determined on a case-by-case basis by FEMA staff (FEMA, 2011).

FEMA also has staff available for crisis counseling, assistance in finding employment after a disaster, legal assistance, and accountants on hand for any disaster relief tax credits available (FEMA, 2011).

The application process for individual assistance is straightforward. The first step is to complete a survey to determine if the applicant qualifies for any form of assistance. After eligibility is determined the applicant can complete the application online. After the completion of the application, the applicant is given a tracking number to track the progress of the application

(FEMA, 2011). The next step can be the hardest, and that is to wait. If the applicant qualifies for aid, an inspector will contact them and start the conversation of what the money can be spent on, and if any of it has to be repaid. If the applicant is denied assistance, he/she will receive a letter explaining the denial. If the explanation is not clear, the applicant can reapply or appeal the original decision. A written appeal must be made no later than 60 days after the original decision (FEMA, 2011).

Individual assistance funds cover seven forms of assistance: temporary housing; cash grants; unemployment; food commodities; legal services; crisis counseling and other forms of assistance (Bea, 1992). Temporary housing assistance funds can cover mortgages and rental payments while current homes are in repair. These funds are only available for up to an 18 month period. Cash grants can be provided for purchasing personal items such as clothing, medical expenses, or household items. Cash can be granted up to \$11,500 per individual or families. Unemployment assistance are those funds provided for people unemployed due to the natural disaster. These funds may continue for a 26 week period. Food commodities are food coupons that are provided to low-income households to purchase groceries. Legal services are available for low-income families and for cases related to the disasters. Crisis counseling is provided through the National Institute of Mental Health and is available to disaster victims cope with the disaster (Bea, 1992).

Public Assistance

Public assistance funds are available to communities as a whole and cover the following categories: debris removal; emergency work; repair and restoration of damaged facilities; hazard mitigation and community disaster loans (Bea, 1992). Removal assistance is available to remove debris that threatens life, public safety or property. Public debris removal funds maybe used to

remove debris from private land if it is in the public interest, and the costs will be covered up to 50%. Emergency work includes measures taken to eliminate threats to the public, including transportation, setting up communication lines, and demolishing structures (Bea, 1992).

The Federal government will not provide all the money needed to repair or restore facilities, but will provide up to 75% of the cost. These facilities include highways, streets, utility systems, and other facilities that provide a service to the public (FEMA, 2011). This rule was put in place after the Mount St. Helens disaster in 1980 when 100% of the cost of public facilities was made, resulting in huge Federal costs. Hazard mitigation is done to help prevent disasters in the future. Funds can also be allocated to develop plans for communities. Community disaster loans are made to governmental units that lose part of their income tax base due to a natural disaster (Bea, 1992).

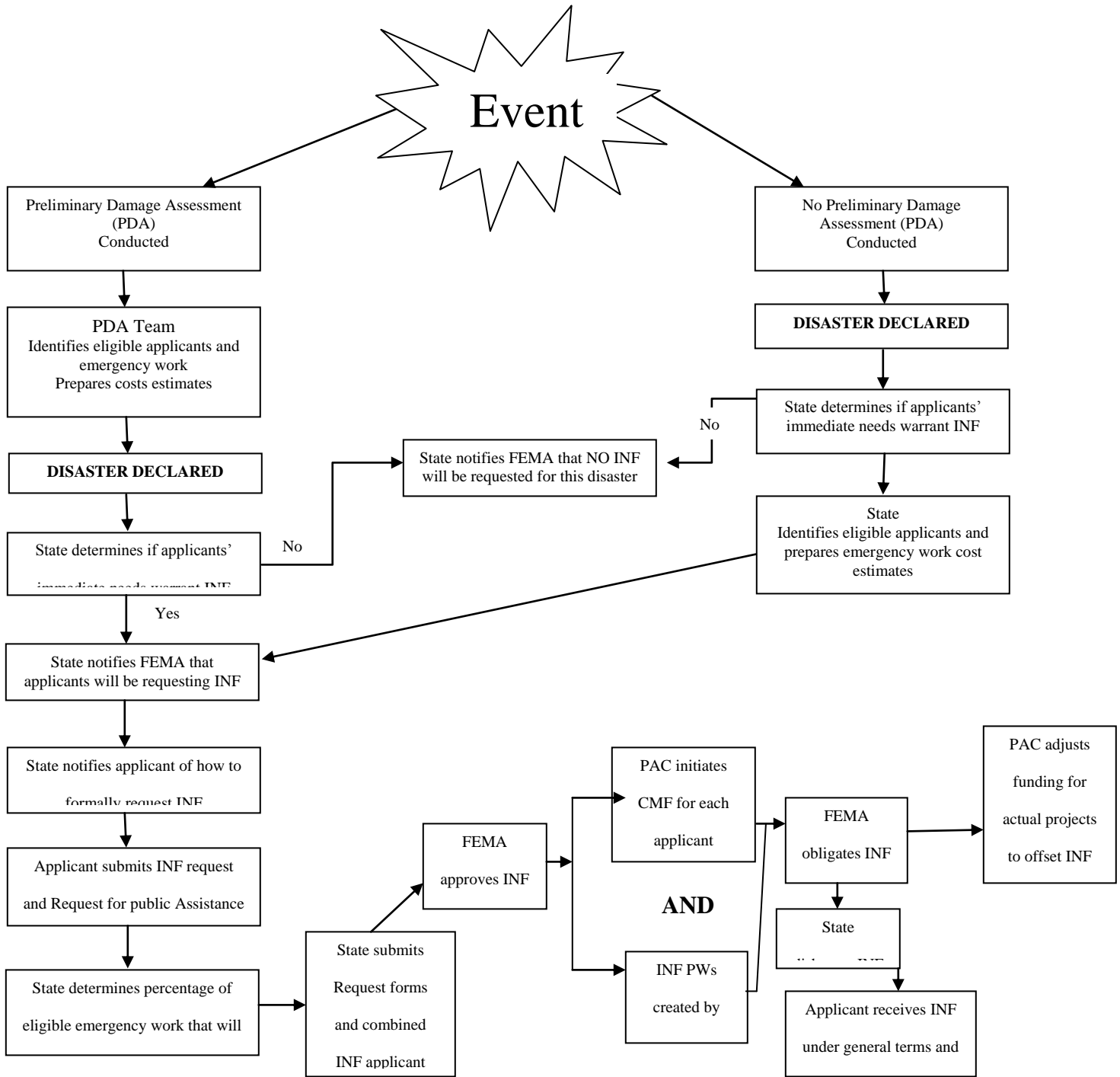
Public assistance funds are in one of two categories, immediate need or not immediate need. Immediate needs funding is available to communities that act quickly (within the first 60 days following the disaster) in order to save life or property. These funds are available to help pay overtime for emergency personnel and to pay for the use of special equipment if needed in disaster clean-up. The process to determine if something can be considered under the immediate needs category is provided in the flow chart, Figure 2. This chart also provides the process to receive the funds for immediate needs and how the decision is made (FEMA 2011).

To help communities understand the process to apply for federal aid, FEMA has developed a handbook explaining the proper way to apply for funding and how FEMA calculate the amount to be received. This handbook provides step by step instructions for completion of forms is necessary for assistance. FEMA will only pay up to 50% of the total cost and each state sets its

own rate of reimbursement for communities. Public assistance funds can be categorized as immediate needs according to the flow chart in Figure 2. Before the request can be submitted, a needs assessment has to be

Figure 2: Immediate Needs Flow Chart

Immediate Needs Flow Chart



Source: FEMA, 2012

Recreated by Preussner, 2012

performed by a FEMA staff member. The formula that communities follow to determine the amount to request, is to take the total in damages and multiply it by the percentage the state deems appropriate to request (up to 50%) and this is the total to request from FEMA (FEMA, 2011). An example would be as follows:

$$\underline{\$50,000 \text{ (total in damages)} \times 45\% \text{ (state's determined percent)} = \$22,500 \text{ (request amount)}}$$

The money from FEMA is passed through to the state and the state is responsible for distributing it to the impacted communities. Usually multiple requests are combined into one large request; this works best when smaller communities have less damages and by combining them into one larger request, the likelihood of receiving the funds is greater (FEMA, 2011). An example of this request would look as the following:

$$\textbf{Applicant A: } \$4500 \times 40\% = \$1800$$

$$\underline{\textbf{Applicant B: } \$8000 \times 40\% = \$3200}$$

$$\textbf{Total Requests: } \$5000 \text{ (A + B)}$$

A second type of funding available for a community that is covered by public assistance are funds that are in form of grants. There are four groups that are eligible to apply for a public assistance grant: state governmental agencies; local governments and special districts; private non-profit organizations; and, federally recognized Native American Indian Tribes, Alaskan Native Tribal governments, Alaskan Native village organizations or authorized tribal organizations and Alaskan Native village organizations (FEMA, 2011).

Once a group has applied for the funding and is granted the funds, the money is sent to that state to handle the distribution of funds. There is a three-way relationship between FEMA, the state,

and the applicant (FEMA, 2011). Each of these parties play an important role in this relationship. FEMA’s role is to determine the amount given, participate in educating the applicant on appropriate fund options, help with the design of projects, and be the review team for compliance with regulations (FEMA, 2011). The state acts as a liaison between the applicant and FEMA. States are also there to supply assistance on the technical side and ensure all state regulations are followed (FEMA, 2011). The process to apply for this funding is shown in Figure 3.

The first step is a preliminary damage assessment (PDA). This is done an estimate of the overall damage to the area. This assessment gives FEMA and the state an idea of what funds may be available and a timeline on receiving these funds (FEMA, 2011). The preliminary damage

Figure 3: Process to Receive Funds



Source: FEMA, 2012

assessment is done by FEMA officials, county emergency management officials and US Small Business officials (FEMA. 2011).

The second step is critical. A request is made from the governor after a state of emergency has been declared. A request for a Presidential Declaration signals that the damage is so severe that the state needs assistance to rebuild (FEMA, 2011).

The third step on the flow chart is a Presidential Declaration. After a Presidential declaration, the next step would be to give a briefing to possible applicants about funds that are available. This briefing is conducted by the state. Applicants have 30 days to submit their request for assistance (FEMA, 2011).

At the end of 30 day request period, there is an official kickoff meeting held by FEMA staff. The purpose of this meeting is to receive applicants' opinions and concerns. This meeting is also where a semi-formal plan is constructed for the process of rebuilding. All applicants who will receive funds are required to be at the meeting (FEMA, 2011).

After the kickoff meeting, the FEMA teams are able to formulate a realistic idea of the types of projects that need to be undertaken and estimate the cost of each project; projects can include more than one site. Once the plans have been developed, they are sent off to be approved. This process is more to double check compliance with the regulations on the state and federal level. Funds can be distributed up to \$100,000. For projects above \$100,000 they are sent to a special review board before approval (FEMA, 2011).

This next step is known as obligation of federal funds. This is a statement that the grantee (the state) understands the level of funding granted and how the funds can be used. It is also the section that states that FEMA understands projects will not be completed by the time of the

distribution of funds, and progression of payments will be done throughout the project's timeline (FEMA, 2011).

The last step is the appeals and closeout portion of this funding option. Anyone who wishes to appeal a decision made by the state has up to 60 days to file the appeal. Once the appeal is made, the applicant is required to submit substantial evidence that a decision not to fund a project was made in error or ignored the facts of the situation. The closeout portion is to ensure all work has been done and all costs have been repaid. Once this step is accomplished, the process is complete (FEMA, 2011).

In conclusion, FEMA is an agency that has a wide array of responsibilities and it is very common for local officials to become lost in the language and regulations spawned by a large bureaucracy. Understanding the process a small city goes through to receive federal aid after a natural disaster will be beneficial for other communities who are faced with the same disaster. To get a better understanding of the process, information was collected about the process and other communities' experiences.

Joplin, Missouri

Joplin, Missouri, is a Midwest community that enjoys the comforts of being a small city and works hard to be a prosperous community. Similar to surrounding communities, Joplin has seen its highs beginning in the late 1800s as a growing mining community and the lows of rebuilding after the devastating 2011 tornado. This is an example of a community that is resilient.

Location

Joplin, Missouri, is located near the Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma border (see Figure 4). It is about 2.5 hours south of Kansas City and about 3.5 hours southwest of Missouri's capital, Jefferson City. There are smaller lakes and streams near the community, but is not located near any large bodies of water, such as the Missouri River (City of Joplin, 2012a).

Figure 4: Map of Joplin, Missouri Image from Alyson



Source: Hunt, nd

Joplin was founded after the Civil War in 1871 by John C. Cox. Cox named this city after the Joplin Spring which was located near the city and the Reverend Harris G. Joplin, who founded the first Methodist congregation in the area (Weiser, 2011).

Joplin was known as a mining community with an abundance of lead and zinc in the area. This attracted miners from the east and the population of Joplin started to increase. During the late 1880s and into the early 1900s Joplin was an active, wild town, with many saloons and gambling establishments. After World War I, the price of lead and zinc decreased and so did the popularity of Joplin (Weiser, 2011).

In 1926, the famous Route 66 was developed and it ran through Joplin. This development promoted many service businesses to locate along this route. This route gained popularity after World War II and still today, attracts many tourists (Weiser, 2011).

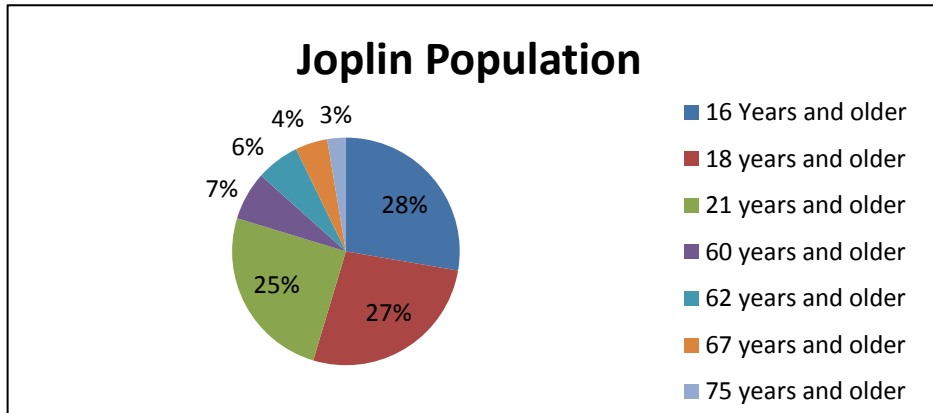
Joplin is also the home to the infamous Bonnie and Clyde. This couple is known for robbing many local stores and they were able to escape capture. Joplin has saved many of the historic landmarks of Bonnie and Clyde and uses them today as tourist attractions (Weiser, 2011).

Present Day Joplin

Today, Joplin is an active small city that has seen an increase in population over the years, an increase of economic opportunities and maintains a below average unemployment rate. It is important to note that these figures were pre-tornado and may not hold true today. The 2010 US Census was conducted before the tornado.

Joplin has a population of 50,150 and over half of the population is female (United States Census [US Census], 2011). The population breakdown is demonstrated in figure 5. Over three-fourths of the population is under the age of 60. This is similar to the state of Missouri's trend, but not similar to many of the Midwest states, which are seeing a rise in the elderly population (US Census, 2011).

Figure 5: Population Chart



Source: US Census, 2012

Joplin is not a very diverse community in terms of ethnicity. The largest ethnic group in Joplin is Caucasian with 93% of the population. There are also small populations of Asians, American Indians, and Black/African Americans. This is similar to the state’s trend (US Census, 2011).

The median income for a family in Joplin is \$35,566; this is below Missouri’s median income of \$46,005 (US Census, 2011). The poverty rate for Joplin is 18.3% and this is above Missouri’s poverty rate of 13.3% (US Census, 2011). The median value of an owner-occupied house in Joplin is \$87,500; this is nearly half of the state’s average (US Census, 2011). The conclusion is that most of the demographics for Joplin indicate that Joplin is below the state average of the same demographic characteristics.

Economy

Joplin is a community that is dominated by manufacturing industries. This accounts for 20% of the employed population. The second highest percent of the employed is retail, with 15%, and construction has 10% (City Data, 2011). Joplin is the home to mid-sized manufacturing industries. These employers are CFI (now Con-Way Truckload), Eagle-Picher Industries, TAMKO Building Products, AT&T Communications, FAG Bearings, and Leggett & Platt (City Data, 2011). Joplin also has many “big box” retail stores throughout the community, such as

Kohls, Macys, and Bed Bath and Beyond. There are also two hospitals located in Joplin (City of Joplin, 2012c).

The City of Joplin has created partnerships to help promote economic development. One of the partnerships is known as Joplin Regional Partnership of Southwest Missouri and Southeast Kansas. This encompasses six counties, Barton, Cherokee, Crawford, Jasper, Labette and Newton counties. This partnership tackles the issues of unemployment, focusing on training and job recruitment to the area. This partnership is able to offer incentives to attract businesses (Joplin Regional Partnerships, 2012).

Another partnership, the Joplin Capital Corporation (JCC), is a multi-bank program that helps finance small business loans and other ventures that are considering Joplin as a potential business site. There are ten banks in Joplin that make up the JCC, which is a nonprofit organization that can offer loans from \$5,000-50,000 to a business (Chamber of Commerce, 2011).

A Business Recovery Fund was established after the May 2011 tornado, created by donations, and to allow businesses to apply and possibly receive funding for business stabilization, training for employees, and to establish incubator. The Incubator fund is for startup businesses (Chamber of Commerce, 2011).

Education

Joplin's public schools currently have over 7700 students enrolled. Joplin's schools include an early childhood center, 13 elementary schools, three middle schools and a newly constructed high school (Missouri Department of Education, 2011). Joplin has a 14:1 student teacher ratio,

which is a little above the state average. Joplin schools have above the state average of attendance of about 94%. The teacher's average pay is below \$40,000, which is about \$4,000 less than the state average (Missouri Department of Education, 2011).

School district data reports that 58% of the students are on free/reduce lunch program, again which is higher than the state average. The average ACT score for students in Joplin is 21.6, which is the same as the state's average. Over 59% of students in Joplin take the ACT, which is lower than the state's average of 64% (Missouri Department of Education, 2011).

Joplin schools have not met the requirement for No Child Left Behind. The only category they met would be the attendance rate. They have not met the requirements for graduation, communication arts and mathematics (Missouri Department of Education, 2011).

There is an 83.1% graduation rate in Joplin, which is slightly below the state average of 85.6%. There is a mixture between public, private, and independent schools in Joplin. They are in the process of building additional facilities to accommodate the increasing population (Missouri Department of Education, 2011).

Joplin is home to a state university, Missouri Southern State University, and two religious colleges, Ozark Christian College and Messenger College. Missouri Southern State University has a population of 6,000 students, and is classified as a DII school. A DII school is one that gives out athletic scholarships and consists of mostly instate students (NCAA, 2011). Ozark Christian College and Messenger College are smaller private schools (Joplin, 2012).

Government

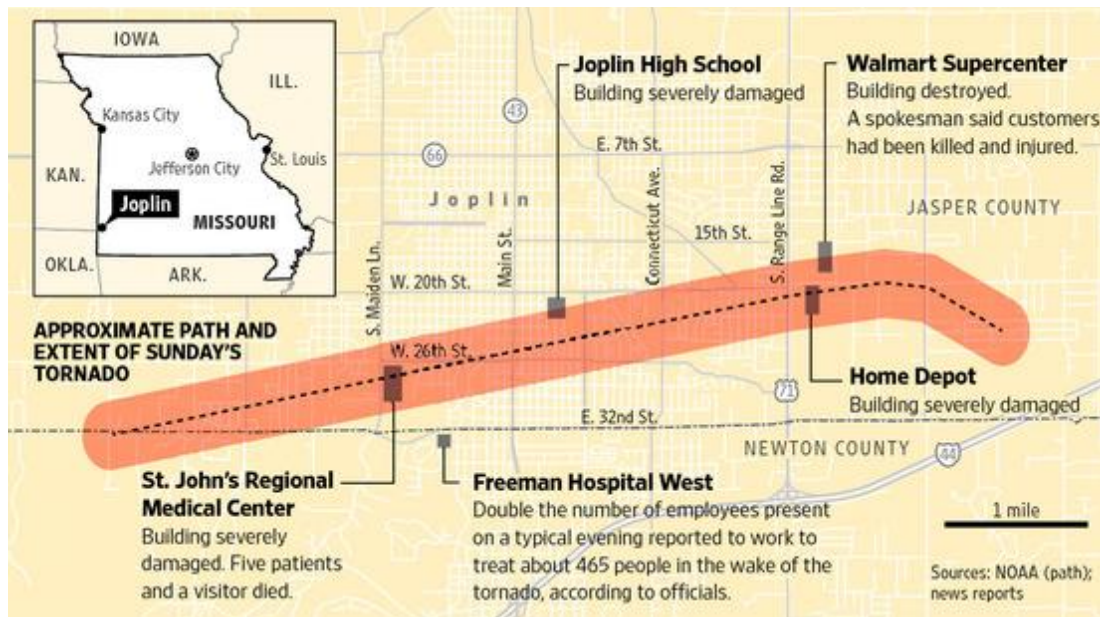
Joplin is governed by a nine member elected city council, including a mayor. Joplin is located in three districts for the state house, District 128, 129, and 131. Charlie Davis is the state senator for District 128 and Bill White is the senator for District 129. Bill Lant is the senator for District 131. Joplin is located in the 7th US Congressional District and the current representative is Congressman Billy Long. State Senators are Ron Richard (district 32) Claire McCaskill and Roy Blunt are the state senators (City of Joplin, 2012b).

Joplin Tornado 2011

On May 22, 2011, Joplin was hit with an EF-5 tornado. The community was changed after this last tornado; the recovery efforts are still evident and there is not a timeline of when the recovery will be completed. There is no official cost estimate for the total damages in Joplin (State of Missouri, 2011).

The tornado that destroyed parts of Joplin hit at 5:41 PM. The tornado left a path that was three-

Figure 6: Tornado Path



Source: National Weather Service, 2011

fourths mile wide and fourteen miles long. Figure 6 shows the tornado path through Joplin that left the most damage. As previously noted the Joplin tornado is considered to be a category EF-5. Tornadoes with this classification are considered to be the strongest and most powerful. This classification is from the National Weather Service. The winds for EF-5 tornadoes are 216-280 miles per hour. The National Weather Service classifies these tornadoes to have the strength to sweep a home from its cement slab and throw it 100 meters. There are only 58 reports of tornadoes that have reached this level since the 1953, when the National Weather Service started keeping track of EF-5 levels (National Weather Service, 2010).

The aftermath from this tornado shocked the country. Nearly 7500 structures were affected by this tornado and about 3500 structures were completely destroyed. One of the hospitals and the high school were destroyed. This tornado also killed 161 and injured hundreds more. When looking at the city as a whole, the tornado flattened about one-third of the city (State of Missouri, 2011).

Figure 7: Destroyed House in Joplin



Source: Preussner, 2012

Community Organizations

Immediately after the tornados a number of community organizations are formed. These organizations assist residents in areas that governmental agencies do not provide help. Community organizations are a way for community members to connect with each other and adds some form of comfort and control when dealing with a disaster (Klinenber, 2008). Strength is with numbers and community organizations are a way to tackle issues and bring together people who might, on their own, not be as effective (Klinenber, 2008). Many times FEMA will become a part of these groups. They offer advice on different aspects such as organizational techniques, goals, duties and timelines.

Recovery in Joplin has been a community effort. There have been many citizen groups formed to help redevelop the areas affected by the tornado. Three area organizations or events that have been instrumental in the rebuilding process are The Citizens Advisory Recovery Team (CART), Ten for Joplin, and the Community Foundation of Southwest Missouri. Each of these organizations plays an important role in Joplin's recovery process.

Citizens Advisory Recovery Team (CART)

One citizen group that has been active in the rebuilding of Joplin is The Citizens Advisory Recovery Team (CART). CART is citizen organized and operated by people from Joplin. Their focus is on rebuilding the community.

CART was developed as a result of two very active community meetings and feedback on the rebuilding process in Joplin. CART is relying on its faith and hard work to rebuild Joplin (Citizens Advisory Recovery Team [CART], 2011).

CART has identified four areas of focus: economic development, schools and community buildings, infrastructure and nature, and neighborhoods and housing. Each of these areas has goals and dedicated teams (CART, 2011).

The first goal of economic development consists of attracting businesses to the corridors and keeping business in these areas. Some of their goals are: assure stability of existing employment base and enhance the base with new, quality job opportunities; expand availability of workforce and enhance workforce skills; and develop, promote and support opportunities to develop major, mixed use, anchor projects to accelerate rebuilding in key areas. This effort is being led by two local businessmen (CART, 2011).

The second goal is to rebuild schools and community facilities. The high school in Joplin was completely demolished by the tornado so this effort has been in the works from the beginning because they needed to construct a school and have it ready by the beginning of the school year in the Fall of 2011. The goals and vision for this group are to create a 21st century learning environment. They also are looking into the area of sharing community space and increasing the amount of community space. This team is headed by community members with technology backgrounds and resources (CART, 2011).

The third goal is to improve infrastructure and environment. This covers a relatively broad area of infrastructure improvement and can be complicated. Infrastructure includes transportation, communication, roads, sewers, and other bricks and mortar projects. The second part of this goal includes the environment and includes the park system, \ensuring there is open space for the community. Some of the goals set forth by this team are: ensuring there is open space and park

systems, offering multi-modal forms of transportation and creating a community that encompasses sustainable practices (CART, 2011).

The fourth and final goal is the neighborhoods and housing. This effort is being led by the Joplin Housing Authority and a realtor from the area. The goals for this group are to promote sustainable building practices when rebuilding, offer low-income housing options, have a mixed density options, and educate homeowners and renters of the importance of having insurance (CART, 2011).

CART is just one of the community based organizations working on rebuilding Joplin. The members of this organization range from private sector businessmen to citizens who have been in the community for decades. This variety ensures that most of the population is represented when making decisions.

Ten for Joplin

Another citizen's led organization is Habitat for Humanity out of Tulsa, Oklahoma. They created the rebuilding effort in Joplin called Ten for Joplin. Board members from Tulsa Habitat were

Figure 8: Ten For Joplin Raising Walls.



Source: Habitat for Humanity in Tulsa, 2011

shocked by the destruction to Joplin and they felt as a neighboring community they needed to assist in the rebuilding process. They worked for about two months to raise funds which amounted to over a million dollars to rebuild homes (Habitat for Humanity [HH], 2011b). They then set-off for Joplin to rebuild homes for people who lost their homes due to the tornado. The tornado that struck Joplin destroyed over 7500 buildings; of the homes destroyed almost 43% were not insured (HH, 2011a). The need for rebuilding homes was something that needed to be addressed quickly and as efficient as possible.

Ten for Joplin was a mass building spree, where they constructed ten homes for low-income families in a span of 16 days. Even though this is organized by Habitat for Humanity, there were many community members involved in this group. Some businesses sponsored houses, while others donated their skills and services toward this effort. The United Way played a big role in this effort because the money they donated purchased the lots where these homes were built (HH, 2011a).

Habitat has developed a website and participating family profiles of those who have received one of the homes. This is a great way to put faces with the victims of the tornado and is a way for those to say “thank you” and what it means to them to have a home again (HH, 2011c).

Community Foundation

A community foundation is a tax-exempt, nonprofit, autonomous, publicly supported, nonsectarian philanthropic institution with a long term goal of building permanent, named component funds established by many separate donors for the broad-based charitable benefit of the residents of a defined geographic area, typically no larger than a state (National Standards of Community Foundation, 2012).

The community foundation located in Joplin, Missouri, is called The Community Foundation of Southwest Missouri. This foundation is part of a larger foundation known as The Community Foundation of the Ozarks. They play a key role in rebuilding this area. There are many projects sponsored by the Foundation. One way the Foundation is helping is by creating grants available to rebuilding and creating funds available to people affected by the storm. Applicants apply for the grants and the Foundation will award grants of \$5,000-\$25,000 (Community Foundation of the Ozarks, 2011b).

Another way the Foundation is helping is by being a partner in the community effort known as Rebuild Joplin. This effort helps connect people with the needed resources by acting as a warehouse for funds and assistance. People who wish to donate or volunteer can come to Rebuild Joplin and be connected to someone (or group) that can use their donations (Community Foundation of the Ozarks, 2011b).

Community organizations are one tool when trying to rebuild after a natural disaster. Joplin has many groups that focus on different aspects. The three biggest and more well known groups, CART, Ten for Joplin, and the Community Foundation offer assistance where the government cannot (and usually quicker than the government).

Analysis

To get an understanding of how FEMA responds to a community and the process by which communities and residents receive funds, a case study was conducted using Joplin, Missouri. Residents and businesses were surveyed about the recovery process and their interaction with FEMA officials. Information gathered from them tells about the interaction FEMA has had with Joplin. One question to be answered from this study is whether or not FEMA has improved its process in dealing with communities and residents. On the outside it appears to have made improvements, but the real test will be how it responds to a disaster and if these new processes are being implemented.

City of Joplin's Response to the Disaster

After the tornado of May 22, 2011 and several days of severe weather that followed, officials took stock of what was left of the town, and went into emergency mode. This was something that emergency crews trained for and they started the search and rescue efforts in Joplin. The City of Joplin's Emergency Management Team, which includes government officials, fire officials, and police, met that afternoon to determine the plan for the rest of the day, which included search and rescue and emergency debris removal (K. Stammer, personal communications, February, 25, 2012).

By that evening of May 22, state officials were already on scene and started the process of getting the state declaration of a disaster. When morning arrived, FEMA crews were in Joplin and ready to take action. The relationship between FEMA officials and Joplin had already been established from previous disasters. This made things go a little smoother since everyone knew

the process and understood how the city worked (K. Stammer, personal communications, February, 25, 2012).

The city implemented its National Incident Management System, NIMS, a structure of how to respond to a disaster. It was created to help cities and other forms of groups to respond, recovery, and mitigate the effects from an incident. This document lays out the roles and responsibilities for all involved in the process (FEMA, 2008). The emergency management team was familiar with this document and structure and knew their roles in this process. Keith Stammer, the Director of Emergency Management for Joplin credited their preparedness and familiarity with program and documents from FEMA for their quick and efficient response to the storm.

After Joplin was declared a disaster area, the next step was to ask for a Presidential Declaration and once that occurred, more funding became available. This declaration usually doesn't take long to occur when damages are as severe as in Joplin (K. Stammer, personal communications, February, 25, 2012).

Once the storm was over, Joplin started to receive immediate attention from all levels of government. State officials and the Governor came to look at the destruction. President Obama traveled to Joplin to see firsthand the destruction. This type of attention is not normally present at disasters and this allowed more options for help.

The magnitude of the tornado allowed for special assistance to be provided by FEMA. An example of the special assistance would be debris removal. There was over three million cubic yards of debris in Joplin. FEMA took half of that debris to landfills located in Kansas, and one north of Joplin. This is different than the normal debris removal because FEMA picked-up 90% of the cost and the 10% was left to the city/state. Normally it is a 75/25 split. This was only the

third time that FEMA offered this assistance for debris removal (K. Stammer, personal communications, February, 25, 2012). There is still much to do for the recovery of Joplin. Over 50% of the destroyed structures have been rebuilt; most of these are commercial or other private ownership. The majority of the structures to be rebuilt are residential, including many apartment buildings. The high school was destroyed by the tornado and is still in the process of being torn down. The timeline for the school being rebuilt is almost three years because the current location is in a floodplain and Joplin cannot receive funds to rebuild the high school if built in a floodplain. The school board is in the process of purchasing land uphill that is not in the floodplain to rebuild the high school. Currently students are going to school in an old Target building and other buildings around Joplin (K. Stammer, personal communication, February, 25, 2012).

Figure 8: Joplin High School.



Source: Preussner, 2012

Community Involvement

Joplin is a community that refuses to be defeated by Mother Nature. City residents are not strangers to natural disasters or the hard work of rebuilding. The tornado that hit on May 22, 2011, created the most damage seen by this community. After the initial shock of the devastation wore off and FEMA officials came in to help people cope and restart everyday tasks, community members gathered to come up with their own plan of action. They knew what the city and county would help with rebuilding, but they also knew it was up to the public to take the initiative. These conversations and meetings led to the creation of CART, Citizen Advisory Recovery Team.

Figure 9: CART community meeting.



Source: CART, 2011

CART's role in the recovery process is to serve as a liaison between the community and the city. They take the concerns of the community and relay them to the city and state. "CART can also be called the watchdog. We know what was promised by the city and we are there to ensure

these promises are kept” stated by CART member, Tonya Sperkle (T. Sperkle, personal communication, February 24, 2012). CART shows up to every public meeting. Their relationship with the City is a positive one. Throughout this process, a FEMA representative has been present at all the meetings and events held by CART. FEMA representatives are seen as mentors to CART. They help keep them moving in the right direction and identify realistic goals and timelines. FEMA was present at the first meeting without being asked to attend. They found out about this group and what they wanted to accomplish and knew they would be helpful in this process. The city views CART as an asset in the rebuilding process and knows without them, things would be moving slower and less coordinated (T. Sperkle, Personal communication, February, 24, 2012).

When the nation and world heard about the devastation left by the tornado, volunteers and donations came pouring into Joplin. People were traveling as far away as The United Arab Emirates to help. When Joplin talks about community involvement, they don’t mean just their community and surrounding cities. Community involvement means everyone and they know that without the generosity of these outside communities, things would be a lot different (HH, 2011a).

Figure 10: Habitat volunteers displaying their t-shirts with sponsors on them.



Source: Habitat for Humanity in Tulsa, 2011

One great story of people coming to Joplin to help in the recovery process would be the effort done by Habitat for Humanity of Tulsa, Oklahoma. It is responsible for the Ten for Joplin event that took place in the later part of 2011. After a board member insisted that the organization help out in Joplin, Habitat for Humanity made the decision to do a massive build in the area (HH, 2011b). It raised over a million dollars to help in this build and worked with the city to purchase lots and find families for these homes. Then, in 16 days, Habitat for Humanity volunteers built ten homes in Joplin for families that had no insurance on their homes which they lost in the tornado. Families that receive a home from Habitat are home owners. They purchase the homes from Habitat with a lower interest rate than normal and the money is then put back into other projects for Habitat. “Something different with these homes is that when homeowners pay for their homes, the money is going to the Habitat for Humanity in Joplin, instead of Habitat for Humanity in Tulsa. This increases the bank accounts for Habitat and they can build more homes with this money” stated Jane Dunbar, President of the Tulsa Habitat for Humanity (J. Dunbar, personal communication, February, 22, 2012).

Efforts from groups like Habitat for Humanity in Tulsa are major contributors to the rebuilding process. These efforts are looked at as a critical tool in rebuilding. Community involvement has been overwhelming and much needed. Without these contributors, Joplin would not be as far along in the recovery and building phase. FEMA was a critical player in this effort because of their continual and meaningful presence in the effort to rebuild.

Relationship with FEMA

Before the tornado, Joplin already had a relationship built with the FEMA officials in their region. Jasper County, where most of Joplin is located, is number one in disaster declarations in the Missouri. Since 1999, it has had 11 disaster declarations in this county. Stammer explained with the relationship already established, things moved quicker and easier than it normally would (K. Stammer, personal communications, February, 25, 2012).

Positives

Stammer had worked with FEMA after the Katrina event has and seen much improvement in FEMA response. The tornado in Joplin destroyed over 7500 structures, many of these being homes and apartment buildings, so there was a great need for temporary housing. “The trailers were brought in immediately because there was a housing plan in place that laid out how long these trailers could be used, assigned a social worker to each family and every time someone moves out of a trailer and into a home, that trailer is taken away immediately. This is seen as a positive because before Katrina, there weren’t housing plans in place” (K. Stammer, personal communication, February, 25, 2012).

Another positive aspect of FEMA coming to Joplin was “the understanding that officials in Joplin were in charge and did not try to overpower them.” Before the tornado, Joplin had run

through disaster drills and because of this practice, it was more prepared for the disaster than most communities (K. Stammer, personal communication, February, 25, 2012). FEMA has the power to declare martial law in communities it feels could turn chaotic, and can override local government power. This did not happen in Joplin. When FEMA arrived on location, the next morning after the tornado, it was there to assist, not take over. Stammer also states that Joplin did not lose any of their government officials and because of this, it could quickly carry out its disaster plans (K. Stammer, personal communication, February, 25, 2012).

Cons

Not everything goes according to plans and usually not everyone is on the same page. Even though some things went smoothly and as planned, other areas were not as easily achieved. Joplin had never seen destruction like what the tornado left behind. It was not aware of what Federal funds it would qualify for and what other aid would be available to the community. This was one of the biggest issues Joplin had with FEMA. FEMA was not very forthcoming with information of what the city qualified for and what was available. Stammer said it “would have been better if the FEMA officials would have come in with a list of the funds Joplin qualifies for and what they did not. Instead it was a guessing game, does Joplin qualify for this, and what the FEMA official would answer” (K. Stammer, personal communication, February, 25, 2012).

Another issue that Joplin had with FEMA was the constant FEMA official turnover. After the initial group of FEMA officials left Joplin, a FEMA field office was created and officials worked from this office. Normally FEMA staff stays for about 4 months and then leave and a new person begins. When there is a new person, that person might interpret rules and regulations differently than the person before and then there is the time spent catching them up on the current problems.

“One of the biggest problems with this is figuring out what can be covered by FEMA dollars. Some people might interpret the rules and agree that a project would be covered, but the next person coming in might say it’s not covered. Lack of consistency with the FEMA officials will cause problems in the end when FEMA is reimbursing the City for repairs” (K. Stammer, personal communication, February, 25, 2012).

When cities need funds from FEMA to assist in rebuilding, “many don’t understand that it is a reimbursement and that reimbursement can take a while. In the FEMA world, they might have disasters taken care of four years after the declaration. Within those four years, they have three years to audit their books and pay for the projects” (K. Stammer, personal communication, February, 25, 2012). This is an issue for communities who might not have money on reserve for projects.

Advice you have for other cities

Joplin is a community that is used to disasters and already established relationships with FEMA officials before the event. Director of Emergency Management Stammer had some advice for other communities when dealing with a disaster.

The first piece of advice for communities would be to reach out and make that connection with their FEMA representative. This will help ease tensions and make the initial visit easier, when dealing with a familiar face. Also this initial contact will give FEMA an inside view of that community and the city’s governmental structure. This will help if there is ever a disaster and FEMA is called in, it will already know the government structure and how they run that town (K. Stammer, personal communication, February, 25, 2012).

The next thing is for communities to actually practice their disaster plans often and keep them updated. Joplin practiced its drills with all who would be involved in a disaster: the police, fire department, EMT, and government officials. In this way, Joplin was prepared and knew how to respond to the disaster. Joplin credits its preparedness in saving lives on that day. It could have been much worse if Joplin was not prepared (K. Stammer, personal communication, February, 25, 2012).

Another factor that is considered to be one of the most important is “keeping it local.” Stammer states, “that the events that happen locally effects local members of the community. “It is important not to let the national attention derail the efforts. There may be media attention to the area, an increase of tourist to the area, but at the end of the day it will be local efforts to rebuild the community” (K. Stammer, personal communication, February, 25, 2012).

When a disaster strikes and the emergency plan is put into place, it is important that everyone involved, at all levels, knows the goals of that day. Within the first few days after a disaster, there should be goals set for each day. It is important to take it day-by-day until the disaster assessment is completed. If everyone knows and understands the goals for that day, things will run smoother and there will be less confusion (K. Stammer, personal communication, February, 25, 2012).

Case Study Conclusions

FEMA is an agency that is involved in every major disaster. FEMA has frequently been criticized for its work with communities. The information gathered from Joplin and its experience with FEMA, and the recovery process, indicates where FEMA excels and where it can improve.

Selected individuals were involved in these interviews about FEMA's response to the Joplin tornado, including Keith Stammer, Director of Emergency Management for the City of Joplin; Tonya Sperkle, member of CART; and Jane Dunbar, head of the Ten for Joplin event by Habitat for Humanity in Tulsa. They were chosen because of their involvement with the recovery process and their interaction with FEMA officials. These three individuals were asked to tell their story the tornado and the relationship with FEMA.

Throughout the participant's stories, there were several common themes regarding FEMA's response to the Joplin disaster. These themes are: response time, communication, funding options, assistance after the storm, and power. Through these stories and the themes discussed, the participant's impression was categorized. The impressions were categorized as "satisfactory" "not satisfactory" and "no opinion." Satisfactory response means that FEMA made only a few errors commensurate with the expectation that some mishaps will occur in handling the aftermath of any major disaster. Whereas, a "Not Satisfactory" rating indicates that there were major lapses in judgment and timing during the recovery process to date. The "No Opinion" option is if the interviewee had no opinion on that topic. Detailed responses will be discussed later in the report.

Table 1: Keith Stammer's Responses

<i>Keith Stammer</i>	Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	No Opinion
Response Time	X		
Communication	X		
Funding Options		X	
Assistance after the storm	X		
Power	X		

Source: Preussner, 2012

Table 2: Tonya Sperkle's Responses

<i>Tonya Sperkle</i>	Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	No Opinion
Response Time	X		
Communication	X		
Funding Options			X
Assistance after the storm	X		
Power	X		

Source: Preussner, 2012

Table 3: Jane Dunbar's Responses

Jane Dunbar	Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	No Opinion
Response Time	X		
Communication		X	
Funding Options			X
Assistance after the storm	X		
Power	X		

Source: Preussner, 2012

Response Time

The first question asked was about FEMA’s response time. This includes the original response to the event, and the time it took to get the needed materials to Joplin for recovery. In the past, FEMA has been criticized for their response time to affected area. As a matter of fact, a number of private businesses and non-governmental organizations responded to the Katrina crisis before FEMA could act (Thevenot & Russell, 2005). In Joplin, Stammer said officials were on the scene the next morning. “They gathered during the night and once day broke, arrived on scene. They came prepared and had a plan ready to help Joplin with the rescue efforts and to start the recovery process” (K. Stammer, personal communication, February, 25, 2012). Sperkle stated “I was impressed with the response time from FEMA and how prepared they were when arriving on scene” (T. Sperkle, personal communication, February 24, 2012). This is an improvement from recent years when the response times were later and there was confusion once arriving on scene.

Communication

FEMA continues to work on its communication skills with communities. The aftermath of Katrina resulted in a classic misstep of leadership and communication and they continue to work on improving. When asked about how well they are communicating with the community, the responses were mixed. Stammer stated that “communication wasn’t always the clearest and timelines weren’t always established. There is still no timeline of completion of the recovery process. There are also flaws in the communication aspect of funding. At first it was unclear when they would get reimbursed; there was confusion on all ends” (K. Stammer, personal communication, February, 25, 2012). On the other hand, when working with the community based organizations there was positive feedback on the quality of communication between them. Sperkle and Dunbar thought that FEMA was informative and easy to talk with. FEMA was consistently present at meetings. Sperkle stated, “They had many good ideas on the recovery and helped them create realistic timelines” (T. Sperkle, personal communication, February 23, 2012).

Funding Options

FEMA is one of the greatest sources of funds to communities after a natural disaster. There are many options for funding and unless city officials are very familiar with what is available, a great deal of time can be spent researching options. Stammer stated this was an area of weakness for FEMA. He stated that “FEMA wasn’t very forthcoming with funding options and the information about what qualified for aid had to be pulled from them” (K. Stammer, personal communication, February 25, 2012). He also noted that “things would have gone better if they had a list of the funding options and what qualifies under each option. Too much time was spent asking questions about funding” (K. Stammer, personal communication, February 25, 2012).

Sperkles and Dunbar did not have any opinion regarding the funding aspect. Dunbar used funds they raised for the homes. This is an area that could be addressed in the future for improvement.

Assistance After the Storm

FEMA officials are not just present for the immediate aftermath of disasters. There are usually officials around until the disaster closeout takes place, which can be as long as 3 years. When asked the participants about FEMA's assistance after the storm they all responded that officials are still present. Sperkles stated that at CART meetings there are usually one if not more FEMA officials present. The officials that are still in Joplin are work out of a field office and are there to assist the community in any way they can.

Power

Another issue examined is the interaction between the city and the FEMA officials. In the past, there was often a power struggle between these two entities. Some cities want FEMA to take complete power while others want their assistance, but do not want it to take total control. The case in Joplin is different because FEMA officials and the city government had interaction before the disaster, and there was an understanding of power and who was in charge. The responsibilities everyone had were already well-defined. Sperkles indicated that FEMA officials came into town and knowing that they served as a support system and worked with CART on recovery plans. Dunbar stated "FEMA did not try to take over and assisted when it came during the rebuilding efforts in Joplin" (J. Dunbar, personal communication, February, 24, 2012).

Meaning Behind Information

The information gathered from these interviews helped answer the question if FEMA has improved their techniques of working with communities after a natural disaster? On the outside there appears to be change and improvement. Stammer stated that “he has been in the field of emergency management for the past 19 years and the interaction with them after this tornado has greatly improved compared to interactions before Hurricane Katrina” (K. Stammer, personal communication, February, 25, 2012). “The response time to a region has improved greatly since Hurricane Katrina. There is not a delay, they are on scene and prepared. There have also been improvements on the communication aspect and interaction with the community. People in Joplin saw FEMA as “friends not foes.” There was an understanding of the roles and what was expected from everyone” (K. Stammer, personal communication, February, 25, 2012).

The overall perception of FEMA’s response to the disaster in Joplin was positive. Joplin acknowledges the quick response time, positive involvement with the community at all levels, and an understanding of power within the community. There were some aspects on which FEMA could improve on. These include communication with the city on the progress that is being made, and being prepared with a list of grants or loans for which the city qualifies.

Future Research

This report examined one aspect of FEMA, public assistance. There are many other topics that could be studied in future research. Two topics that could be looked into are: do we need FEMA and should we look at the individual assistance side of funding.

FEMA- Do we need it?

FEMA is a very large government agency in Homeland Security, and has power over many situations. Many consider FEMA to be one of the more powerful agencies in the United States. People may not be aware of the power FEMA holds because it rarely execute its powers to the full extent. Some of the powers FEMA holds entail controlling roadways, food supplies, communication, and electrical power. When disasters occur, FEMA has the authority to take over these sectors and can control them without a timeline (FEMA, 2012c). When Hurricane Katrina occurred, FEMA did exercise some of these powers until things were under control.

A number of individuals and public officials have publically criticized FEMA and are trying to close this agency. One of the most vocal advocates for this move would be Senator Ron Paul. This idea of power and how much one agency should hold is a topic that can be researched in the future. If Paul could have his way and FEMA is closed, who would take on the responsibility of disasters, and is it the federal government's responsibility to assist after a natural disaster?

Individual Assistance

Future research on FEMA and the elements of a community to rebuild after a disaster might include taking a deeper look into the citizens' reaction to FEMA and the process to receive funding on an individual basis. There are two major types of funding, public assistance and individual assistance. This report examines the public side of funding, but does not research the citizen's role in receiving aid. This research could include interviews with FEMA applicants about the process and their reactions to FEMA's response. Joplin, Missouri, could be used as case study for this research. Many of the citizens are still in the process of applying and waiting for funding.

Another area in individual assistance would be FEMA's control over what is covered and how they determine when an applicant qualifies and doesn't qualify. This would be done through interviews with FEMA agents and state officials who work with people in the application process.

These are just two areas that could be focused on in the future. FEMA is an agency that is evolving and their practices should be studied to ensure they are acting as efficient as possible.

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Appendix A

Case Study notes from interviews

Tonya Sperkle- CART member

These are my notes from my phone interview with Tonya Sperkle.

How was CART started and why?

Developed after a few active town hall meetings and citizens realizing there are many immediate needs that need to be addressed. This is a citizen focused group.

-Long term planning

-Different teams create CART

Issues CART faced

-Pace of redevelopment

-there was no issue with participation many volunteers

Relationship with the town and with FEMA

-Used as a mentor for CART

-help guide CART in the beginning

-Uses knowledge about disasters to help form goals and tells best practices to incorporate into the goals.

-There is a positive relationship with FEMA and the community

Future of CART

- CART will continue its work until everything is constructed and back to “normal”
- They hope to use the CART framework to create other groups in the future

Other information

- Constant interaction with the public to help reduce issues
- Very transparent process, with all documents available to read
- Volunteer group, doesn't require \$
- Watchdog role in the community

Jane Dunbar, Habitat for Humanity, Ten for Joplin

These are my notes from my phone interview with Jane Dunbar.

How was HH involved and why

- Board members out of Tulsa stated that we needed to help out Joplin, because that destruction could have been them.
- Realized the need of housing and HH in Joplin had their hands full and needed outside help

Issues HH faced

- obtaining land to build
- organizing volunteers and the paperwork

Relationship with the town and with FEMA

-There was miscommunication with HH and FEMA that slowed the process

-FEMA wanted to help

Future of involvement of HH

-The Ten for Joplin event was a one-time event.

-Continue to try to assist Joplin the recovery process as much as possible, without neglecting our area

Other information

-All the money raised in this event (through selling the homes) went back to Joplin HH to ensure they were financially able to continue the building.

-Saw our role as equipping them with the materials to create homes.

Keith Stammer- City of Joplin, MO

These are notes from my conversation with Keith about FEMA and Joplin and the relationship.

This interview was done in Joplin.

Relationship with FEMA

-There was already a relationship established with FEMA officials and the City of Joplin before the Tornado. This made the process go smoother because the roles were already established. It was also beneficial that we did not lose any of our officials during this storm because they were able to go right into the emergency management plan and knew what to do.

-FEMA arrived in Joplin at 7am the next morning with the highest level of officials present to do the needs assessment.

-There was a “rush” on the declaration so FEMA could start the process

What went well with FEMA

-Since we already had a relationship things went easier.

-Communication on most topics went well, they had a plan and used it.

-There was no power struggle or blame on what to do on either side

What do you wish went better

-My biggest complaint was the fact they didn't come with a list of what funds we could qualify for. If I didn't know what was available I might still be asking questions!

Recommendations to other cities

-meeting your FEMA officials before you need them

-have an emergency plan and practice it

-keep the efforts local

-include community organizations in the process