

AWC Municipal Excellence Award, Public Safety
City of Sequim, Washington (pop. 7,280) Emergency Management Program

Project Statement

Sequim built a robust multi-faceted emergency management program, leveraging limited resources through partnerships, to prepare for the future Cascadia Earthquake and lesser hazards; Sequim generated a good return on bad luck in the process.

Project Summary

Sequim is located on the Olympic Peninsula and features one of the oldest, and therefore most vulnerable, populations in the state by median age. Sequim has a population of 7,280 residents, a school district population of 30,000, a trade area of 50,000, and an annual tourism base of over 3 million. The City has 78 budgeted full time equivalent employees. Sequim faces risks of storms, wildfires, tsunamis, and earthquakes, besides the typical threats faced by most cities like terrorism and hazardous materials spills. Most of the city sits within a moderate liquefaction zone.

Even prior to the 2016 Cascadia Uprising earthquake exercise, Sequim was hard at work developing an effective emergency management program. The City had a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and had developed some basic components of an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) that it could stand up within a few hours. It also had stockpiled military surplus supplies at the City's Public Works Yard to support extended staff operations and to serve as a back-up location should the City's EOC be compromised. However, staff had limited or no training and experience and the EOC required more work to be effective.

In preparation for the potential 9.0 Cascadia Earthquake, the Washington State Military Department, Clallam County, cities, and other agencies created plans specific for the disaster, recognizing that the bridges throughout Clallam County would collapse creating micro-islands. Sequim would be the largest micro-island, with an estimated population of 25,000 if the earthquake occurred outside of tourism season and a much larger population if it occurred in season, and would be placed under tremendous pressure to respond. Basic supplies, planned to be delivered by the military would not be available for at least a couple of weeks and full infrastructure restoration, would not be expected for 6-12 months.

The City of Sequim participated in the 2016 Cascadia Uprising earthquake exercise, recognized deficiencies in its response system, and soon after initiated monthly emergency management meetings that often drew 30-40 people, with about half of the participants consisting of Sequim staff. Other active partners included Fire District 3, Clallam County, the Sequim-Dungeness Valley Chamber of Commerce, Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES), Olympic Medical Center, Clallam Public Utility District, KSQM community radio, Sequim School District, Pacific Northwest

National Labs, and assisted living centers. The team worked monthly to clarify roles in emergency management and to complete list of projects generated from the Cascadia Uprising exercise. In 2017, regional meetings shifted to quarterly, but City staff continue to meet every month, and partners are welcome, to train and to continue to improve our emergency operations systems. The City of Sequim and its partners accomplished the following tasks during the past two years and have these plans moving forward:

- EOC Staffing and Equipment - Fire District 3 and the City of Sequim made plans in 2018 to merge EOCs through an interlocal agreement. By combining staffing, the two agencies will have at least 25 staff members to run two daily 12-hour shifts during a long-term disaster. The City also outfitted the EOC with a generator in 2017. Both organizations will be a part of the Northwest Incident Management Team, which deploys to regional disasters. The City completed outfitting of the EOC, including disaster supplies and a radio room with aviation, HAM, marine, and satellite capabilities. An extra large antenna allows the City of Sequim to talk directly with the State if Clallam County communications are compromised. The City is currently working with ARES on the development of a wireless mesh system. Surface tablets serve the EOC, which has its own network should the City's network become unavailable.
- Public Education and Information - All of the agencies partnered on a common public education and information message encouraging people to prepare for 30 days without food, water, and access to medicine. KSQM radio worked with agencies on pre-recorded disaster messages and continues to work with other media, including the Sequim Gazette and the Peninsula Daily News to encourage the community's preparation. In 2017, the City created its first Crisis Communications Plan.
- Training - Fire District 3 and Clallam County specialized in training, both of staff and the public. Fire District 3 has trained 300 residents for 12 CERT Teams. In 2018, Fire District 3 will train seven CERT Teams, with 20 members each, one in each of the City's seven neighborhood areas. The City of Sequim gradually trained its staff to work within the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and is now training staff to operate specialized EOC positions. Guest speakers worked with the team on things like the structure of the EOC, communications systems, and business continuity. The City of Sequim partnered with Texas A&M University and FEMA in 2016 to bring a FEMA instructor to Sequim to offer an all hazards training for senior and elected officials. The City also organized training by State Emergency Management in March 2018.
- Planning - The City of Sequim updated its Comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan in 2017 and is planning an overhaul in 2018.

- Service Continuity - The City of Sequim is coordinating with other agencies to be ready to provide potable water through alternative means. All agencies are partnering on a State Legislative ask to assist with funding above ground diesel fuel tanks at the City's yard that can be used for day-to-day operations, but that can double as an emergency fuel supply to power vehicles and generators. The City led the effort to create a multi-agency equipment resource directory available during disasters. The City and Fire District 3 are partnering, through an interlocal agreement, to allow the City's Police Department to receive surplus military equipment that can be used by Fire District 3. Assisted living centers are networking to achieve preparedness levels that exceed the State's standard. Olympic Medical Center is partnering with all of the agencies on the pre-positioning of medicine.
- Exercises - Exercises after Cascadia Uprising included wildfire and winter storm tabletops. In fall 2018, there will be a tabletop exercise on an active shooter scenario at the City's open campus high school. In 2019, this will expand to a full field scenario with both the EOC and field response personnel in play.
- Action - Sequim activated the EOC for a windstorm in October 2016 and can activate in less than an hour. The EOC will be activated and City staff will practice using NIMS during the upcoming two-week Service Fest associated with the City's Neighborhood Revitalization program efforts.

Clallam County volunteer, Jim Buck received recognition for the Governor's Volunteer Service Award in the State of Washington's disaster preparedness and response category in 2017. The Washington State Military Department cited the Clallam County approach, with Sequim's ongoing efforts serving as a hub, as a model for the rest of the state's rural counties. King 5 covered the area in an extended story during 2017. This is the City's first application for recognition for its leadership.

The City of Sequim will continue to convene partners in the region and will continue to prepare for the Cascadia Earthquake and other disasters for the indefinite future. As a small city, Sequim faced a huge challenge with the Cascadia Earthquake scenario, one that would test any city but that requires Sequim to operate as a mid-sized city. What the City of Sequim has accomplished to date was without dedicated emergency management personnel. With the City Council's support, Sequim made emergency management a key organizational priority and began driving towards improvement.

In his book, *Great by Choice*, bestselling business author Jim Collins talks about a concept that resulted from his research on companies that went from good to great in stock performance and sustained the performance; it is called "Return on Luck". Collins asserts that every organization experiences good and bad luck. What

separates great organizations is that they seek to get a good return on any type of luck. The City of Sequim's position, close to the Cascadia Fault, surrounded by water and county residents, as one of the oldest communities by age in Washington, in a liquefaction zone, with many bridges, steep slopes, and a rural setting, is bad luck for a Cascadia level earthquake. The City has taken that bad luck and engaged in a robust and multi-faceted approach towards emergency management. Sequim, and the surrounding region, are now far better prepared for Cascadia than even two years ago and the City is ready should a series of lesser disasters occur. Sequim's residents and staff hope that Cascadia will not occur during our time, but we are confident that with continued gritty effort, our City will be ready whenever it occurs.