

Disaster recovery

Manitoba has seen its share of disasters over the past 15 years, everything from massive flooding to tornados. What is common in all of these disasters is the co-ordinated and professional response at all levels of government.

Starting with local responders through to the federal government, the response to a disaster is generally well done. Resources are deployed, incident commanders take control of sites and situations are managed to reduce the risk to lives and property. Whether it is emergency dikes, evacuations or search and rescue, the immediate needs in a disaster or emergency are the focus of our plans and preparations.

It is easy to understand why our community emergency management (EM) system is focussed on response; it is the component of EM that is going to

save the most lives and reduce property damage in the immediacy of the event. Its lights and sirens are a tangible and visible example of the various orders of government responding to the urgent needs of its citizens. However, I believe that community involvement needs to go beyond the immediate response and address the short and long-term recovery needs of the community.

Community-based recovery is the coordinated efforts to bring about the immediate, medium and long term regeneration of the community following a disaster. Regardless of the severity of

A COMMUNITY APPROACH

By Lee Spencer, Director of Recovery at
Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization

the disaster or the level of assistance from other orders of government, the primary focus for recovery rests with local government.

There are many components of recovery – residential, commercial, industrial, economic, social and social support – and there are various degrees of recovery. Successful recovery efforts typically rely on strong, local, community participation and integration of community into regional, provincial and national networks. This requires not only strong local government capacity but also the engagement of

public, private and volunteer groups – groups that are integrated into the community and motivated by a desire to make things better. Provincial and federal governments can provide recovery assistance but it comes with an increased level of intervention in the community decision-making sphere. This intervention into local decision-making is best managed by strong local leaders who understand recovery, and can keep the focus on the community needs.¹

For the most part, recovery efforts have strived to re-establish what was lost and restore a community to its pre-



disaster state. While the repair and restoration of the physical environment is an important undertaking, it represents only one component of recovery and generally ignores the opportunities to increase resiliency in the aftermath of a disaster. Now that our community preparedness is at such a high level, it is time to raise our recovery standards to the same levels. We must look at recovery planning and recovery as a social process focused on issues beyond restoration to enhancing resiliency and sustainability of communities.

While all communities intend to recover from the next emergency or

disaster, how many have a plan to recover? After response, recovery occurs along the critical path of disaster/emergency management. A quick scan of the community emergency plans shows that there are few actual recovery plans in any of the community emergency plans.

To begin recovery planning at the community level, emergency planners should:

- Consider the need to address a wide range of issues from re-entry of evacuees through to the future economic well-being of the community.
- Leverage existing relationships and structures such as chambers of


commerce or other committees.

- Catalogue and engage community resources such as seniors groups, clergy and other non-government organizations in your recovery planning.
- Establish a recovery committee and meet regularly. Structures and relationships established before an event are more effective in the face of a crisis.

A recovery plan can:

- shorten the recovery time
- avoid confusion and reduce errors in the recovery process
- avoid duplication of effort
- minimize recovery costs

Most communities feel pressed to rebuild to a pre-disaster state as quickly as possible. However, opportunity for change can often present itself in the recovery phase of a disaster. What processes and decision-making structures does your community have in place to take advantage of the recovery opportunities? Decisions such as restricting rebuilding in the flood-prone area, modifying infrastructure to enhance resiliency or to attract economic investment to the region will affect community resiliency for the long term and should be considered. Recovery is more than restoring physical assets and providing social welfare. Successful recovery recognizes the wide and variable range of recovery needs and that recovery is successfully achieved when all those needs are addressed in a coordinated manner.²

Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) recognizes the importance of recovery planning for communities and is offering training specifically focused on enhancing community disaster recovery planning over the next year. It is important that all levels of emergency management in Manitoba take time to consider not only their preparedness to respond to hazards the spring and summer may bring, but also plan for an effective recovery effort that restores or enhances our communities. 

Footnotes:

- 1 Mileti, Dennis S. *Disaster by Design*. Joseph Henry Press, Washington, DC, 1999.
- 2 *Recovery Management*, May 2005, Government of New Zealand.

BORLAND


CONSTRUCTION INC.


BUILDING MANITOBA SINCE 1919

<p>Municipal Paving & Full-Depth Reclaiming Leonard Wiens</p> <p>Asphalt & Concrete Street Resurfacing Scott Rutledge, Todd Gulka</p> <p>Commercial Parking Lots Rick Cheney, Mark Robles</p>	<p>Underground Utilities Frank Vickers</p> <p>Equipment Rental Marcel Savard</p> <p>Asphalt, Limestone, Gravel & Sand Supplies David Shume, P.Eng.</p>
--	---

President
J. Henry Borger

751 Lagimodiere Boulevard, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2J 0T8
Ph: (204) 255-6444 Fax: (204) 255-5209
Email: bci@borlandconstruction.com





URETEK®

WORLDWIDE

- ! We lift, align, under-pin and stabilize settled, voided or shifting concrete slabs.
- ! We can densify weak soils to increase load-bearing capacity using our unique deep-injection technology.
- ! We can repair municipal infra-structure as concrete or asphalt pavements and storm/waste water systems.

MINIMAL DISRUPTION!
COST EFFECTIVE!
PERMANENT!

1-866-8 URETEK
1-866-8873835
WWW.URETEK.CA