

Good morning

My name is Chris Boyer and I am the Contra Costa County Emergency Manager with the Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your time and attention to this emergency situation, and the response. Since the initial notification of the accident our County has maintained a robust presence in the Incident Command Post, and has provided response assets on the ground and in the air.

Today we are still on the water, still performing protective and clean up actions on our shores. Right now, in the midst of deliberate response it is difficult to say with clarity what specific issues possibly delayed or minimized the efforts of local, state and federal agencies. However, we can say that the response is not what we expected – in disasters it never is. The opportunity for diligent root cause analysis for every problem and concern is in the future once all the facts can be compiled and reviewed completely and competently.

While the response is still active we do have an opportune time for some high level observations, and I would like to share mine with you.

First, communication is always the first casualty of any disaster. Each of our personal expectations become the judged standard of care, and personal perceptions the reality of the situation. Without solid and trusted lines of rich communication from all directions, we cannot make informed decisions, build trusting relationships, or participate in transparent government processes.

Second, the OSPER Area Contingency Plan for the San Francisco Bay was last updated in 2005. Emergency management in a post 9/11 and post Katrina world is experiencing rapid change. Portions of the National Incident Management System, the National Response Framework, and several Homeland Security Presidential Directives are not reflected in emergency plans that are over 18 months old.

Third, the relationship between top level federal, state, and local responders requires common understanding of goals, unified decision making, deliberate and faithful effort honoring statutes, processes, and policies from all cooperators to be effective.

Finally, at the County level emergency management staffing levels have been victimized by unfunded federal mandates since 9/11. To protect and prepare a population of over 1 million citizens my County has 3 emergency planners that spend the majority of their time on Federal compliance issues and not on local emergency preparation or planning.

My experience over the past week with local response agencies has been the most cooperative and seamless in memory. My experience with state and federal cooperators was problematic.

I would like to close with the proposal that the most efficient response to any disaster is adequate prevention and preparation.

Thank You