

Audit Follow Up

As of March 31, 2007



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Emergency Management Program

(Report #0707 issued January 8, 2007)

Report #0718

May 30, 2007

Summary

The Fire Department management has completed two action plan steps due as of March 31, 2007, and made ongoing progress on two additional steps to resolve issues identified in audit report #0707, Audit of Emergency Management Program.

In audit report #0707, we identified issues related to the administration of the Emergency Management (EM) program and the EM planning and preparation activities. We provided specific recommendations to address these issues.

Between January 1, 2007, and March 31, 2007, the EM coordinator and Fire management have taken the following actions:

- Developed and implemented a process to gather input from City executive management and other persons working directly with the EM program to assist in conducting the EM coordinator's performance evaluations;
- Developed and implemented performance measures for the EM program and coordinator;
- Continued efforts toward meeting all National Incident Management System (NIMS) requirements by providing training to more than 1,500 City employees; and

- Continued efforts toward improving the effectiveness of communications between the City and County EM personnel by encouraging cooperation and enhancing communications.

Scope, Objectives, and Methodology

The original audit and this subsequent follow up were conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards and Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

Report #0707

The scope of report #0707 included a review of the City's EM planning and implementation activities as of September 30, 2006. The primary objectives were to determine whether the City's Emergency Incident Management Plan and activities: 1) adequately addressed federal and state criteria, best practices, and lessons learned; and 2) were adequately implemented, as applicable.

Report #0718

This audit follow up is to report on the progress and status of efforts by the Fire Department and EM Advisory Team to complete action plan steps due for completion during the period January 1, 2007, through March 31, 2007. This is our first follow up on action plan steps identified in audit report #0707. To determine the status of the action plan steps, we interviewed staff and reviewed relevant documentation.

Background

Tallahassee is the largest metropolitan area within the surrounding eight-county area and the largest city between Jacksonville and Pensacola. The City offers the majority of businesses and regional services, including a regional airport and two regional hospitals. In addition, the majority of businesses in Leon County are located in the City; we noted that 79% of the public schools and 79% of the hotels in Leon County are also within the City limits. In the event of a disaster, the City will be expected to be able to respond to damage and restore services to customers and residents in a timely and efficient manner. Services to be restored would include electric, water, and sewer, stormwater, solid waste, and natural gas. Additional City services that would be called upon include Police, Fire, Public Works, and StarMetro.

In 1992, the City initiated an EM program, but it is not recognized as a municipal EM program as defined in the Florida Statutes. The City does have an active EM program with a full-time EM coordinator, citywide EM and Continuity of Operations Plans, and operates an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for monitoring conditions and controlling City resources during disaster situations. It is modeled after the systems and structure of the National Incident Management System (NIMS). NIMS "establishes a uniformed set of processes and procedures that emergency responders at all levels of government will use to conduct response operations," and promotes the ability to effectively coordinate response and assistance during large-scale or complex incidents. City staff applied these processes when providing assistance to assist other local governments during the 2005 hurricane season.

Funding for the City's EM program is accounted for in the Fire EM cost center, while costs for the program, however, are spread across departments depending upon the activities and needs within each department. The 2007 approved budget for the EM program was \$128,864.

In report #0707, we noted many strengths in the City's EM program, including: the implementation of NIMS command structure and philosophy; the existence of a full-time EM coordinator; an "all-hazards" Emergency Incident Management Plan; dedicated and knowledgeable staff to lead response efforts during emergencies; and a methodology to capture disaster related expenses.

Opportunities to improve the City's EM program exist related to:

1) The administration of the EM program, including: compliance with the federal NIMS requirements; the location and reporting of the EM coordinator position within the City's organizational structure; the tracking and reporting of EM program costs outside of the EM Division related to planning and "non-declared" emergency response activities; the continued efforts to improve the coordination of resources, cooperation and communication between the City and County EM programs; and the utilization of performance measures to evaluate the EM program's effectiveness and efficiency.

2) The EM planning and preparation activities related to: staffing and training of EM personnel and City executive management; development and testing of departmental Continuity of Operations Plans; reevaluation of "critical" software applications for disaster recovery; backup communications planning; adequacy of City's Emergency Operations Center; and defining criteria for when emergency public safety and non-public safety personnel should take shelter during major storms.

Previous Conditions and Current Status

Table 1, on the following page, identifies the four action plan steps due as of March 31, 2007, and describes the current status of each action plan step.

Table 1
Action Plan Steps from Audit Report #0707
Due as of March 31, 2007, and Current Status

Action Plan Steps Due as of March 31, 2007	Current Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to pursue NIMS compliance by meeting all requirements within the City's control and responsibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☼ Ongoing and progressing. To date, over 1,500 City employees have been trained in the basic required NIMS courses, including approximately 99% of the staff from Police, Fire, Water and Sewer, Electric, Aviation, Streets and Drainage, Storm Water, Traffic Engineering, Engineering, Communications, Real Estate, and Neighborhood Services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a process to periodically gather input from City executive management or those persons that can best convey how effectively the EM coordinator works in their respective departments to incorporate into the EM coordinator's performance evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Completed. The EM Advisory Team meets quarterly and reviews the progress of the coordinator, and his activities such as training presented, plans developed, grants written, coordination with other departments, agencies and communities. Additionally, specific feedback is solicited from key staff that interact with the coordinator and input received is incorporated into the evaluation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management continue efforts toward improving the level of communication and effectiveness of working relationships between the City and County EM personnel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☼ Ongoing and progressing. Staff has met with County EM director and staff on several occasions. Four joint City/County staff pre-season meetings are scheduled for April. Efforts are ongoing to ensure open effective communications.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, obtain management approval, and implement appropriate performance measures to provide City management information on the program's performance, impact, costs, and benefits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Completed. Management developed and implemented performance measures for the EM program and coordinator. Additionally, Fire management has developed a separate budget proposal for the EM program (i.e., not combined with Fire) to create a better mechanism for departments to track EM related funding and expenses.

Table Legend:

● - Issue addressed in the original audit

✓ - Issue addressed and completed

☼ - Ongoing and progressing

Conclusion

As described in Table 1 above, management has completed two action plan steps due as of March 31, 2007. In addition, progress is being made for two other “ongoing” action plan steps.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance provided by EM program staff and Fire management during this audit follow up and commend their efforts to implement steps addressing the issues identified in the audit.

Appointed Official's Response

City Manager:

I'm pleased with the progress and findings of this follow up audit. City departments have completed both of the items that are due during this period and are making outstanding progress on the ongoing items. I am particularly pleased with the progress toward NIMS compliance training. Staff has worked exceptionally hard to deliver the training to over 1500 employees thus far. We appreciate the work on this follow up by staff from the Auditor's Office and I'm confident the improvements that have been implemented will enhance emergency preparedness for our community.

Copies of this audit follow up #0718 or audit report #0707 may be obtained from the City Auditor's website (<http://talgov.com/auditing/index.cfm>) or via request by telephone (850 / 891-8397), by FAX (850 / 891-0912), by mail or in person (Office of the City Auditor, 300 S. Adams Street, Mail Box A-22, Tallahassee, FL 32301-1731), or by e-mail (auditors@talgov.com).

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