



County Administrative Office Public Information

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CSAC 2019 Challenge Award Entry

San Bernardino County

"Terrorist Attack Legacy Report and Organizational Review"

OVERVIEW: Following the San Bernardino terrorist attack, the County prepared two reports documenting the County's response and recovery for the benefit of others facing similar circumstances.

CHALLENGE: On December 2, 2015, a terrorist attack took the lives of 13 County employees and one other community member, and wounded and traumatized dozens of other County employees.

The County sought and received a great deal of advice from other communities that had endured mass shootings. However, many aspects of the County's experience were unique. For instance, all but one of the deceased, injured, and directly traumatized were County employees who were on the job at the time. Also, almost all of the deceased and incapacitated County employees worked in the same office, which performs a vital public health function that had to continue uninterrupted despite their absence. There were no precedents for the County to follow to address many of the challenges it faced.

SOLUTION: The County determined it had a responsibility to document and analyze all of the actions it took as a public agency and employer so it could create a resource for future County leaders and other public agencies who might someday face similar circumstances. The result is two reports – one, an organizational review documenting the County Government organization's response to and recovery from the attack; the other, a legacy report designed as a resource for other agencies coping with or preparing for a similar incident. The Board of Supervisors commissioned CPARS Consulting to prepare these reports. CPARS assembled a team of experts in emergency management and response, communications and public information, and human resources and employee services to interview hundreds of County executives and other employees and review documents.

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INNOVATION: Although law enforcement “after-action” reports are quite common following major incidents, to the County’s knowledge and to the knowledge of the County’s consultant CPARS, no agency has done an organizational review documenting and examining the actions taken by civilian management and staff in response to an incident of this nature. Nor is the County aware of another agency that has prepared a detailed “guide book” that could be utilized by other agencies facing similar circumstances. This idea was born in the County’s fruitless search for examples showing how other agencies have dealt with a crisis such as this, and the notion that perhaps there had never been a crisis such as this, but that future incidents were possible.

RESULTS: The County CEO forwarded the reports to CSAC, the National Association of Counties, the League of California Cities, the National League of Cities, and the International City/County Management Association for the benefit of their members. Also, the County CEO reached out to his counterpart in Virginia Beach, VA, following the mass shooting in that community to offer support and access to the Legacy Report and Organizational Review, as their tragic incident is likely to pose many of the same reaction and recovery challenges as the December 2, 2015 incident.

REPLICABILITY: The County believes these reports and the broader notion that steps taken toward problem-solving should be documented for the benefit of future leaders and other agencies is one that be adopted by any organization.

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OPTIONAL SUBMISSION: The legacy report can be viewed at and downloaded from:

<http://www.sbccounty.gov/uploads/CAO/reports/December2LegacyDocument.pdf>. The organizational

review can be viewed at and downloaded from:

<http://www.sbccounty.gov/uploads/CAO/reports/December2OrganizationalReview.pdf>.