



# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

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*REVISION #3*

Resolution 2019-668

Adoption of Revised Emergency Preparedness Plan

COLUMBIA HOUSING | 1917 HARDEN STREET, COLUMBIA, SC 29204

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## Attachments

Attachment 1:	Emergency Resources
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Attachment 3:	Emergency Operations Center
Attachment 4:	Internal Emergency Contact Information
Attachment 5:	Situational Emergency Procedures
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## INTRODUCTION

The Columbia Housing Authority's (CH) Emergency Preparedness Plan identifies natural and man-made emergencies that may impact a single structure or the entire agency. It details the response procedures that CH should follow in case of an emergency.

All departments within the agency should become familiar with this plan. As appropriate, each department should formulate their own action plans or emergency operations checklist to complement this plan.

CH emergency operations will be conducted within the framework of CH policy guidelines. Any exception to these procedures will be conducted by, or with the approval of, the Executive Director, or designee, directing and/or coordinating the emergency operations.

An Emergency Management Planning Committee will meet on an annual basis at the beginning of each fiscal year to review the Emergency Preparedness Plan for necessary updates and revision. Divisional and departmental emergency plans are to be maintained as supplements to this umbrella plan. Each department should review these plans at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 emphasized the need for local agencies to immediately respond to an emergency and to have a plan in place to react to the emergency. That is the purpose of the CH's Emergency Response Plan. This agency has the ultimate responsibility to prepare and respond to a disaster. FEMA and South Carolina Emergency Management Division are not first responders but have indicated their willingness and mission to assist the Authority whenever there is a disaster or emergency.

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 provided a lot of insight into the problems of a disaster impacting an entire Authority. Communication was the primary problem for Authorities since cell towers, phone systems, email, and internet communications were totally destroyed in many cases.

In the event of a complete disaster impacting the total Authority, the Executive Director will contact the Eastern Carolina Regional Housing Authority for assistance from other PHA's outside the probable disaster area at (919)735-0435. CH recognizes that each employee may have individual concern for the safety of their own families, once these emergencies have been addressed, the employee is expected to comply with this Emergency Preparedness Plan.

Regional emergency efforts are coordinated through the South Carolina Executive Director's Association (SCEDA). The SCEDA manual is maintained in the

Maintenance Department. CH reaffirms its position that whenever possible, CH will assist other housing authorities if a disaster occurs.

There is no way to prevent or deter the forces of nature, we can be prepared, we can assess our operations, inventory and organize available resources keep our comments informed and hopefully enlightened, and then meet the challenge head on.

## PURPOSE

The basic emergency procedures outlined in this guide are to protect life and property through effective use of CH resources and to provide for the physical and emotional well-being of the residents of our public housing communities during and immediately following any emergency.

This document describes an integrated plan for responding to a CH emergency. Whenever an emergency affecting CH reaches proportions that cannot be handled by routine measures, the Executive Director, or his/her designee, may declare a state of emergency and implement the Emergency Preparedness Plan. It is recognized that the specific actions implemented will be dependent on the nature and severity of the situation. Since an emergency may be sudden and without warning, these procedures are designed to be flexible in order to accommodate situations of various types and magnitudes.

## SCOPE

It is possible for a major disaster to occur at any time and at any CH property. CH includes over 300 buildings and employs approximately 150 individuals. CH has three elderly high-rises and one large older public housing community (Latimer Manor). CH serves approximately 20,000 persons in the public housing program and the Housing Choice Voucher Programs.

This plan designates three levels of emergencies. These definitions are provided as guidelines to assist staff and residents in determining the appropriate response. Any type of emergency incident, potential or actual, should be reported immediately to local Law Enforcement at 911.

### Level 1

Any incident, potential or actual, that will not seriously affect the overall functional capacity of CH. These emergencies can be handled through normal operating channels. Examples include minor chemical spills, most deaths/suicides, low-level acts of violence, sewer stoppages, power outages, and weather-related situations such as those that could occur during winter storms.

## **Level 2**

Any incident, potential or actual, that affects an entire building or buildings, and which may disrupt the overall operation of CH. See Attachment 1 for a list of Emergency Resources. These emergencies require a coordinated response beyond normal operating channels. Outside emergency services will probably be required, as well as major efforts from CH staff. These situations are those that are likely to traumatize a significant number of community members (e.g., some deaths, violence, or fire).

## **Level 3**

Any event or incident that has the potential or does seriously-impair or halt CH operations. In some cases, death of personnel and severe property damage may be sustained. Such major disasters require a coordinated response by all CH resources and outside emergency services would be essential. These situations include disasters such as tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, major chemical incidents and major fires. In all cases, an Emergency Operations Center will be activated, and the appropriate support and operational plans implemented.

## **TYPES OF EMERGENCIES**

The CH is at risk from various emergencies and/or hazards. The following list identifies those that constitute a Level II or Level III response:

- Fire
- Natural disaster (Tornado, Hurricane, Winter Storm, Earthquake)
- Chemical or radiation spill
- Violent or criminal behavior
- Utility failure
- Bomb
- Civil disturbances or demonstrations
- Medical/Psychological (epidemic, poisoning, threats of harm to self, other)
- Public relations issues (budgetary issues, resident safety issues, management issues)
- Transportation accident (accident involving an Authority vehicle; private/corporate aircraft crash, train derailment)

## **ASSUMPTIONS**

An emergency or disaster may occur at any time of the day or night, weekend or holiday, with little or no warning.

The succession of events in an emergency is not predictable. Published support and operational plans will serve only as a guide and checklist and may require modification during an actual event to meet the requirements of the emergency.

Disasters may impact all of Richland County; therefore, state, city, county and federal emergency services may not be available. A delay in emergency services may be expected (up to 48-72 hours).

## DECLARATION OF AN EMERGENCY

The authority to declare a state of emergency rests with the Executive Director or designee. Until the Executive Director makes such a declaration, CH's Security Officers will place into immediate effect the procedures necessary to meet the emergency, safeguarding persons and property, and securing CH facilities.

In the absence of the Executive Director, the succession of authority for directing an emergency situation is the Chief Operating Officer or designee.

In the event of earthquakes, aftershocks, fires, storms or a major disaster occurring in or around any CH property, the CH Maintenance Coordinator and CH Director of Security will be dispatched to any disaster site to determine the extent of any damage.

## DIRECTION AND COORDINATION

All emergency operations will be directed by the Executive Director or designee. In their absence, the first responder will assume control of the emergency response until relieved.

Direct operational control of any Authority's major emergency or disaster is the responsibility of the Deputy Director for Housing and Facilities Management.

The Executive Director and Senior Staff will meet on an ongoing basis in regard to the Columbia Housing Authority's policy and legal concerns in order to determine what actions are required beyond the standard emergency response protocols. A detailed explanation of Emergency Team responsibilities is included in Attachment 2.

## EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

In the event of a Level III disaster or on orders of Columbia Housing's Executive Director, an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) under the direction of the Chief Operating Officer will be established in the Columbia Housing's Main Office at 1917 Harden Street. See **Attachment 3** for additional information.

CH's Main Office is in a low-lying area subject to flooding and may be subject to no utilities. Therefore, the following will serve as alternative EOC locations due to their ability to operate on backup generators:

1. Tillis Center, 211 Simpkins Lane
2. Oak Read High-rise, 221 Read Street
3. Marion Street High-rise, 1930 Marion Street
4. Arrington Manor High-rise, 2225 College Street
5. Local School in coordination with Richland School District I

Each alternative EOC location is numerically ordered; if the main location is unavailable, CH staff shall report to #1 on the list, in the event #1 is unavailable, staff shall report to #2, and so forth and so on.

### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TEAM

When an emergency occurs, the CH Executive Assistant will contact members of the CH Emergency Management Team comprised of the following persons:

- Emergency Director: CH Executive Director or designee
- Emergency Coordinator: Chief Operating Officer
- Physical Damage: Maintenance Coordinator
- Financial Impact: Director of Accounting and Budgets Resident Impact: Director of Public Housing
- Employee Impact: Director of Human Resources
- Public Information: Director of Communications
- IT/Communications: Director of IT

### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

The CH Executive Assistant will have the responsibility for contacting all members of the CH Board of Commissioners and keeping them apprised of any emergency situation. Please see **Attachment 4** for contact information for the Emergency Management Team.

The Emergency Management Team is responsible for implementing the overall emergency preparedness plan. Individual responsibilities of the Executive Management team are outlined in **Attachment 2**. All team members will alert and coordinate additional staff support as needed for meeting the emergency, while the Executive Director with the advice of the Chief Operating Officer will make emergency policy decisions and request outside assistance when necessary.

Additional staff support may include: Accountants, Property Management, Case Management, Computer Services and the Procurement Office. Other CH staff may

find it necessary to respond, depending on how the emergency affects their individual departments and on what type of additional support service their department can provide.

All departments should have emergency procedures in place in response to any type of emergency.

### **Responsibilities**

- **Executive Director/COO**  
Columbia Housing's Executive Director is responsible for the overall direction of the agency's emergency operations.
- **Department Heads**  
The Chief Operating Officer, where appropriate, should prepare an emergency response plan that addresses the unique characteristics of the emergency within the context of this umbrella plan.

These staff persons are also responsible for conducting drills to insure that building evacuation information is distributed to all employees with follow-up discussions, on-the-job training or explanation as required. Time shall be allowed for training employees in emergency techniques such as fire extinguisher usage, first aid, CPR and building evacuation procedures. Contact the Director of Security for assistance.

- **Property Management Staff**  
All Property Managers should educate their residents and employees concerning CH procedures as well as evacuation procedures for their buildings and/or area. They should evaluate, survey and estimate their assigned buildings, facility or area in order to determine the impact a fire or earthquake could have on it. All safety hazards should be reported to the Security and Maintenance Departments and promptly submit work orders to reduce hazards and to minimize accidents. Contact either of these departments for assistance.

## **NOTIFICATIONS SYSTEM**

The telephone is the primary means of emergency notification for the departments within the Authority. There is no central PA system in any of the CH's facilities. All departments should establish a telephone tree for emergency notification of employees during business hours as well as after hours for key personnel.

In case of any emergency, voice mail notification can be activated. The Director of IT or designee can implement this procedure if necessary.



An emergency message can be delivered using the CH's Central Office telephone system. The Director of IT is responsible for activation of the emergency telephone line. This line is typically activated for severe weather announcements and updates that affect opening and closing of the CH offices.

The Director of Communications is responsible for activation of notices on local television networks.

The CH Executive Assistant is the focal point for transmission of official emergency telephone communication to all Department Heads.

Each Department Head, upon receiving notification of an emergency, is to pass the same information along to those departments/areas under his or her direction.

The first responder to any emergency will notify the Chief Operating Officer of any CH emergency as necessary and will initiate the notification system.

## EMERGENCY RESOURCES

The following are resources that the Authority has available for any emergency.

### **CH Security**

Uniformed CH security officers and Community Safety Officers are on call 24 hours a day. Additionally, police help is readily available from the Columbia Police Department and/or Richland County Sheriff's Department.

To contact CH Security please call: (803) 995-1455.

### **Medical, Physical, Emotional**

Richland County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) should be contact by calling 911 if there is a medical emergency.

The United Way of the Midlands can provide referral services for medical and health-oriented needs.

To contact the United Way of the Midlands please call: 211

Please note that these guidelines do not refer to obtaining medical treatment for accidental injury or occupational disease sustained by employees in the course of performing their job duties. Separate procedures exist for treating work-related injuries.

The Employee Assistant Program, which is currently contracted to the Palmetto Employee Assistance Program (PEAP), provides assistance 24 hours a day. PEAP offers counseling services and makes referrals.

To contact the PEAP please call: (803) 929-0661.

### **Maintenance**

Skilled workers are available 24 hours a day. They are capable of providing the following emergency services: maintenance at all times during normal working hours and on short notice at other times

1. Utilities: Repairs to water, gas, electric and sewage systems.
2. Structures: Repairs to structures and mechanical equipment therein, including heating and cooling systems.
3. Equipment: Portable pumps, generators, floodlights, welders, air compressors, tractors, backhoes, forklifts, etc.

For after-hours emergency work orders please call: (803) 251-2747.

### **Procurement**

Emergency procurement of required goods and services in direct support of an emergency must be handled in a manner to ensure compliance with CH Procurement Policy. Emergency procurements are limited to supplies and services necessary to meet the immediate emergency conditions only. Contact the Director of Procurement or designee for assistance or direction during an emergency.

A detailed record will be maintained of all supplies and services purchased to meet an emergency situation; this is vital for analysis and assessment of total damages incurred during an emergency situation and to receive appropriate reimbursement through insurance coverage.

## **RECORDING OF EMERGENCY HOURS**

All employees (outside of normal business hours) and volunteers will record their hours on a daily basis for reimbursement for insurance claims and in the submission of a FEMA claim in a Presidential Declared Emergency.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

To report an emergency, call Security at (803) 995-1455.

When calling, remain calm and carefully explain the problem and location to the public safety dispatcher. Do not hang up until told to do so. Basic procedures for responding to specific types of emergency incidents are provided in Attachment 5.

## TRAININGS, DRILLS AND EXERCISES

The success of this plan necessitates that the CH maintain a constant state of readiness to assure the efficient and orderly transition from routine activities to those associated with emergency situations. This is accomplished through the development of the CH Emergency Preparedness Plan.

### Training Objectives

- To establish capabilities for protecting the CH community from the effects of an emergency.
- To respond effectively to the actual occurrence of an emergency.
- To provide for recovery in the aftermath of any emergency involving extensive damage or other debilitating influence on the normal pattern of life at any of the CH's public housing communities or buildings.
- To validate plans and assure preparedness.

### Drills and Exercise Procedures

The CH Director of Security will work with all divisions at the CH to develop an appropriate drill and exercise plan to assure emergency management and preparedness plans effectively meet the needs of any emergency situation.

The Director of Security will serve as the Training Director for crisis management and emergency operations. The Chief Operating Officer will evaluate the results of specific drills and exercises, suggesting specific changes and updates to the Authority's Emergency Preparedness Plan.

### Trainings, Drills and Exercise Schedules

The CH Chief Operating Officer will conduct a training of the Emergency Preparedness Plan with the CH Team at least twice per year. Additional training opportunities may be conducted as needed.

Drills and Classes will be held on a quarterly basis for all CH properties. CH Department Heads will be responsible for coordinating training schedules. Schedules must be submitted to the Chief Operating Officer by the end of the CH Fiscal Year of June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Additionally, a sign in sheet will be utilized to track attendance. Each department head will provide a report to the Chief Operating Officer at the end of the fiscal year to include training, drills, classes or any other exercise activities completed throughout the year.

## EVALUATION

The Emergency Management Team will convene annually to review the Emergency Preparedness Plan and recommend updates should and/or changes as needed. The Chief Operating Officer will make the necessary changes and forward to the Executive Director for approval.

Drills and exercises will be realistic and conducted as necessary to test the plan's effectiveness. Written evaluations will be prepared after every drill and exercise to ensure staff's understanding and to identify potential areas for additional training.

The Executive Director will present the plan to the Board of Commissioners for review and approval of any policy changes to the Emergency Preparedness Plan.