IEDC: Disaster Response & Recovery

November 9, 2012

Disasters Happen: Anywhere

- May 22, 2011, 5:41 pm
- EF-5 tornado through Joplin and Duquesne
- Wind speeds of up to 300 mph
- The deadliest and most destructive single tornado in the U.S. in more than 60 years

More than 8,000 housing units destroyed or substantially damaged; 4,200+ beyond salvage

More than 18,000 people immediately displaced; 9,000 for the long term. More than 1,000 injured; many critically.
161 Dead

Half of the Joplin public schools facilities and Catholic schools buildings destroyed or damaged. More than 3,800 students without facilities

Nearly 560 employers demolished or substantially damaged; additional 400+ impacted by loss of utilities, loss of customers and/or injured employees.

More than 5,000 job positions impacted.

Recovery and Rebuild Priorities

- Require Immediate and Long-term Action
- Address the effect seen in other large-scale natural disasters; population & business loss
- Three-pronged approach /partnership
  - Citizens; clean-up, housing and support – City, Social
  - Schools; retain children and families – School Dists.
  - Business; keep business, jobs and tax base – Chamber

The Response: Immediate

- Get to businesses fast and with initial resources and keep in touch for the long-haul
- Get in touch with SBTDC, SBA, FEMA, State and others to define available resources
- Define who needs assistance
  - Destroyed
  - Damaged
  - Economic impact negative (power outages, loss of customers)
  - Economic impact positive (demand for services, goods)
- Don’t limit to “business”; think of “employers”
  - Medical, apartments, social service agencies, churches, attractions

The Response: Immediate

- Utilize social media and website
- Find ways to get funding for intermediate and longer-term needs (Raise money)
- Get community leadership engaged on rebuilding early; encourage “back better” discussion
- Consistently stay in touch with government, education, social services

The Response: Immediate

- One hour after: Facebook posting with initial information on scope of disaster; first resources
- First day, contact with SBTDC, SBA for joint business support center.
- Created "have-needs" boards to track resources.

- Initial GIS mapping of path, for members and DunBrad for non-members. Indicated 430 businesses / medical offices (Final 489) Plus churches, apartments, non-profits.

Response: Immediate

Second Day: Chamber staff out in the area finding business owners and managers. More than 400 contacted in person in first 2 ½ weeks.

Response: Immediate

- Lists, lists, lists.
- Available buildings
- Contractors, emergency resources, “Haves”.
- Listening, feedback. What did business need?
- Lots of hand-holding.

Response: Immediate

Fourth Day: Business Recovery Center opens at the Chamber campus. The quickest BRC opening for SBA.

SBA and SBTDC co-shared space with JACC and others to give services to impacted businesses.

Response: Immediate

- Rebuilt website focused only on disaster resources, plus updates on status of businesses.
- Created employer tracking system, all contacts entered (status, needs, follow-up action,). Staff first, then by WIB through NEG funds.
- Tuesday, nine days after, called first leadership meeting for updates, next steps, what needed to be kept on "future" list. Group set weekly schedule.
- Three weeks after, all 1100 Chamber members and 200+ impacted non-members reached.

Response: Short-Term

- If possible, get private funds for business in place. Government can take awhile.
- Keep promoting businesses that are reopening, rebuilding, new. Add momentum.
- Reassess needs and respond with resources.
- Maintain focus on long-term rebuild

Response: Short-Term

Sixth Week: Business Recovery Expo

- Small Business Technology and Development Center
- Internal Revenue Service
- University of Missouri Extension
- Workforce Investment Board
- City of Joplin
- US Chamber of Commerce
- Missouri Insurance Commissioner
- Utility providers
- Missouri Department of Economic Development
- State of Missouri Resource and Recovery Center

Response: Short-Term

- Two months, opened Joplin Tomorrow loan program for companies creating new jobs. Long-term, low interest. $1.5-million eventually raised. Raised money for Chamber Foundation for "future needs".

- Began campaign to "Shop Joplin". And additional campaign to drive firms to Biz Recovery Center. Continued tracking of businesses and other employer's status and needs

- Began campaign to "Shop Joplin".

- Additional campaign to drive firms to Biz Recovery Center. Continued tracking of employer's status and referrals to resources.

- On behalf of City, made contacts with businesses regarding debris removal / demolition timeframes

Response: Continuing

- Leveraged Chamber Foundation's Business Recovery Fund & staffing resources to help SBTDC obtain additional two-year, $600,000 SBA funding to add counseling staff at Innovation Center

- Implemented Business Stabilization Fund in April. $200,000; short-term working capital loans for companies still struggling.

- Utilized outside e.d. strategy firm to "reset" local efforts and look at "best practices" for long-term.

Response: Continuing

- Continued tracking of businesses and directing to available resources. (now using Foundation funds)
- Support Master Developer efforts, overall strategies for rebuilding.
- Providing seminars and workshops for businesses on on-going basis.
- Provide Business Recovery Fund support for implementing National Career Readiness Certification efforts with employers and schools.

Response: Status Check

- Nearly 500 employers back: 90%
- Over 95% of jobs base retained
- Nearly thirty new companies, plus expansions
- Employment in Joplin Metro area at all-time high. More than 84,000 people employed in July 2012. (82,000 pre-recession, 2008)

Final Thoughts

- Business have immediate resource needs
  - Lists:
    - General contractors, home contractors (associations?)
    - Heavy equipment, generators, disposal bins
    - Have-Need coordination
    - Available buildings / spaces
    - Office equipment, supplies
  - Financial support:
    - List of banks with phone numbers (their contacts gone)
    - Small Business & Technology Development Center, contacts for counseling on financials, business and marketing plans

Final Thoughts

- Get outside help to staff office
  - Neighboring chambers, key volunteers, other associations, family, friends
  - Use to answer phones, address walk-ins, update lists, distribute information to staff
- Get out in area; communication is uncertain, face to face is better.
- Reach out to all businesses. Businesses outside the disaster area may also have been impacted, negatively or positively

Final Thoughts

- Have Facebook, other social media, update continuously.
- Set-up system to track employers continuously.
- Drive donations to your organization's foundation (if you have one), or community foundation.
- Have above resources for the long-term needs, not just immediate.

Final Thoughts

- Be prepared to be busier than you ever dreamed possible.
- Businesses & community will look to you and your organization to be responding to needs and be credible in providing information.
- Make the best decisions you can, without second-guessing. If you're wrong, fix-it; if you're right, move on. Flexibility and Forgiveness.
- Be KIND: to yourself, your team, your family and everyone with whom you are working.

Questions?

Rob O'Brian, President,
Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce
417.624.4150
robrian@joplincc.com