



Kansas RTAP Fact Sheet

A Service of the Kansas Rural Transit Assistance Program — for Transit Agencies

A Transportation Provider's Role: Coordinated Emergency Management

By Erin Hogan

With peak tornado season on its way, erratic weather and safety concerns demand that local governments be proactive about emergency response planning. Local transportation providers play a crucial role in that planning process. In the July 2015 issue of TransReporter, Kansas RTAP trainer Anne Lowder shared highlights from a National Transit Institute (NTI) workshop designed to aid transit providers in developing emergency management plans. This follow-up is for transit managers, to help you address broader coordination outside of an individual agency. You will learn the fundamentals of emergency management and what steps your agency should take to be a part of the process.

Emergency management at the county level

Most emergency responses begin at the local level with the municipality or county. Kansas state law requires each county to have its own emergency management agency or participate in an inter-jurisdictional arrangement (KSA 48-929). Each agency must prepare and keep current a disaster emergency plan for its jurisdiction that has been approved by the Kansas Division of Emergency Management (KDEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In some counties, the emergency manager is a one-person department or even shared between two counties.

Every county in Kansas has an emergency management plan. Sometimes called a Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP) or County Emergency Operations Plan (CEOP), these plans are typically developed by a Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). Like the statewide Kansas Response Plan, county plans typically are structured to follow the National Response Framework (NRF). FEMA developed the NRF as a tool to structure emergency operations planning. Kansas requires county plans be updated every five years, but many emergency management agencies update them every year.



An emergency plan at any level establishes authorities, outlines procedures and organizes resources. The NRF uses emergency support functions (ESFs) to categorize resources, such as communications (ESF-2), search and rescue (ESF-9), and public health (ESF-8). Transportation is labeled ESF-1 in the national, state, and most county plans.

The Role of ESF-1

The designated ESF-1 coordinator and primary agency is typically the largest transit provider in the area. For example, Lawrence Transit is the ESF-1 coordinator in the Douglas County Emergency Operations Plan. Other counties, like Pottawatomie County, designate the emergency management department itself as the ESF-1 coordinator. Counties sometimes rely on FTA-funded transit providers to serve as ESF-1 coordinators, but will most likely designate your agency as a support agency.

Your agency is more likely to be designated as the ESF-1 coordinator in your county if you are a 5307 provider (Urbanized Area Formula Grant recipient), part of the county government, or the only provider in a very rural county. The county emergency manager will contact you before including you in the plan and will outline your responsibilities, if this is the case.

Mutual aid agreements are contracts among emergency responders to provide assistance across jurisdictional boundaries. These agreements help responders more effectively use resources in emergencies. Kansas has a mutual aid system that automatically enrolls all political subdivisions within the state, with an option to decline participation (KSA 48-950). If an emergency occurs that a county's own emergency response resources cannot address, they will first turn to surrounding counties through the mutual aid system for additional assistance.

Emergency management and cost reimbursement at the state and federal levels

In the case that a county has declared an emergency and exhausted local resources through mutual aid, the governor may declare a state of emergency to access FEMA resources and assistance. For example in 2017, Governor Colyer issued a Major Disaster Declaration for severe storms, straight-line winds and flooding throughout the entire state during July. He issues another declaration for a severe winter storm, snowstorms, straight-line winds and flooding in June. Governor Brownback issued a State of Disaster Emergency Proclamation in response to grassfires in the southern part of the state (Barber, Comanche, Harvey and Reno Counties) and northeastern part of the state (Geary, Morton, Pottawatomie, Riley and Wabaunsee Counties).

Issuing the proclamation activates the disaster response and recovery portions of the Kansas Response Plan. When a governor declares a state of emergency, his or her staff works with the local FEMA office to request a presidential declaration and assess if the state requires federal assistance.

In the 2017 Kansas Response Plan, the most recent version available, the ESF-1 annex designates the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) as the ESF coordinator and co-primary agency with the Kansas Highway Patrol. They are responsible for mobilizing resources as they deem necessary when the plan is activated.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) can also assist transit providers with disaster response costs. The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) established the FTA's Emergency Relief Program (49 USC 5324), which enables the FTA to assist public transit operators recovering from damage after a disaster.

After Hurricane Sandy, Congress allocated \$10.9 billion to the FTA Emergency Relief Program to relieve

the financial burden on affected transit operators. In the event that Congress allocates dollars to this program, funds are used for capital projects to protect, repair or replace damaged assets. Some evacuation and rescue operating costs are also eligible.

Transportation provider responsibilities

While there is no one-size-fits-all emergency management strategy, it is important that agencies cover their bases. Here are six best practices Kansas transportation providers should employ in emergency management planning and how the Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency (ATA) used them in their planning process.

1. Start with your local emergency manager

Make sure you have an up-to-date copy of your county's emergency operations plan and know if you have a designated role in the plan. If your agency is the ESF coordinator for transportation, you will have already been involved in the development of the plan and your responsibilities.

If your agency is not included, reach out to the emergency manager and ESF-1 coordinator to get a sense of what is expected of your agency in an emergency and how they would use your resources. If your service area extends into more than one county, be sure to contact all relevant emergency managers.

Riley County Emergency Management Coordinator Laurie Harrison stressed the importance of transit providers reaching out to their county's emergency manager. "Some emergency managers may not know about all of the transportation services in the area, especially where they share an emergency manager between a few counties," Harrison said. "That's why it's important that transit agencies reach out to the [ESF] manager and offer up their help. We rely on the public and private sector, but sometimes we have on blinders and forget about outside resources," Harrison said.

The Flint Hills ATA has been working with Riley County Emergency Management to coordinate emergency operations. Flint Hills ATA Director Anne Smith said the ATA office used to be located right next to the emergency management office. "It was dumb luck that we were neighbors and knew each other's business," Smith said. "Most providers probably don't know about ESF-1 and most emergency managers probably aren't aware who all of their (transportation) providers are."

If the ESF-1 coordinator plans to engage multiple transportation providers in emergency operations, they may draw up a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or a document outlining the circumstances under which each agency's assets or services would be used.

Smith said it took some time to sort out their role and the appropriate processes. "We had a lot of meetings with a lot of people," Smith said. "It came down to creating a memorandum of understanding within ESF-1.

This was critical because it determined the threshold for involvement.” The ATA and Riley County Emergency Management office will continue refining and updating the MOU and other policies and agreements.

Take action: Contact your local emergency manager and discuss your agency’s role with both the emergency manager and the ESF-1 coordinator. The Kansas Division of Emergency Management has a list available on their website with the name of each county’s emergency manager and their contact information: <http://www.kansastag.gov/kdem.asp?PageID=200>. You can also call KDEM for more information, 785-274-1409.



2. Coordinate with other local human service agencies and other transit providers

It is important to consider other community resources when crafting your agency’s emergency operations plan or working in the ESF-1 capacity.

Sub-recipients of grants 5310 and 5317 are required by the FTA to be part of a locally developed coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan (CPT-HSTP). In 2007, KDOT designated the Coordinated Transit Districts (CTDs) as the lead agencies to develop these coordinated plans, with the assistance of KDOT program consultants and the University of Kansas Transportation Center.

Human service transportation covers services for persons with disabilities, older adults (60+) and persons with lower incomes, and may be provided by public transit agencies, municipalities, human service agencies or private providers. The CPT-HSTP requires coordination of community resources—the same stakeholders you should work with on emergency management planning, like senior living centers and developmental centers for disabled persons.

CPT-HSTP planning meetings are a good time to address emergency management, and the CPT-HSTP document itself can provide a good starting point for memoranda of understanding between agencies. It is also important to consider how your agency would continue its regular service if your vehicles were being used for an emergency at another agency or outside of your community.

Some human service agencies offer their own transportation (typically FTA 5310 grant sub-recipients). Even with their own fleet of vehicles, they might need additional transportation support if they had to evacuate their entire facility. Or, if you are with a public transportation agency, you need their help if you needed extra vehicles in an emergency. Reaching out to agencies in your area is critical because you might be unaware that they included your agency resources in their internal emergency operations plan. Creating a formal memorandum of understanding between all agencies included in an emergency management plan improves communication and cooperation between agencies when the needs arise.

Take action: Make a list of human service providers and other transit providers in or near your service area. Reach out to them to explore creating memoranda of understanding for sharing resources in an emergency. A sample memorandum can be found on the KUTC website on the RTAP “Resources to Download” page, under Management.

3. Develop an emergency plan for your agency

In addition to participating in an emergency management plan for your county and being included in the plans of local human service agencies, your agency should also develop its own internal emergency operations or continuity plan.

The 2017 NTI workshop on developing a transit emergency management plan is summarized in a Kansas RTAP fact sheet available online. KDEM also has several resources for developing an emergency plan at www.ksready.gov.

County emergency managers or departments can help you draft or review your agency’s emergency management plan. Working with your local emergency manager not only utilizes an expert resource, but also helps you develop a good relationship with them.

Additionally, the FTA provides a number of helpful resources through its Office of Transit Safety and Oversight. The website includes a resource library, sample documents, and training opportunities. The FTA “Response and Recovery for Declared Emergencies and Disasters” is also very instructive, outlining strategies and protocols for grantees and eligibility for federal emergency relief funds.

KDOT is the direct recipient of most 5310, 5311, and 5317 funds in Kansas, which they distribute to providers. To satisfy FTA requirements, KDOT and other direct recipients of FTA grants must keep an inventory of their fleet to inform emergency decision-making. KDOT requires that agencies receiving 5310, 5311 or 5317 funding complete the afterhours contact information form for the Office of

Public Transportation. KDOT's "Policies for Public Transportation Grantees" also states that KDOT fleet vehicles may be used in the case of a declared federal, state or local emergency that requires the evacuation of residents.

MAP-21 requires FTA grant recipients to develop agency safety plans. Once the FTA provides guidance to state agencies on requirements for a safety plan, that information will be communicated to sub-recipients to develop agency-specific safety plans. Safety plans are often developed in conjunction with emergency management plans and may be one in the same. However, your agency should not wait for direction on safety planning to develop an emergency management plan.

The Flint Hills ATA director said they are developing an agency safety plan that integrates emergency management. "We've developed a plan of our own," Smith said "Our operations manager has taken several FEMA classes and FTA webinars to move us in a direction of the recommendations and requirements of that plan, but we won't have a final plan until KDOT gives us the requirements. We decided we wanted to be prepared, though."

Take action: Use the KDEM, FTA, and NTI course resources to draft an emergency operations and safety plan. You can clarify and revise as new rules are passed down from the FTA, but having any plan is better than no plan.

4. Contact your insurance provider and ask questions

KDOT requires that providers have full-coverage vehicle insurance on all transit vehicles awarded by the KDOT Office of Public Transportation. This coverage must include comprehensive, collision and liability coverage, but there is no specific requirement for the deductible.

Insurance liability posed a major challenge for the Flint Hills ATA when they started developing an ESF-1 plan with their county. "For a long time our biggest issue was liability," Smith said. "Our insurance company wouldn't even let us consider participating in any emergency management situation."

Providing transportation service in an evacuation might require your agency to transport special populations you would not normally transport, like individuals from hospitals and prisons. Your insurance policy likely is designed to cover your regular operations, but coverage may be different under alternative circumstances or with alternative passengers.

Smith said working with the police department's insurance coverage in the case of transporting prisoners has helped to address this issue. "Our insurance will not cover any damages during that service," she said. "The moment vehicles are used for that purpose, police will have to extend their insurance to that activity."

It is helpful to contact your insurance provider when drafting an emergency operations plan. There may be important distinctions between voluntary assistance among agencies and assistance required by the state in an emergency. Be sure any memorandum of understanding addresses the threshold for assistance, who would be operating the vehicles in the emergency, and what insurance is being used at all points of service.

Take Action: The next time you contact your insurance provider, ask them about their policies and potential limitations of coverage in emergency situations. Knowing your coverage before you start working with other agencies or providers will help move the process along.

5. Learn about the reimbursement process

If your agency is called to assist with an evacuation, reimbursement for operating costs or any damages that you incur during the assistance might be available. Noting which level of government declared the situation, the nature of the situation, and the timeframe of assistance provided by your agency will be relevant in determining which agency will reimburse you and for how much.

FEMA will not provide financial relief, for example, if the FTA's 5324 Emergency Relief Program received funding related to the incident. You may need to coordinate with the regional FEMA and regional FTA offices in addition to the Kansas Division of Emergency Management, other state offices, and county departments to secure reimbursement.

Take action: FEMA publishes a Public Assistance Applicant Handbook. Take the opportunity to read the introduction and eligibility sections to get a sense of the procedure. Questions can be directed to the FEMA Region 7 office in Kansas City.

6. Practice and update the plan regularly

Smith said Flint Hills ATA has handled a few informal emergency response situations since they sorted out coverage and responsibilities. Putting plans into practice or running drills can help you determine the strengths and weaknesses of your agency's plan and point out where the plan needs revision or updating.

KDEM offers trainings, at no cost, to anyone involved in the local or state emergency management system and there are exercise templates on its website. According to KDEM, exercises allow participating entities and systems to address gaps, deficiencies and vulnerabilities in a safe environment, prior to a real event.

Your county emergency manager may also have exercises in which your agency can participate. Jillian Rodrigue, Assistant Director of Emergency Management in Douglas County, says that in larger exercises the department may include local transit

agencies in addition to Lawrence Transit, the ESF-1 coordinator. “We want to be familiar with community providers before an emergency occurs. During an emergency is not the time to exchange business cards,” she said. “We want to know our partners and what each brings to the table in order to best serve our community.”

Be sure to revise your plan regularly. Most county emergency operations plans are revised annually, but your internal agency plan may not need to be updated as frequently.

Take Action: Explore the KDEM training program. Taking courses can help your agency and your community in an emergency. Be sure to run your agency’s emergency plan through drills or test exercises. Consider integrating these drills into staff meetings or other training opportunities.

Conclusion

Like most issues in transportation, emergency planning is based on specific location, agency size, and service population, but there are certain steps all provider agencies should take to ensure emergency preparedness. Developing a transit emergency management plan may take several months and many meetings and will require frequent re-evaluation. However, it is well worth it to have your bases covered, and it will make the response and any reimbursement processes much smoother in the unfortunate case of an emergency. ●

Suggested resources on this topic

Kansas Division of Emergency Management, Kansas Response Plan. 2017. http://www.kansastag.gov/AdvHTML_doc_upload/2017%20KRP%20FINAL.pdf

Kansas Division of Emergency Management webpage, “Preparedness and Training.” Accessed June 29, 2016. <http://www.kansastag.gov/KDEM.asp?PageID=156>

KDOT, “Policy Manual: Office of Public Transportation.” Revised 4/3/2018

Contacts for Emergency Planning

For more information on transit emergency management planning, consult one of the contacts below:

Kansas Division of Emergency Management
http://www.kansastag.gov/kdem_default.asp
Main Office: (785) 646-1409

Talk to Jonathan York, Response and Recovery Branch Director; Brian Murdie, Planning and Mitigation Branch Director; or Brian Rogers, Resource Management Planner

Kansas Department of Transportation
<http://www.ksdot.org/>
Bureau of Maintenance: 785-296-3576

Talk to Jim Frye, Field Maintenance Manager and Emergency Operations Coordinator

FTA Region 7 (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska)
<https://www.transit.dot.gov/about/regional-offices/region-7/region-7>
Operations and Program Management Office: 816-329-3920
Talk to Jessica Gladstone, Administrative Officer

FEMA Region 7 (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska)
<https://www.fema.gov/region-vii-ia-ks-mo-ne>
Regional Office in Kansas City: (816) 283-7061
Talk to Andy Megrail, Natural Hazards Program Specialist for Kansas

Sources for this article

2015 Kansas Statutes Annotated, Chapter 48. http://www.ksrevisor.org/statutes/ksa_ch48.html

Federal Transit Authority, "Response and Recovery for Declared Emergencies and Disasters: A Resource Document for Transit Agencies." June 2013. https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/Response_and_Recovery_for_Declared_Emergencies_and_Disasters_062813.pdf

Federal Transit Authority webpage, "FTA's Emergency Relief Program." <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grant-programs/emergency-relief-program/emergency-relief-program>

Interview with Laurie Harrison, Riley County Emergency Management, June 29, 2016.

Interview with Jillian Rodrigue, Douglas County Emergency Management, June 14, 2016.

Interview with Anne Smith, Flint Hills Area Transit Agency, June 2, 2016.

Suggested resources on this topic:

Kansas Division of Emergency Management, Kansas Response Plan. 2017. http://www.kansastag.gov/AdvHTML_doc_upload/2017%20KRP%20FINAL.pdf

Kansas Division of Emergency Management webpage, "Preparedness and Training." Accessed June 29, 2016. <http://www.kansastag.gov/KDEM.asp?PageID=156>

KDOT, "Policy Manual: Office of Public Transportation." Revised 4/3/2018.