

OREGON RESILIENCE CASE STUDY

BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING: THE PEOPLE

A Business Continuity Plan (BCP) ensures an individual organization can continue to perform its **essential functions**, provide **essential services**, and deliver **core capabilities** during a disruption to normal operations.

Oregon utilities have implemented a number of BCP actions related to staff response, preparedness, mutual aid, and training.

RESPONSE

Blachly-Lane Electric Cooperative

Ideally, the utility's upgraded headquarters will sustain operations and staff for a 3-day, 3-week, or 3-month emergency. With its continuous improvements and training, Blachly-Lane is getting closer to reaching that 3-month goal. Key management would report to the facility after an emergency, then would bring in line personnel. The utility estimates starting with about a dozen employees reporting after an event, eventually working up to 24 as needed.

Blachly-Lane's strategy is to be able to provide shelter if an employee can't get home after an emergency. The utility can provide sleeping arrangements in its multipurpose room, as well as food and water. On site, Blachly-Lane has a two-week supply of bottled water and food rations. The utility looked back on how it has historically needed and used items, and two weeks seemed like the most practical length of time.



A rendering of Blachly-Lane's headquarters addition.

Emerald People's Utility District

Emerald is working on creating succession plans for emergencies. If key staff are unable to respond, identify who is next in line – as well as how that person will be notified that he or she is needed.

Management is training staff to understand roles after an emergency. There may not always be a clear person in charge providing instructions and assigning work, so employees will need to know what to do on their own.

Communication lines may be down after an emergency, so Emerald has a two-way radio system in place if towers are still standing. Nearby utilities also have towers, so if Emerald's are down, radios may be able to connect to others. As an even more analog back-up, the PUD also has old fashioned walkie talkies powered by AA batteries.

McMinnville Water and Light

Employees at McMinnville Water & Light have a pocket-sized guidebook for emergency response. The guidebook includes contact information, pertinent addresses, supplier information, and response activities. It includes a business continuity plan, including what managers are responsible for which activities. The guidebook is updated annually, and staff often have more than one copy in multiple locations.

The emergency response team at McMinnville has developed an ongoing task list of emergency preparation activities. They meet every other month to report on task progress and update the task list as needed.

Tillamook People's Utility District

In summer 2018, Tillamook will conduct Applied Technology Council (ATC) 20 Post-earthquake Safety Evaluation of Buildings training, so staff can assess whether or not a building is safe to enter after an emergency. The utility invited other local entities to participate in the training. The cost is an estimated \$150, and will likely take place at Tillamook Community College.

The Tillamook area is waterway and bridge heavy, so three service centers in the north, south, and central areas of the service territory have communications equipment installed in case staff can't get to headquarters after an emergency. Each service center has its own diesel or propane generator.

Tillamook PUD has signed on to a Regional Mutual Aid Agreement for the western region. This ensures mutual assistance could come from outside of Oregon/Washington in case of an emergency.



Springfield Utility Board

SUB serves water customers in addition to electricity customers, so its emergency response will focus on restoring both critical services.

Where there are electric-only utilities or utility areas where there is overlap in providers, utilities could develop collaborative response plans in collaboration with City and County emergency managers. For example, other critical services such as water or sewer treatment facilities may need electricity to operate.

PREPAREDNESS

Blachly-Lane Electric Cooperative

Blachly-Lane is working with its employees to ensure they are also personally prepared. As part of its safety and wellness program, the utility has provided a "go bag" for each employee to take home, which includes

essential materials, including a drinking water filter. Recognizing that employees would have a hard time getting to work if they were worried about their own families at home, Blachy-Lane also gave employees the option to purchase additional go-bags if needed.

Eugene Water & Electric Board

EWEB's communication and outreach about emergency preparedness has paid off – the utility has sold about 15,000 three-gallon water jugs to customers over the last few years. The utility partnered with the Red Cross and other utilities to offer the jugs at a discount – just \$5 instead of the typical retail price of \$15 or more.

In 2012, EWEB completed an emergency water supply plan, which included building emergency water distribution trailers that can be deployed to specific sites. For example, in June 2018, EWEB sent two of its distribution trailers to Salem after the city's water supply showed high levels of toxins that could affect vulnerable people. The trailers are designed to be easy to use, so volunteers can run them to distribute the water.

McMinnville Water and Light

McMinnville is actively training its employees in emergency response. Managers are completing FEMA classes, and an in-house training will focus on implementing an Incident Command System.

Utility management is also urging staff to have credit cards on hand after an emergency. In many cases, help will come from outside of the state, so cash is not ideal. Remote-pay may be the only option.

Tillamook People's Utility District

Tillamook PUD is prioritizing Incident Command System training for all of its employees. Currently, 90 percent have completed the training, and the PUD is also working on cross-training with others in the community.

The utility handed out emergency "go bags" to staff at its annual safety dinner. Bags include multi-tools, water, food, and other materials. At each safety training, staff receive an additional item to add to the bag.

Emerald People's Utility District

The PUD is also looking at additional personal preparedness measures, such as putting together "go-bags" for employees.

Central Lincoln People's Utility District

Regardless of the nature of an emergency or disaster, Central Lincoln's primary goal is to stand up the affected system safely and as quickly as possible. To rebuild and restore power to the service territory, the utility's employees will need to be available to work. In the aftermath of a large disaster, Central Lincoln recognizes that employees will first want to take care of their families before returning to their job. The more adequately prepared employees are for an emergency, the sooner they will be available and ready to work. Employee and family welfare is the primary driver in promoting personal preparedness at Central Lincoln.

Central Lincoln introduced personal preparedness to employees at its annual Employee Training Day in 2014. Employees were briefed on the Cascadia earthquake/tsunami threat, participated in an exercise focused on survival in a collapsed building, and heard from county emergency management personnel on the significance of personal preparedness. Each employee received a three-day supply of food and water (good for five years) and a list of resources to build a personal emergency kit or go-bag. In conjunction, the utility equipped all 87 of its vehicles with a go-bag that included food, water and other personal emergency supplies.



CLPUD demonstrates a 2-3 day emergency kit for staff.

Central Lincoln has continued to encourage personal preparedness in a variety of ways. Ongoing preparedness education takes place through articles in the employee online newsletter and reiteration at planning and safety meetings. At every Employee Training Day since 2014, employees have received a personal emergency kit item including a water filter, backpack, lantern, solar charger and portable toilet. Employees who serve on standing committees within the utility receive a personal preparedness themed item upon completion of service. These items have included a hand-crank radio, camp stove, survival tent and freeze dried foods. Many employees now have a well-stocked go-bag in their personal vehicle and have moved on to stocking shelter-in-place supplies at home. Providing emergency kit items at normal utility gift giving opportunities has been an effective way to sustain the conversation and develop a culture of personal preparedness.

MUTUAL AID

Emerald People’s Utility District

Emerald PUD will work on developing relationships with other nearby services, such as the county, city, and other utilities. After a large-scale emergency, it will be all-hands-on-deck. Responding employees will have to think outside the box and help each other. For example, if staff can’t get to Emerald PUD’s headquarters but could get to another utility’s office, they could report there for work. In other situations, teams from separate utilities could team up – such as a tree crew and a line crew working together to clear roads and restore lines.

Central Lincoln People’s Utility District

To restore power to its service territory after a catastrophic event, Central Lincoln will inevitably need help from other utilities. Therefore, it views membership in mutual assistance groups as critical and is signatory to four mutual assistance agreements including the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), Lane County utilities, American Public Power Association (APPA) and the Western Regional Mutual Assistance Agreement Group (WRMAAG). Further, if Central Lincoln seeks to receive reimbursement for mutual assistance services after a declared natural disaster, “FEMA encourages parties to have written mutual aid agreements in place prior to a declared fire, emergency, or major disaster.”- FEMA Disaster Assistance Policy DAP9523.6. Central Lincoln has provided mutual assistance to neighboring utilities on multiple occasions in the last three years and has benefited from shared after action reports, professional networking and exposure to new methods and technology.

TRAINING

Blachly-Lane Electric Cooperative

Blachly-Lane has incorporated regular staff safety trainings through its monthly safety meetings.

The utility is also actively participating in statewide planning and resiliency meetings and networking with local municipalities to coordinate efforts. Blachly-Lane staff have also learned from worldwide events to see how emergencies have affected communities – and how those communities responded.

Blachly-Lane is also reaching out to Bonneville Power Administration staff and Lane County Fire Department staff about how they could incorporate the use of HAM radios if they are up and running after a major emergency.



Blachly-Lane's staff participate in monthly safety trainings.

Tillamook People's Utility District

Tillamook is working on creating a joint ICS exercise with Central Lincoln PUD to get employees comfortable with the system.

Emerald People's Utility District

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Central Lincoln People's Utility District

In 2015, Central Lincoln adopted the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Incident Command System (ICS) and trained all 125 employees in the fundamentals of ICS. The basic course was offered on-site with an instructor who had extensive electric utility experience. The instructor was able to demonstrate how FEMA's command and control management structure applied to the electric industry and how employees could expect to interface with emergency responders during an incident. Since then, dispatchers, supervisors and managers have received advanced training through online coursework and have attended another on-site course tailored specifically to Central Lincoln. Learning to work within the national emergency responder framework is prerequisite to standing up the utility after a major disaster or catastrophic event.