

Provincial Emergency Program Volunteers: British Columbia's Public Safety Lifeline

Robert Bugslag; Wayne Dauphinee

Provincial Emergency Program, Victoria, British Columbia, CANADA

British Columbians are faced with >60 hazards, the potential impact of which could affect many thousands of residents. Such events can occur anywhere within a spectrum from a near-urban environment at one extreme, to desolate and hostile back-country many miles from the nearest centre capable of coordinating and providing effective assistance at the other end. Given the vast distances, coupled with the wide variety of terrain and rugged topography, and the modest population-base characteristic of this province, the delivery of emergency/disaster response services is a formidable challenge.

The increased demand being placed on the current emergency response system as population increases, ecotourism grows, and as higher-risk leisure activities become more popular, has accelerated the requirement for enhancement of the system to effectively meet public expectations and the anticipated challenges of the years 2000 and beyond.

The day-to-day success of the provincial emergency program unquestionably is a credit to the dedication of the 13,000 provincial emergency services volunteers from a variety of emergency response organizations.¹ Furthermore, the ICS²-based emergency management skills possessed by many of these volunteers readily can be transferred from their routine emergency response function to a disaster response scenario. Last year, provincial emergency response volunteers were involved in >6,000 incidents.

Recognizing the increasing demand being placed on volunteer emergency services organizations, innovative programs must be developed to maintain the operational capability and readiness of such organizations. The presentation will:

- 1) Address the role of emergency services volunteers in providing British Columbia the safest, most cost-effective and efficient emergency response program possible; and
- 2) Provide an insight into the organization, training and partnership funding initiatives being promoted by the Provincial Emergency Program for the search and rescue (SAR) and highway rescue components of the program.

References

1. Search and Rescue (SAR), Highway Rescue, PEP Air, Amateur Radio, and Emergency Social Services.
2. ICS (Incident Command System) — a management system designed specifically for emergencies providing standardized organizations, terminology, and procedures.

Keywords: emergency service; funding; highway; partnership; rescue; search; volunteers;

E-mail: bob.bugslag@gems9.gov.bc.ca

Mental Health in Disaster in the Philippines

Eleanor L. Ronquillo, MD

Department of Psychiatry, Philippine General Hospital and University of the Philippines, Manila, PHILIPPINES

Introduction: The Philippines has been ravaged by many disasters especially during the past decade. The occurrence of disasters has been more frequent in developing countries like the Philippines. This results in greater numbers of victims who already are disadvantaged socially with poor health and other socio-economic conditions. While recovery may be expected for most following the impact of the event, delayed psycho-social and even psychiatric symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder or depression may be manifested within a few years after the event.

Methods: The extent of psychological problems was determined through the use of the Self-Reporting Questionnaire. The instrument was administered to victims of the Mt. Pinatubo eruption one month and 10 months after the event. The prevalence of psychiatric syndromes, using the 40-item Present State Examination was administered to victims 2–3 years after the event.

Results: Psychological problems were found among 92% of victims one month after the eruption and in 76% nine months later. The prevalence of psychiatric syndromes, using the Present State Exam was 31% for anxiety and 31% for depression, taken 2–3 years after the event.

Psychosocial interventions for disaster victims were undertaken since the earthquake of 1990. These involved Psychosocial Processing (PSP), Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD), training other health professionals, social workers, psychologists, teachers, and other caregivers. Since then, most of the disaster management programs have included psychosocial interventions for the victims. The intervention aims at facilitating victims to gain a sense of empowerment. Without psychosocial intervention, the victims would remain in their passive-dependent state, not able to effectively utilize resources to reconstruct their lives and communities. Thus, psychosocial interventions should be an integral component of disaster management.

Keywords: critical incident stress debriefing; disaster; incidence; mental health; Philippines; post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); psychiatry; training; victims

E-mail: Vhampironqe@vba.va.gov