How will we manage without you?
When You Lose First Responders to Big Fires and Other Disasters

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Austin-Travis County EMS System
I grew up here….
Trained here…
We live in reference to past experience and not to future events, however inevitable. ~ H. G. Wells
This was something entirely different...
On September 4th wildfires struck several communities in Travis County

At approximately 4pm I was contacted
- Normally approximately 150 pieces of apparatus
- Now 18 engines and 7 ladder trucks
- Covering 1,100 square miles

“We are no longer able to provide medical first response”
We learned a few things from our wildfire experience, not the least of which was...
This is not a good time to make decisions about how to degrade your service level
Pre-plan Loss of Service

• Better to plan when not under duress
• What if we have catastrophic loss of:
  – First Responder Resources
  – EMS / Hospital Resources
• Create options BEFORE you need them
  – Compile a cafeteria style menu
  – Pick what you need for your situation
• Provides well thought out rationale for why
Advantage of a Menu

- More comprehensive list of options
- Implementation can be planned
- Estimated effect/risk can be calculated
- Allows rapid and efficient implementation
Having a list of options

Reduce Demand
• Progressive elimination of first response to calls
• Eliminating hospital choice
• Cancel all interfacility transports
• Eliminating any response to Alpha/Bravo calls
• Phone triage process
• Treat and release

Increase Supply
• Adding additional transport units/EMS FR
• Utilize non-transport units in first response
• Engaging private ambulance services
• Mutual aid/CERT
Implementation

• What is your threshold for activation?
• How do you activate the process?
• Who is affected by the change and have they been educated?
Estimated Effect/Risk

• To make an informed decision you have to know the risk/benefit
  • Who has reduced/increased workload?
  • What risk are you incurring and are they reasonable given your circumstances?
Turning off alpha/bravo response

- Do you have a mechanism to do so?
- Do you have a script for call takers?
  - What are your instructions?
- Do you have a call back process?
  - What do you do on the call back?
- How many call takers do you need to accomplish the new tasks?

- How confident are you in your identification?
Communications Center

• Dispatch is at the center of your ability to modify your system on the fly
  – Allows you to rapidly effect change by modifying behavior of a few providers

• Know your communications capabilities and their weaknesses

• Invest heavily in evaluating this process
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Without a preplan there are actions that are easily overlooked…
Prevention

• Notification of public via media
• Identified at risk populations
  – Recommended moving to other locations
  – Staying indoors
  – Decreasing activity
  – Use of medications as needed
  – Consultation with PMD if needed
  – When to contact 911
You will not be able to anticipate everything.... sometimes your plans won’t work
Fire Rehab

- Established process for structure fires
- Had more than an adequate supply of
  - Food/Snacks
  - Water
  - Area to rest
  - Even Shade!
Rehab Model Didn’t Work

- Remote location
- Limited access
- Strung out on fire line
- Limited resources
What is your personal pre-plan?

• Many live where we work so disasters are going to affect you personally
• Do you have a pre-plan for your family
  – Where do you evacuate to?
  – What do you bring?
  – How do you stay in contact?
• If you don’t have a plan you can’t focus on the tasks at hand
Take Away

• You need a pre-plan to deal with predictable catastrophic losses in your System
• Realistic evaluation of your menu of options before you need them
• Pre-plans for degraded service allows attention to other elements of your disaster
• Your plans will be imperfect but leave you better prepared