When Disasters Become Second Nature

Taking the Crisis out of Disaster Communications Strategies

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LWC Disaster Plan: UI

Louisiana has dealt with its share of disasters, including the Great Flood of 1927, Hurricanes Rita and Katrina (2005); Gustav and Ike (2008); and massive flooding due to 1,000-year floods (2016).

- The LWC’s Disaster Plan for Communications:
  - Prepare/Update Disaster Preparedness Manual;
  - Ensure Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) covers small-scale and large-scale disasters;
  - Establish relocation team (Strike Team);
  - Include physical addresses of all offices;
  - Create disaster call trees and update monthly;
  - Include instructions and personnel information;
  - Consider your employees’ needs. Some may have been impacted by the natural disaster.

  - Example: The LWC’s “Labor Market” during the flood of 2016. LWC employees donated items for coworkers impacted by the flood.

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- Levees broke in at least 145 places;
- 700,000 were homeless;
- 500 people died;
- $1 billion in losses.

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UI Pre-Disaster Checklist: DUA Application, Templates

- **Test** *Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) Claim Application functionality* (annual DUA training for all UI staff);
- **Regular review** of *staff call tree*;
- **Identification of states able to assist** in a disaster (Hurricane Irma);
- **Templates** are in place, including *press release; DUA funding & benefits rights templates; social media, website, phone systems & news outlet messaging; FAQs, one-pagers, and fliers; newsletters/emails to staff; Boilerplate memos of understanding (MOUs)* ready for other states to assist with calls and other needs.

*Note: Supplemental template packets are available.*
UI Post Disaster: Call Trees, Contacts, UI Metrics

- **Activate** disaster call trees;
- **Trigger** “affected by natural disaster” question;
- **Contact** chambers of commerce or state/local department of homeland security to gauge number of businesses impacted;
- **Gather** Labor force data from LMI;
- **Generate** disaster-related claims metrics for each county/parish.
- **Maintain** daily call metrics.
- **Establish** daily call with USDOL to provide DUA metrics.

Flooding began on August 12, 2016. By August 15, more than 10 rivers had reached flood stage. Eight rivers reached record levels.
Disaster Worker Grants (DWGs) under WIOA: Types, Triggers, Qualifying Events

Two types of DWGs:
➢ Employment Recovery DWGs for employment & training activities for dislocated workers;
➢ Disaster Recovery DWGs allow for the creation of disaster relief employment to assist with clean-up and recovery efforts.

Qualifying events for Emp. Recovery DWGs:
➢ Plant closures or mass layoffs;
➢ Closures and realignments of military installations.

Triggers, Employment Recovery DWGs:
➢ Notification of a mass layoff or a closure as a result of a WARN Act notice, a general announcement, or other means;
➢ Worker need and interest in services determined through Rapid Response, or other, and justifies need for DWG; &
➢ A determination has been made, with applicable local area, that State and local formula funds are inadequate.

Qualifying events for Dis. Recovery DWGs:
➢ Emergencies or major disasters;
➢ Emergency or disaster situation of national significance, natural or man-made.

Triggers, Disaster Recovery DWGs:
➢ FEMA has declared that the affected area is eligible for public assistance;
➢ A situation such as a qualifying event that impacts the local and/or State economy.
When to Apply for DWG:

• For Employment DWGs – Applications may be submitted at any time during the year and must be submitted to respond to eligible events as soon as possible *(refer to Triggers)*;

• For Disaster Recovery DWGs – Applications must be submitted as soon as possible when:
  ➢ FEMA declares area *eligible for public assistance*;
  ➢ USDOL publishes guidance on *requirements for submitting applications* for DWGs:
    o Requirements may vary depending on the DWG;
    o Application usually submitted 15 days after FEMA declaration issued;
    o Project implementation plan submitted after receiving DWG award, usually no later than 60 days after the DWG has been awarded.

In 2016:
• A “No-name storm” dumped 3 times as much rain as Hurricane Katrina, or 7.1 trillion gallons of water, on South Louisiana.
• 75% of homes in Livingston Parish flooded;
• one-third of structures in Ascension Parish flooded;
• 146,000 homes damaged;
• 30,000 people rescued;
• 11,000 people in state-operated shelters;
• 21 schools flooded;
• 13 people died from the flooding.
Tennessee Wildfires, 2016
Before

Tennessee Wildfires, 2016
After

Hurricane Dorian,
Bahamas, 2019

Hurricane Harvey,
Texas, 2017

Hurricane Sandy,
New Jersey, 2012

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