

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Exploring Potential Synergies: This report explores current practices in emergency management and potential synergies with community resilience, quality of life, and long-term initiatives in the City of Tempe. To this end, our research team conducted a series of interviews with eight City of Tempe departments/offices and two Maricopa County Departments, for a total of 16 interviewees, regarding emergency management (EM) practice in local and regional government. The team also reviewed recommended-practices, academic literature, and federal guidance. Considering the possible synergies between community resilience and emergency management, the team brought together leading local and national hazards-related practitioners in a series of three panel events, to discuss how the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommended *Whole Community Approach for Emergency Management* applies to local level

- [preparedness and response](#),
- [disaster recovery and mitigation](#), and
- the intersection of [emergency management, resilience, and sustainability](#).

Community Resilience: The report adopts the definition of community resilience as the ability of communities to withstand shocks and stresses, recover from disasters, and continue to thrive despite exposure to increasing hazards. With this in mind, this study looked for programs to build off of (showcases), identify networks of stakeholders to leverage, and explore different approaches to emergency management that foster community resilience.

FINDINGS

Showcases: The City of Tempe's emergency management program had considerable success in building an efficient response system, planning for and managing large community events, engaging members of the public in preparedness activities, and maintaining a strong relationship with regional emergency management partners.

Hazards: The top three hazard priorities as perceived by respondents are: 1. Prolonged Electrical/Gas Outage, 2. Extreme Heat and 3. Cyber Threats, and the cascading effects should either hazard lead to an emergency event.

Roles & Responsibilities: In identifying roles and responsibilities for their departments/offices across all four phases, respondents first indicated that most roles centered on preparedness or response activities. Less than half of the respondents saw roles for their units in mitigation or recovery. The Fire Medical Rescue Department identified duties across all four phases of emergency management. Second, some respondents identified with formal and clearly defined roles. Other respondents engaged informally in emergency management matters and expressed a desire for clarification of roles and responsibilities. A third group of respondents did not see any direct role for their unit in emergency management. Nevertheless, some in this group expressed great interest to be more involved.

Vision: Respondents also described their vision for the further development of the Emergency Management Program, identifying priorities, activities to establish a common frame of reference and ideas for positioning emergency management within the structures of local government.

Priorities: Identified priorities included *common and traditional* emergency management tasks, such as emergency planning, conducting training and exercises, maintaining the Emergency Operations

Center (EOC), situational awareness during an emergency event, coordinating communications and planning for hazard mitigation. Other respondents prioritized less traditional tasks put forth in recent FEMA guidance. These include *non-traditional tasks* such as:

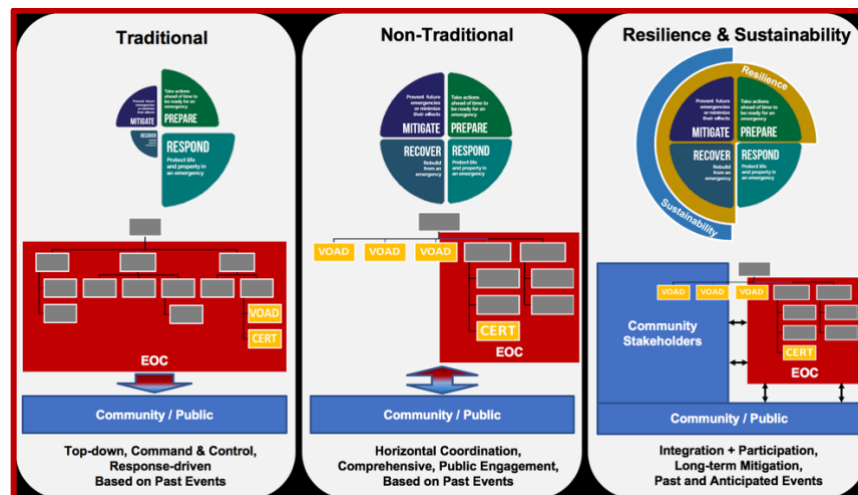
- Preparedness: Working through ‘**Culture Brokers**’ (individuals who translate values, practices, and communication patterns) to prepare diverse populations for disasters and hazards.
- Recovery: Prioritizing actions that **reduce inequalities** and, in turn, vulnerabilities to hazards.
- Mitigation: Anticipating future community hazards and vulnerabilities; preparing plans to **mitigate overall community risk**; and conducting city-wide training to facilitate a common language, understanding, and knowledge of local hazards and mitigation strategies.

The latter, non-traditional tasks speak to the broadening role of emergency managers within local communities. They also garnered the attention of practitioners, institutions (e.g. FEMA), and scholars.

Establishing a common frame of reference seeks to build a culture of emergency management around *frequent communication and engagement* of city departments/offices with the office responsible for emergency management, as well as *involving the whole community in planning activities* (e.g. workshops) and emergency management exercises. These activities facilitate a common understanding of community assets, hazards, vulnerabilities, and risks, as well as establishing rapport across stakeholders. Respondents offered ideas how to realize these two aspects.

This emerging vision reflects general developments in the field of emergency management as a whole. The field strives to work with all internal and external stakeholder groups and to equally focus on all phases of emergency management, supporting community resilience and sustainability (see figure).

Changing Approaches to Emergency Management



RECOMMENDED ACTION AREAS

Using insights from our respondents, as well as a review of emergency management and community resilience literature, we recommend the following actions:

- **Build a Network**
Use the onboarding process to build a network around the ‘Whole Community’.
- **Use the Planning Process**
Leverage the hazards and emergency planning processes to build resilience capacity
- **Involve all Stakeholders**
Develop a training and exercise program that engages the ‘Whole Community’