

Disaster Management Plan

19.1 INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is not possible if disasters are continuously injuring and killing and damaging infrastructure, property and livelihoods. It is important that the relationship between disasters and development is recognized so that proactive action can be taken to eliminate or at least reduce the impact of the consequences of disasters.

When disasters occur the cost of the disaster sets back development, since projects are often delayed due to the diverting of funds. On the other hand, when disasters occur they provide an opportunity to rebuild “smarter”, i.e. to avoid the likelihood of repetition of the disaster, and to plan for a sustainable and safe future. Development can both increase or reduce the vulnerability of the community. Unsafe or inappropriate development increases vulnerability while adequate attention to risk in the planning of development will reduce vulnerability.

19.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Disaster Management has been the subject of a completed Green and White Paper process nationally, which formed the foundation on which the Disaster Management Bill of 2001 was based. It is anticipated that the Disaster Management Act will be promulgated in 2002.

Chapter 5 of the Bill relates to Municipal Disaster Management:

- Part 1 : Municipal Disaster Management Framework
- Part 2 : Municipal Disaster Management Centres
- Part 3 : Powers and duties of Municipalities and Municipal entities

Parts of the following legislation also has an impact on the municipality's obligations pertaining to Disaster Management:

- ❑ The Constitution
- ❑ The Municipal Systems Act
- ❑ The National Environmental Management Act
- ❑ The National Water Act
- ❑ The Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act
- ❑ The National Building Standards Act
- ❑ The Development Facilitation Act
- ❑ The National Veld and Forest Fire Act
- ❑ The Hazardous Substances Act
- ❑ The National Health Act
- ❑ The Occupational Health and Safety Act
- ❑ The South African Weather Service Act
- ❑ Various Municipal By-laws

Apart from the above, there are also other policies that have an influence on Disaster Management. One of these is the development of Local Agenda 21 as a more articulated framework over the past 10 years.

As an aspirant metropolitan municipality, Buffalo City is expected to provide the same, stand-alone level of service required of a metropolitan municipality.

As a result of this, the Province has provided R308,000 for the establishment of a Disaster Management Centre in Buffalo City. The procurement of equipment is currently taking place.

19.3 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The White Paper provides a national framework and advocates that this structure be mirrored at provincial and local levels. The following structures are required in Buffalo City:

Council Committee

A committee, or sub-committee of Council that will approve disaster-related policies, budgets and provide co-ordination on a political level.

Technical Task Teams

Various task teams must be formed to address disaster-related issues, in order to find technical solutions.

Community Involvement

The ward councillors and committees will be the interface with communities on disaster-management issues. The necessary structures will be required to facilitate this.

Disaster Management Centre

This is the structure that provides technical and administrative support to the other structures, so that Disaster Management is practised in a co-ordinated manner. The Centre will also facilitate the capacity-building of the other structures so that maximum results can be achieved.

19.4 CONSTRAINTS

The hub of Disaster Management is the Disaster Management Centre, and the capacity of the centre will determine the potential to manage disaster. The current capacity in terms of staff, information, institutional framework and funding is severely lacking, and will need to be corrected if Buffalo City is to carry out the Disaster Management functions of a Metropolitan Municipality. The current staff for Buffalo City is a Disaster Management Officer and a clerical post. A minimum of eight staff is required to provide an acceptable level of service.

19.5 BACKGROUND / PRIORITY ISSUES

Buffalo City is susceptible to, and has previously experienced, the following disasters:

Wind	<input type="checkbox"/> Gales (mostly along coast and at sea) <input type="checkbox"/> Tornados (entire Buffalo City)
Floods	Entire Buffalo City
Drought	Entire Buffalo City
Epidemics	Various areas
Fires	<input type="checkbox"/> Veld and forest (whole area) <input type="checkbox"/> Informal (informal sector) <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial and commercial (whole area) <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional (schools and hospitals)
Earth Tremors	Whole area
Major Road Accidents	Whole area
Train Accidents	Lone Tree
Shipping Accidents	Various along coast
Hazardous Materials	Whole area
Strikes	Whole area

Unrest	Whole area
Terrorism	Whole area
Service Failure	Water (Berlin and Mdantsane)
Electricity	Large sections of East London and Mdantsane
Internally Displaced Persons	Most informal areas are a result of urbanisation

Lack of economic development in rural areas and communal conflicts are other aspects that play important roles.

The disasters listed above have the potential to occur throughout Buffalo City. There are however communities that are at risk of specific hazards, for example high density shack areas, houses within flood lines and people living near the airport.

Certain groups within the community, such as the aged, women, children, the disabled and the poor suffer the most from disasters and also lack capacity to recover.

The overall priority issue concerning disaster management is the lack of an integrated approach to disaster management in Buffalo City Municipality, which results in unsustainable development with unacceptable human, economic and environmental losses.

19.6 OBJECTIVE

Following the identification of the key problem (priority issue) the following objective for future disaster management development has been formulated:

Proactive and reactive integrated disaster management for all communities in the Buffalo City Municipality, so that the consequences of disasters can be eliminated or reduced through a safe and sustainable environment.

19.7 STRATEGIES

Disasters impact on every community and aspect of community life. It is thus essential that a holistic approach involving the entire community be taken to manage disaster. It is furthermore necessary to build capacity both inside and outside the municipality through partnerships and community participation as well as to include disaster management in developmental planning.

The disaster management services for the Buffalo City area are described below in terms of the key functions and services required to plan for, to respond to and recover from potential disaster scenarios.

19.7.1 RISK AND VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

This function helps to identify and map the risks and vulnerabilities that exist within the Buffalo City area so that appropriate prevention, mitigation and response plans and strategies may be developed.

At present, large gaps exist in the information on risk and vulnerability in Buffalo City. Very little risk mapping exists, which is information that is critical for decision-making.

There is an urgent need to conduct a risk and vulnerability assessment and to create risk maps. There will be an ongoing need to keep the information up-to-date.

19.7.2 PREVENTION AND MITIGATION

The worldwide focus of Disaster Management is to prevent or mitigate the impact of disasters. This service provides for the identification of existing problems that need intervention, development of strategies and promotion of the need to reduce the risk of disasters occurring, as well as reducing the scale or significance of a given disaster.

A risk and vulnerability assessment must form part of the feasibility study on all new development, so that prevention and mitigation can be built into the project. Prevention and mitigation measures include the following aspects:

- Engineering and construction
- Physical planning
- Economic
- Management and institutional
- Societal

19.7.3 PREPAREDNESS

In spite of prevention and mitigation, disasters will still occur. Therefore, contingency plans must be prepared and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure a co-ordinated response with maximum returns from available resources. Preparedness also involves:

- Institutional framework
- Information
- Resource base
- Warning systems
- Response mechanisms
- Awareness, training and education

19.7.4 RESPONSE

The preparedness of the city will determine the speed and efficiency of the response. The service includes responding to disasters in accordance with Disaster Plans and ensuring improvements to response actions through evaluation. The key response functions include:

- Evacuation
- Search and rescue
- Safety and security
- Assessment of needs.

19.7.5 RELIEF

Relief measures are to reduce the suffering of disaster victims, by promoting and supporting community and victim capacity in a manner that promotes independence. To be effective, relief must be:

- Appropriate
- In good condition/of good quality
- In required quantities/at required level
- At the place and time it is needed

19.7.6 REHABILITATION

Rehabilitation is the action taken in the aftermath of a disaster to enable basic services to resume functioning, assist victims with self-help efforts to repair physical damage and community facilities, revive economic activities and provide psychological and social support to survivors. Rehabilitation must focus on lifeline services and must be needs-driven based on assessment. Lifeline services include:

- Communications
- Water supply
- Power supply
- Roads and transport
- Waste disposal
- Public health

19.7.7 RECONSTRUCTION

Reconstruction is the full restoration of all services and local infrastructure, replacement of damaged physical structures, the revitalisation of the economy and the restoration of social and cultural life.

It is essential that prevention and mitigation are built into reconstruction and that local capacity is improved on.

19.8 CONCLUSION

The overall task is to develop proactive and reactive integrated disaster management for all communities in the Buffalo City Municipality. All of the key functions discussed above form the total Disaster Management package. Lack of attention to any single function will seriously jeopardise the ability to manage disaster, and will result in unnecessary and avoidable loss and hardship which will impact negatively on sustainability of development.

The hub of Disaster Management is the Disaster Management Centre, and the capacity of the centre will determine the efficiency with which a proper Disaster Management service will be provided to the citizens of Buffalo City.