

City of Portland

Office of
Emergency
Management

2011 - 2013
Strategic Plan

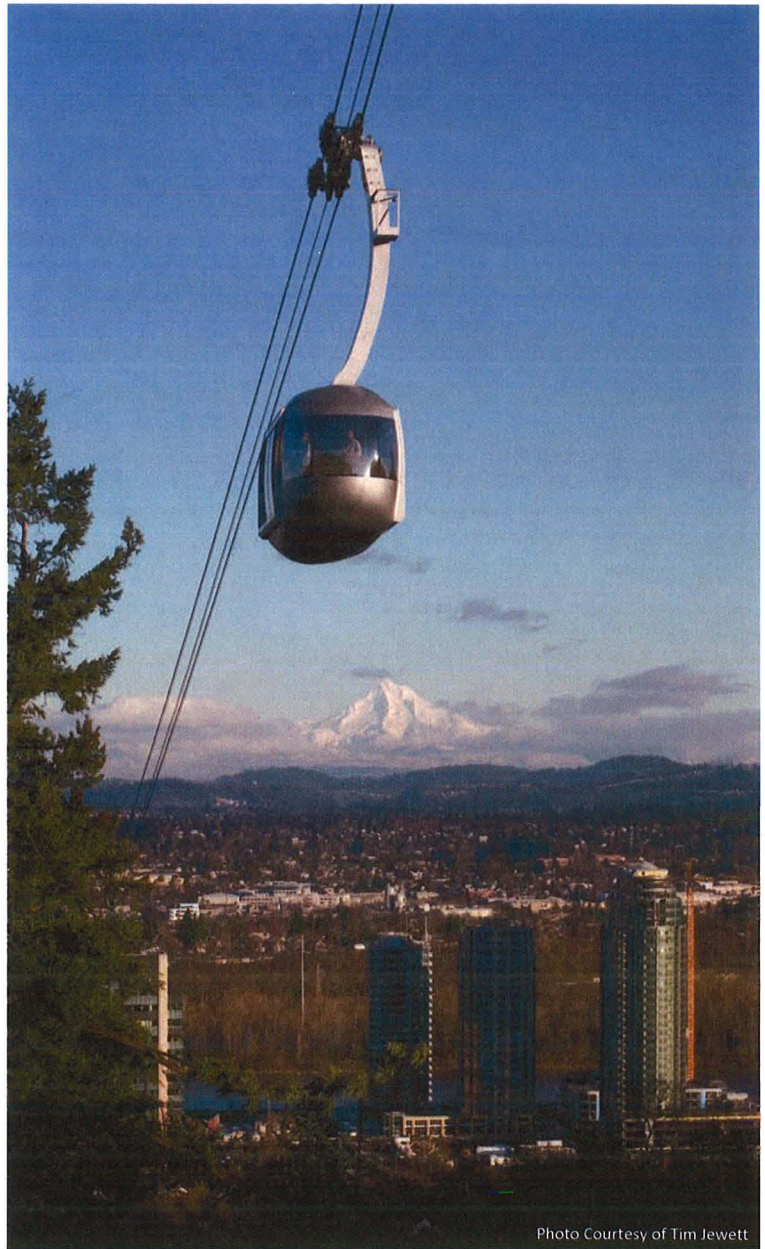
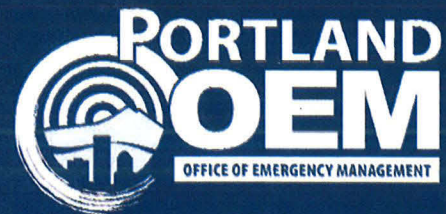


Photo Courtesy of Tim Jewett

Portland Office of Emergency Management

City of Portland, Oregon
Sam Adams, Mayor - Carmen Merlo, Director



Vision

A resilient community.



Profile

The Portland Office of Emergency Management (POEM) works before, during and after emergencies to minimize impacts on the community. Our work depends upon coordination with others in government, the private sector and the wider community to promote risk reduction, readiness, response, and recovery. Our goal is a resilient community that can endure all hazards, adapt quickly to disruptions and return to normal activities as soon as possible.

Mission

Protect lives, property and the environment through a coordinated and responsive emergency management program.

Desired Outcome

A resilient City that can significantly reduce social, economic and environmental losses from hazards through strategic investments in land use planning, environmental protection, asset management and community preparedness efforts.

Strategic Planning Approach

POEM's goal to promote a culture of resilience requires a shared understanding of, and responsibility for, hazard risk reduction. POEM is a coordination bureau, not a response bureau. We rely on the close coordination, collaboration and cooperation of all City bureaus – individually and collectively. It further requires the close coordination and collaboration of county, regional and state partners, community organizations and the private sector. The Portland Office of Emergency Management will centralize this effort to better align emergency management objectives with broader community goals in achieving a common good.

Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning process began with a staff retreat in October 2010 to refine the bureau's mission and vision, and identify opportunities and challenges. Key documents used to guide the strategic planning process were the 2010 [performance audit](#) and [emergency management accreditation program](#) performance standards. Other documents, including the [Portland Plan](#) and other bureau strategic plans, were reviewed to ensure congruence with broader city goals. Input to the strategic plan was additionally provided by POEM's Budget Advisory Committee, Neighborhood Emergency Team Steering

Committee, Emergency Management Steering Committee, Disaster Policy Council and public feedback from a community town hall meeting.

This three-year strategic plan proposes to implement a coordinated and interdisciplinary approach that leverages POEM's efforts to inform, motivate and involve partner agencies and the community to promote a culture of resilience.

Guiding Principles

This strategy acknowledges the importance of a shared responsibility between public and private sectors and the community to strengthen resilience. To the greatest extent possible, specific objectives will identify opportunities for increased cooperation and coordination among government agencies, the private sector, and nongovernmental community organizations to improve emergency preparedness and hazard risk reduction.

There is an oft-spoken adage that "all disasters are local." This is not so much a statement about the role of local response agencies as much as it is an acknowledgment that every disaster ultimately belongs to individuals and communities – they are the ones left picking up the pieces in the aftermath of an event. Therefore, institutionalizing meaningful opportunities for community participation in a shared decision-making process is critical because their expectations will shape how the City recovers from an emergency.

Local Trends

Population Trends

Local trends like a growing, aging and increasingly diverse populace require distinct communications and preparedness, response and recovery strategies. Right now seniors represent about 23 percent of our population¹. By 2015, that number will increase to 27 percent. Meanwhile the 19-and-under population will grow by only 1.2 percent². A greater number of people will need medical care and other assistance. Significantly, those people will be served by an aging population of volunteers.

Portland's population is expected to increase by 100,000 new households in the next 25 years. This increased growth and density will add stress and capacity demands on existing infrastructure in addition to increasing the number of people exposed to natural, technological and other disasters.

Social and Demographic Trends

Understanding the City's demographic characteristics is crucial to ensuring information is accessible to diverse racial and ethnic populations and individuals with limited English language proficiency. Among people at least five years old living in Portland, 18 percent spoke a language other than English at home. Of those speaking a language other than English at home, 50 percent reported that they did not speak English "very well"³. In addition, five percent of the households did not have telephone service⁴.

¹Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey.

²Source: Portland Fire & Rescue Strategic Plan 2010-2015.

³Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey.

⁴Ibid

⁵City of Portland Asset Status & Condition Report, 2010.

Because disasters impact people differently, ensuring the integration and consideration of individuals with disabilities or specific access and functional needs, as well as the groups and organizations that support these individuals, is critical to effective emergency planning.

Aging Critical Infrastructure

Portland is the economic engine of the state. It's concentration of people, buildings, critical infrastructure and businesses pose special emergency planning challenges. Most of the City's transportation, water, sewer and telecommunications infrastructure as well as private sector electrical and natural gas transmission and distribution systems were designed and built prior to an understanding of the Pacific Northwest's seismic risk. In addition, much of the City's transportation, water and sewer system infrastructure are nearing the end of their lifecycle and will require significant investments.

Eighteen percent of bridge structures owned and maintained by the Portland Bureau of Transportation are considered to be in poor or very poor condition and are in need of rehabilitation or replacement⁵. Half of the 2,000 miles of water distribution mains are older than 50 years; transmission conduits are 50-92 years old; and dams and reservoirs are 42-75 years old. Maintaining and investing in critical infrastructure is vital – these assets not only support our quality of life but their immediate restoration after an emergency is crucial to ensuring the community's recovery.

National Trends

Increasing Role Social Media Networks Play in Emergency Response & Recovery Operations

The speed and ease with which social media allows users to share information and experiences requires a quicker pace of emergency communications. In the absence of official information, the public has begun to use social media to share information during emergencies with friends and families, elected officials and emergency response agencies. This prompts a greater need to ensure timely, consistent and accurate information is disseminated to the public during emergency events.

Findings from [a recent study](#) commissioned by the Red Cross reveal that 75% of people surveyed now expect an almost-immediate response after posting a call for help on a social media platform during a disaster. This has created an unexpected side effect in which responding authorities and aid organizations are expected to be aware of and respond to emergency requests for help coming from nontraditional sources such as Facebook, Twitter and text messages.

The development and rapid adoption of virtual communities will continue to shift influence away from traditional communication methods such as broadcast media. This trend presents challenges and opportunities. It will become important for government to establish itself as a trusted source of information and to communicate that role in coordination with trusted

community leaders. Appropriately managed, social media networks can play a significant role in emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

Effects of Climate Change

The scientific consensus around the world suggests that the Earth's climate is changing as a result of human emissions of greenhouse gases. Potential impacts of climate change include increased risk of flooding (including localized urban flooding) and landslides, more frequent energy disruptions as a consequence of increased demand for cooling, more intense wildfires during periods of drier summers, and higher public health risk—especially to vulnerable populations—from increases to annual temperature and severe temperature events such as heat waves. Aside from impacts to the natural environment – changes in precipitation and temperatures may also have potential detrimental impacts to critical infrastructure: increased sag of overhead lines for energy, transportation and communications systems, increased road degradation requiring more frequent maintenance, and impacts to water quality and potentially higher overall water demands during the summer peak season requiring additional use of the Columbia South Shore Well Field to supplement Bull Run surface supplies.

Opportunities



Portland - Great Flood of 1894

Portland Plan Integration

The development of the Portland Plan, the City's strategic vision for the next 25 years, provides a unique opportunity to coordinate and align plans vertically at the city, regional, and state level and horizontally across City bureaus. While there is much emphasis on green and sustainable development, truly sustainable development cannot be achieved without a component of hazard risk reduction. In fact, the single most effective way to limit the consequences of natural hazards including flooding, landslides, wildfires and earthquakes is to implement sound land use planning, zoning, and building codes that discourage development in hazard prone areas.

It is important to acknowledge that many sustainability practices adopted by individuals and communities also serve to strengthen the overall resiliency of the City. Regardless of the motivating factor, actions such as commuting by bicycle, growing gardens, adopting energy-efficient lifestyles or creating building practices that are less reliant upon the energy grid can lessen the impact of an emergency on our daily lives. Understanding how these inherent behaviors can aid a community's resilience helps in the promotion of preparedness-oriented culture change.

Regional Collaboration

The Portland Urban Area (which includes Columbia, Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington Counties in Oregon and Clark County in Washington) has benefited from enhanced regional partnerships with local governments and the private sector that have been cultivated from regional emergency planning efforts funded by the Urban Areas Security Initiative Grant Program. Some of the targeted capabilities enhanced through regional efforts include: interoperable communications, explosive device response operations, fire incident response support, hazardous materials response and decontamination, medical surge and restoration of lifelines. The strength of the relationships fostered through these regional efforts cannot be underestimated when close collaboration and coordination is needed to respond to an emergency event.

Investments in Prevention and Mitigation Strategies

A sustainable community is a resilient one. For communities to be resilient, development must be designed so the impacts of hazards are minimized to a tolerable level. Portland has made several investments in natural hazard mitigation projects. Several recent examples include:

- The Bureau of Environmental Services' Willing Seller Program helps move people and property out of harm's way of flooding and minimizes repetitive loss properties. Acquired land is restored to natural floodplain functions and the City additionally places deed restrictions on each property designating it as open space in perpetuity.



Seismic upgrades at Diack's pond



Controlled Burn

- The Water Bureau's Sandy River Crossing Project safeguards two of the main conduits that cross the Sandy River on a 114-year old bridge to deliver water from the Bull Run Watershed to Portland. The project relocated the exposed sections of these conduits into a 435-foot long tunnel under the Sandy River to mitigate vulnerability from earthquakes, landslides or other natural hazards.
- The Water Bureau additionally received Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant funds to conduct seismic upgrades at Diack's and Sestor's ponds, where conduits cross stream channels on trestles. These two locations are especially vulnerable because of their siting and exposure to erosion, scouring of the support trestles and inadequate foundation footings.

Another Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant enabled Portland Parks & Recreation, Portland Fire & Rescue and the Bureau of Environmental Services to implement

controlled burns and invasive species management plans for vegetated natural areas with high wildfire danger in three focus areas: Forest Park, Powell Butte Nature Park and two sites along the Willamette Escarpment – Oaks Bottom Wildlife Refuge and Mocks Crest Natural Area.

City bureaus are heavily invested in sustainability and climate change reduction initiatives: the citywide tree policy, invasive plant management, erosion control measures, green building codes and stormwater management practices (to name a few) reduce the impact of hazards on our daily lives and cumulatively strengthen our resilience to hazards.

Finally, the City has funded investments in urban renewal areas that include opportunities for low interest commercial property redevelopment loans for the seismic upgrade of existing and historic buildings to meet current building codes.

Challenges

Lack of Experience with Large-Scale Disasters

While the City does experience regular natural hazards (snow storms, flooding, landslides), a history of large-scale natural or other disasters is not part of our collective memories. Unlike other parts of the country that routinely experiences hurricanes, tornadoes or earthquakes, there is no readily observable or recently demonstrated need to prepare in Oregon. As a result, some believe that the lack of large-scale emergencies or demonstrated need to prepare breeds inertia.

Rethinking Preparedness

In June 2010, POEM convened a town hall meeting in SW Portland to engage the community in a dialogue about preparedness. Surprisingly, many defined being prepared as having “stuff” i.e. supplies. While it is true that having supplies can indeed make you more prepared – the converse is not true, i.e., not having supplies does not make you less prepared. Preparedness should be defined as a state of “readiness”. Readiness also includes: being informed, having a plan, being prepared to take action, being resourceful, and more generally, having the ability to function despite disturbance, change and uncertainty. Equally as important is promoting preparedness as a series of small, consistent, manageable and ongoing steps rather than a final destination. By taking small incremental steps – the effort becomes more sustainable.

Organizational Change and Governance

The Portland Office of Emergency Management (POEM) has experienced tremendous growth and change over the course of its short life. Previously part of Portland Fire & Rescue, POEM did not become a stand-alone bureau until FY 2003-2004. Since then, the bureau has grown from six positions to 12 full time positions including six limited term positions. The bureau’s history has been marked by instability/turnover and vacancies in critical positions, including five bureau directors since 2004.

Historically, POEM has been given the responsibility, but not the authority, to coordinate the work of City bureaus. Recent changes to City code help codify POEM’s role as the entity that centralizes the coordination of emergency management under the direction of the Mayor. Additionally, the work of POEM was diluted by a long history of oral traditions. This simply acknowledges that historically, many plans, policies and programs were not formalized in writing but rather passed down through oral histories. This is not to suggest that strategic planning processes were not conducted – merely that they were not properly documented. Collectively, this lack of formal recording created a significant documentation gap that we are now catching up with. And because comprehensive planning efforts are months-to years-long processes, it will take months or years to document measurable progress.

External Factors Influence Priorities

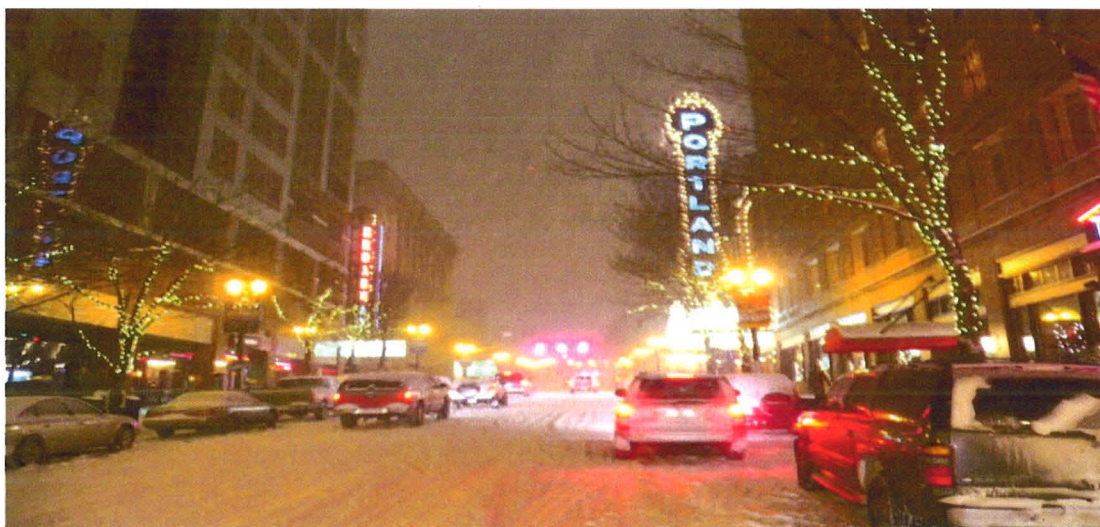
Too often, federal grant programs and requirements drive the work of POEM. While the Portland Urban Area has greatly benefited from homeland security grant funds, changing national priorities are sometimes at odds with regional and local priorities. Pursuing greater *regional* capabilities has sometimes been at the expense of furthering the *City's* emergency management program. The end result is that more focus has been placed on ensuring federal grant compliance and promoting regional capabilities than advancing POEM's initiatives.

Real world events also influence the priorities of the office. As a recent example, the thwarted bombing attempt during the annual tree lighting ceremony in Pioneer Courthouse Square prompted the immediate review and update of the Terrorism Appendix. While this was something already scheduled for update, it now took top priority in lieu of other hazard plan review and development.

Lack of Cohesive Public Messaging

Studies have shown that in the absence of an actual disaster, two factors are by far the strongest motivators of household preparedness and mitigation. The first is "information received" about readiness. To be effective, information must: be consistent, come from multiple sources, be communicated over multiple modes of communication, focus on what actions to take, and it must explain how those actions reduce future losses. The second factor is "information observed." The impact of "seeing" others prepare and mitigate is generally stronger than passively receiving information.

Currently, emergency public information comes from many different emergency response agencies (POEM, Portland Fire & Rescue, Portland Water Bureau, Portland Bureau of Transportation, Red Cross) and is disseminated in different ways and at different times.



These varied sources and approaches would be more successful if they were organized and coordinated into a more deliberate and ongoing strategy.

In addition, the fragmented communications landscape makes it harder to ensure messages reach their intended audience. Traditionally, broadcast media played a large role in how the public received information.

Now, fewer people are tuning in to their local news while more and more people rely on new media like Twitter and Facebook to share and exchange information. These diversified platforms prompt an adaptation to the way we communicate important information to the public.



Strategic Goals

Goal 1

Integrate emergency management into broader community goals and investment strategies.

- Work with the Bureau of Planning & Sustainability, Bureau of Development Services and Bureau of Environmental Services to promote integrated land use planning, environmental protection and structural and non-structural development strategies that intentionally reduce vulnerability to natural hazards. Planning – December 2013
- Work with the Bureau of Development Services to deliver ongoing residential seismic strengthening classes. Explore the feasibility of developing a certification system for both voluntary seismic upgrades of existing buildings as well as new construction similar to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) system for green building standards (seismic platinum, seismic gold, seismic silver). Administration – December 2012
- Advance the work of the City Asset Managers Group/Citywide Assets Report and advocate that funding needed for retrofits of critical buildings and lifelines—as well as other critical facility hardening—are incorporated into capitol improvement plans. Administration – December 2013

- Work with the Bureau of Development Services and Portland Housing Bureau to assess and prioritize a list of unreinforced masonry buildings for retrofit based on building size, location, number of units, and ability to serve low-income or vulnerable occupants. Include buildings identified as designated shelters among the top priority. Planning – June 2012

Goal 2

Adopt a “whole community” approach to emergency management that promotes equitable access and integration of historically underserved and at-risk populations in emergency planning processes.

- Work with Multnomah County Emergency Management to update an all hazards threat and risk assessment to facilitate the identification of vulnerabilities and prioritize mitigation and preparedness activities. Planning – March 2012
- Collaborate with the Office of Neighborhood Involvement to raise community awareness and empower communities to manage and reduce hazard risk by having access to the necessary information and resources. Planning – Ongoing
- Engage the Office of Neighborhood Involvement in developing and periodically updating neighborhood

coalition-specific maps that visually display and identify community vulnerabilities (concentration of elderly, schools, daycare or residential centers, unreinforced masonry buildings, known hazard areas, etc.) and assets (medical facilities, NET staging areas, parks facilities, grocery stores, etc). Planning – June 2012

- Implement the community outreach plan and identify opportunities to foster relationships among individuals, communities and organizations to encourage trust and build consensus. Public Information/All – Ongoing



- Work with the appropriate City Bureaus to adopt meaningful, innovative integration of culturally diverse and vulnerable groups into the development and review of emergency plans before, during and after emergencies. Administration – December 2012

- Promote communication equity by ensuring printed materials, website information and other emergency information is translated into several targeted languages. PIO – Ongoing
- Sponsor greater opportunities for the professional development of POEM staff and strengthen efforts to increase staff diversity. Administration – Ongoing

Goal 3

Prompt household action by increasing the visibility of actual preparedness and mitigation activities.

- Create a clearly visible correlation between the written preparedness and mitigation message and the real-world application of the message. Structurally reinforcing homes, installing emergency gas shut off valves, bracing water heaters, rehearsing evacuation scenarios are all behaviors that can be easily mimicked in the context of cultural change. PIO – Ongoing
- Provide easily understandable information on hazard risks to residents in high-risk areas to encourage people to take action to reduce risks and build resilience. PIO – Ongoing
- Simplify preparedness messages. Showcase ways people can invest in preparedness with little or no financial impact. PIO – Ongoing

- Lead and coordinate the content and dissemination efforts of City public information officers with county and regional partners to ensure messages resonate with targeted and general audiences. PIO – Ongoing

Goal 4

Advance Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) and ECC responder readiness.

- Deliver training on core competencies (Incident Command System, ECC 101) and advanced practices (ECC position-specific training, resource management, WebEOC, etc.). Develop two-year training calendar of recurring classes so attendees have adequate notice of training opportunities. Operations/Exercise & Training – Ongoing

- Refine ECC concept of operations and develop and implement operational guidelines for ECC essential and support functions and improve how these functions are appropriately documented, tracked and shared in WebEOC. Operations – September 2012

- Secure the commitment of Bureau Directors to identify, train, equip and exercise designated ECC responders. Work with bureaus represented on the Emergency Management Steering Committee and Disaster Policy Council to

recruit ECC responders and develop a program that (a) trains ECC personnel on their assigned roles and responsibilities, (b) tests and evaluates ECC concept of operations and (c) addresses lessons learned from real-world events or exercise after-action reports.

Operations/Exercise & Training – Ongoing

- Engage the Mayor, City Commissioners and City executives in regular scenario-based drills and exercises to facilitate the implementation of continuity of operations plans and formulation of policy decisions in support of emergency response and recovery. Exercise & Training – Ongoing



1962 Columbus Day Storm Damage

- Pursue permanent funding for a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analyst and develop in-house geographic mapping capabilities to better inform

- emergency planning, response and recovery operations. Administration – November 2011
- Leverage the resources and relationships of the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, Portland Fire & Rescue, Portland Police Bureau, Bureau of Emergency Communications, Bureau of Development Services, Portland Parks & Recreation and POEM to implement Neighborhood Safety Committees. Administration – December 2012
 - Continue to systematically implement the recommendations of the Neighborhood Emergency Team (NET) Organization and Responsibilities Working Group and other governance arrangements to ensure the sustainability and accountability of the NET program. Operations/NET – October 2012
 - Coordinate with Portland Fire & Rescue to provide ongoing training for Neighborhood Emergency Teams and integrate NETs into tabletop, functional and full-scale exercises. Operations/NET – Ongoing
 - Work with the Portland Bureau of Transportation, Portland Water Bureau and SW Portland NETs to develop a master plan for the reuse of the Jerome Sears US Army Reserve Center as a west side emergency operations center. Administration – December 2012
 - Pilot a community emergency information center (kiosk) concept at the Sears facility to facilitate the exchange of information and resource needs between the ECC/EOC and the local community. Consider expansion of the pilot site to community “hubs” throughout the City. Operations/NET – September 2013
 - Partner with the private sector, Multnomah County Emergency Management and state and regional agencies (TriMet, Port of Portland, ODOT) to develop a concept of operations for their participation in ECC operations. Operations – March 2013
 - Capitalize on the growing use of social media and develop protocols for its use in emergencies to monitor and aggregate crowd-sourced data, disseminate real-time information and assess rapidly changing conditions. PIO – June 2012
 - Brand Public Alerts as a trusted source of official information and cultivate the site as a centralized regional resource for information on major service disruptions. Include the development of a mobile platform for Public Alerts. PIO – November 2011
 - Coordinate efforts with Multnomah County Emergency Management to enhance the capabilities of the community notification system and integrate the Voluntary Emergency Registry with Public Alerts to ensure the most vulnerable among us receive emergency information. PIO – April 2012

Goal 5

Adopt a strategic planning process that holistically integrates planning, training, exercises, and evaluation and ensures plans are vertically and horizontally synchronized with appropriate bureaus, stakeholder agencies and jurisdictions.

- Work with the Office of Management and Finance to complete a citywide Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) to inform the identification and prioritization of personnel and resources needed to perform essential functions and achieve recovery time objectives. Planning – September 2012
 - Develop a Resource Management Annex to guide resource mobilization protocols
- and enable the timely and efficient tracking, deployment and recovery of resources before, during and after an incident. Work with infrastructure bureaus, Multnomah County Emergency Management and regional partners to improve mission/task-tracking capabilities and identify a process for facilitating the real-time tracking of resources through WebEOC. Planning – December 2013
- Work with City infrastructure bureaus, Multnomah County Emergency Management and private sector partners to develop a Damage Assessment Annex that coordinates the process of collecting and reporting damage assessments of public and private sector critical facilities and lifelines as well as other public and private property. Planning – June 2013



Burlingame Landslide - October 2008

- Partner with Multnomah County Emergency Management, Metro and private sector partners to develop a countywide Debris Management Annex that coordinates debris management strategies with solid waste planning and reuse and recycling opportunities and further identifies forecasting/modeling for debris volume, landfill capacities, landfill class/types, emergency contracting and procurement procedures and potential temporary transfer/storage sites. Planning – March 2014
- Work with the Oregon Department of Energy and private sector partners to advance the findings from the Portland Local Energy Assurance Plan to develop an Energy Annex for responding to significant energy disruptions. Include a restoration of lifelines framework that identifies the prioritization and coordination of work to repair or restore roads, bridges, water and wastewater systems and utilities (gas, fuel, electric, telecommunications) among city, county, state, regional and private sector entities given an energy disruption/shortage. LEAP – April 2012



Train Derailment - May 2011