Recovering from a Natural Disaster - lessons learned from Penn Yan flooding

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Yates County Overview

Yates County
- Population
- County: 25,000
- Penn Yan: 5,200
  - Greater PY: 15,000
- Jerusalem: 4,500
- Lots of wineries & breweries

Geography
- Keuka Lake
- Rolling hills
  - 1000+ culverts, gullies, creeks, streams
    - 15-20 per mile around the lakes
Storm Overview - what the heck happened???

- May 13\textsuperscript{th} and 16\textsuperscript{th}  
- Rain started falling over night catching many by surprise  
  - Approximately 6-9” of rain fell between 9pm – 5am on 5/13  
  - 2-4” of additional rain fell on 5/16  
- Too much water, too fast caused many of the culverts and creek beds to overflow  
  - Large debris simply too much to handle  
  - Steep hills helped accelerate water flow
Storm Overview - Impact Toll

- **50 + businesses & 250 + homes damaged**
  - Few had flood insurance
    - Last flood happened in 1972
    - Swollen river flood effected properties adjacent to Keuka Lake and Keuka Outlet (connects Keuka to Seneca Lake)
    - May flood was a “gully washer” and effected nearly entire local geographic area
    - Local insurance companies worked hard with clients

- **300 emergency calls over 3 day period**
- **248 structure inspections**

- **Total roads damaged: 126 + parking lots**
- **Total damage:$6,500,000+ Roads and Culverts alone**
Area high school students helping with clean up
NYS Emergency Management meeting with effected community
How did we respond?

• Immediate organization
  ▫ Led by Private and Public organizations
  ▫ Certain individuals gravitated to leadership roles
  ▫ Disseminated information to the public

• Immediate, near and future assistance challenges

• Responsibilities were assigned

• Points of contacts given
  ▫ Infrastructure
  ▫ Business
  ▫ Residential

• Primary organizations stayed in constant contact coordinating relief efforts
FLEDC: Direct Assistance

Goal: Get businesses opened ASAP

- Emergency Financing: partnered with Lyons National Bank
  - 0% interest loans – flexible payment terms
    - Payments begin a month or two after re-opening
    - 13 emergency loans - $419,500 lent out
    - $ in hands of businesses within 7 days
    - Vetted applicants to verify need

- Work with NYS on financial assistance
  - “Please don’t come unless you have specific program and instructions...”

- Information clearing house with NYS
  - Assisted businesses with NYS applications, refunds, questions, challenges
Keuka Housing: Direct Assistance

Goal: Get people in homes

- Emergency Financing: partnered with Foundations / Grants
  - 114 applications for direct homeowner assistance
  - Coordinated Local & State assistance
    - Vetted applicants to verify actual need
- Information clearing house with NYS
- Assisted businesses with NYS applications, refunds, questions, challenges
- Continuing grant efforts
  - Hot water tanks, septic systems failures still occurring
The Living Well: Direct Assistance

Goal: Get people what they need

• Became THE lead volunteer organization
• Coordinated receipt & delivery of physical donations
• Feet on the street
  ▫ Directed volunteer help to those that needed it
    • Assigned project managers, home inspectors to home owners in need
Lessons Learned: Be Ready to...

- Difficult to be physically ready for a natural disaster
- Efficiency and speed in response is key
- Who are the key organizations?
  - Establish primary points of contact/local agencies to
    - Be information clearing houses
    - Coordinate volunteers, donations, media
    - Local Agencies outperformed National Agencies
- Develop platform for sharing information across all parties
  - Government entities / key organizations / media / effected individuals & businesses
- Pre-arrange funding through local financing institutions for those effected
  - Have applications ready
Lessons Learned: Be Ready to...

• Continuing public education:
  ▫ Conduct Citizen preparedness classes
    • Importance of keeping household items far away from stream beds
    • Urge home and business owners to annual review insurance policies
      • AND to understand what is/isn’t covered

• Establish Emergency Operation Center
  ▫ Yates EOC received some water damage during flood

• Verify Local Emergency Planning Committees are meeting
  ▫ Yates County LEPC continues to improve their efficiencies
    • 60+ individuals met prior to Hurricane Sandy
Lessons Learned: Be Ready to...

- Determine current emergency housing supply
  - If needed establish plan for additional units
    - Was a real challenge for some areas including Yates County.
- Develop plan to manage volunteer labor
- Establish main entity for financial contributions
- Have media plan
  - Publicize the entity for financial contributions
  - Who volunteers should contact
- Conduct follow up meetings to analyze what worked and what needs improvement
We’re Back.....