



Helping Communities Impacted by Flooding...Again



The main mission of Safeguard Iowa Partnership is to support relationships between private and public organizations before, during and after disasters. A prime example of accomplishing this mission occurred during the spring of 2013 when liaisons from the Safeguard Iowa Partnership Emergency Operations Center (EOC) liaison program played a key role during the activation of Johnson County's EOC.

The story actually goes back to the epic floods of 2008, when the Iowa River rose to record heights, flooding large parts of Iowa City and the University of Iowa. Safeguard Iowa Partnership EOC liaisons served in the Johnson County EOC during the disaster, and Dave Wilson, the emergency management coordinator for Johnson County, saw the importance and value of the Partnership.

Since then, Wilson has helped to improve partnerships with local private companies by offering a variety of training that includes EOC operations and incident command. Wilson says that the Safeguard Iowa Partnership "is a good partner because of the other partners they can bring to the table who have resources and tools that we normally wouldn't have access to."



During the spring 2013 activation, Safeguard Iowa Partnership EOC liaisons assisted with logistics within the operations center. With sandbag reserves dwindling, Johnson County needed to replenish its supply to continue to fight the rising waters and protect critical infrastructure and key resources. One mission involved arranging trucking for a sizeable supply of sandbags to be transported from New Jersey to Iowa City. Wilson stated that when initial plans for transportation fell through, within hours Safeguard Iowa Partnership EOC liaisons had coordinated with CH Robinson to secure another truck that could deliver the sandbags within the time constraints. Wilson says these sandbags were used to protect infrastructure and small businesses; the rest were set aside for the next flood.

Jessica Eash, who lives in Iowa City and works at Hills Bank and Trust Company, went through Safeguard Iowa Partnership EOC liaison training just two weeks prior to being activated. She was positioned at the logistics table during her activation, helping to order a number of support items for the EOC and responders. In doing so, Jessica saw firsthand the difference the additional staff Safeguard Iowa Partnership made in helping Wilson and Johnson County. "I think it is really beneficial," Eash says. "If we need additional information, now we have the contacts at the EOC and know how the process works."



Dave Wilson says the big benefits of the program involve sharing information and building partnerships. "It is very advantageous to share information on risks and threats with local businesses, and work together to protect key infrastructure," he says. It also helps to know the steps they are taking to protect key items.

Trent Mull, a Safeguard Iowa Partnership EOC liaison volunteer from UnityPoint Health - Trinity Hospital in the Quad Cities, arranged to secure a number of logistical needs, including life vests for the public safety dive team. Mull explains that the morning situation briefings in the EOC were "eye-opening" and helped him gain a situational awareness of the disaster. "It really helped me better understand what was going on and what they were preparing for," Mull says. "This gave me a broader spectrum of response, both at the scene and from the EOC." For Mull, building relationships was a key component of the activation.



Wilson praises the Safeguard Iowa Partnership EOC liaison program for providing specialized resources and knowledge in key areas. He notes that "so much infrastructure is owned by private businesses."

Johnson County is just one of several counties to have partnered with the Safeguard Iowa Partnership to activate the EOC liaison program. Contact Safeguard Iowa Partnership to learn more about how your county can play a role in the Emergency Operation Center liaison program or if you are interested in joining the elite group of liaisons.

To learn more about joining Safeguard Iowa Partnership visit www.safeguardiowa.org.

The Safeguard Iowa Partnership is a 501c3 nonprofit involving government, private-sector, higher education and nonprofit organizations. Our mission is to strengthen the capacity of Iowa to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters through public-private collaboration.

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