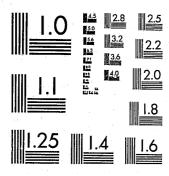
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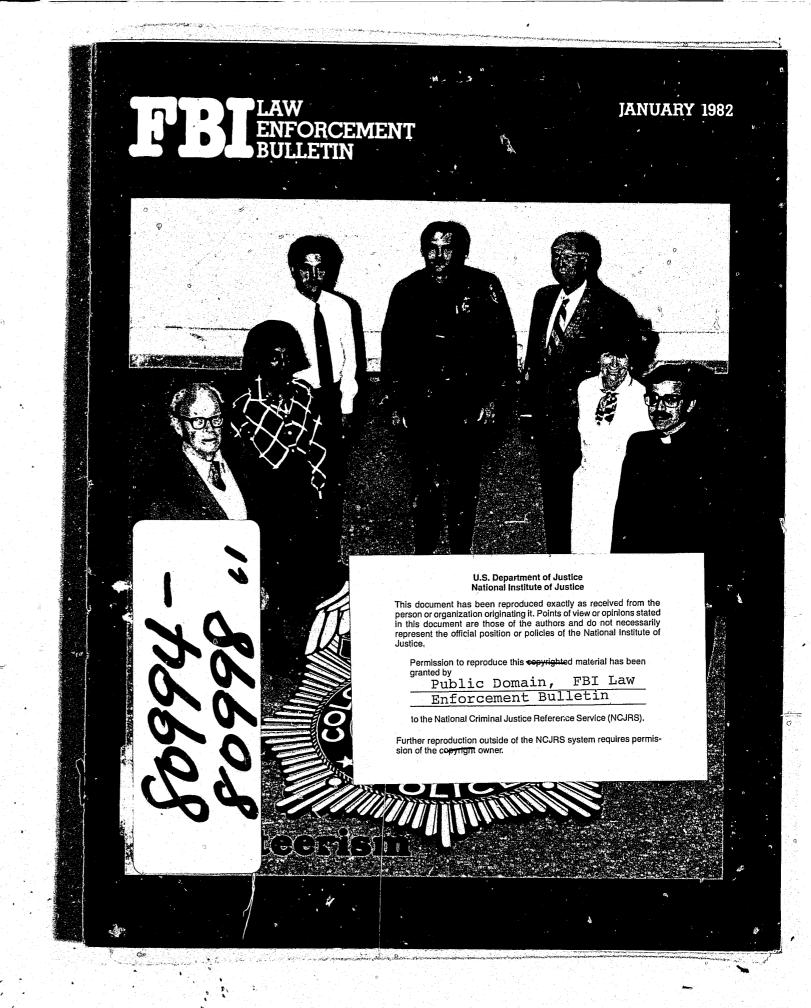
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William H. Webster, Director

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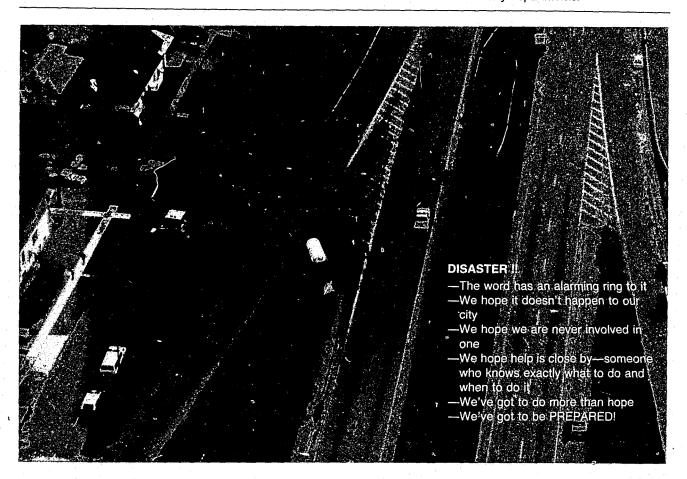
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Developing Police Disaster Preparedness Plans

LT. JAMES B. CORCORAN Commander of Bureau of Planning and Analysis Disaster Coordinator Police Department Buffalo, N.Y.

A disaster strikes suddenly and without warning. If a disaster is to be properly handled, the key is preparation through planning, organization, training, and acquisition of equipment.

Because of the daily pressures of operating a department and a city, the enormous potential for widespread disruption of a city by a disaster is often overlooked by most police administrators and other members of the city management team. It is difficult for a police administrator to conceptualize that a disaster could cause a total breakdown in transportation, communications, power supply, and other public services against the backdrop of loss of life and property. Therefore, little or no thought is given to disaster planning in many departments.





Lieutenant Corcoran



James B. Cunningham

Preparedness and response planning must become key objectives for the Nation's police departments. Preparations must be made for natural disasters usually equated with extreme weather conditions or technological disasters such as Three Mile Island. The list of potential disasters should include chemical accidents, fires, explosions, disturbances, transportation of nuclear waste, and even enemy attacks. Based on geographic location, individual departments add to the list by preparing for earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, or other potential disasters most likely to strike a given region. Planners must also be alert to possible disasters that might relate to new industries that have moved into their communities.

The City of Buffalo, N.Y., is geographically positioned at the gateway to Ontario, Canada, and serves as the principle conduit for shipments of chemicals and other hazardous materials to and from Niagara Falls, N.Y., as well as to Canada. The city's position as a major Lake Erie port has further influenced Buffalo's growth into a multimodal transportation center.

The increase in the number and toxicity of hazardous materials being shipped through Buffalo's 14 police precincts daily and increasing public awareness of the potential threat to public health and safety have promoted a merging of ideas and efforts by the city's police and fire departments. This effort has been coordinated by the Mayor's Office of Disaster Preparedness.

The police department has established guidelines to insure the coordinated efforts of the department, and plans and aids were developed to allow command officers to concentrate their energies on stabilizing and assisting the community's recovery from a

Disaster Operational Procedures Manual

The Disaster Operational Procedures Manual is a compendium of:

1) Existing emergency procedures covering such calamities as snow, floods, riots, airport disas-

- ters, multiple-alarm fires, hazardous materials accidents involving the railroad, tractor-trailers, or tanks, and other serious emergencies:
- 2) A multiadaptable procedural plan that is applicable to a number of catastrophies; and
- 3) Resource reference lists of key personnel and equipment.

Emergency Operations Handbook

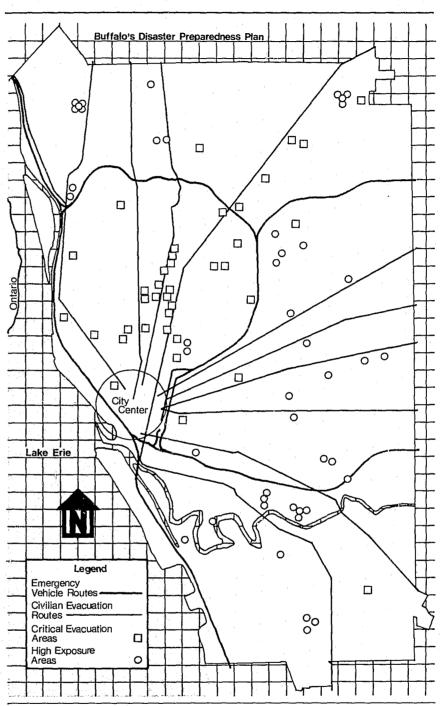
The Emergency Operations Handbook is a timesaving planning device for command officers. This handbook contains step-by-step instructions on how to plan, suggestions on planning, and referral worksheets which list operational orders, manpower and equipment resources, outside resources, command post needs, communications, security, intelligence, press, and onsite operations.

Emergency Mobilization Plan

The emergency mobilization plan is a computerized personnel roster batch report of all sworn personnel who will be assigned to "precincts of residency" if there is a need to activate the emergency mobilization plan. When disaster strikes, all department members will report to duty in full uniform. Members who live in the city will report to their normal assignments; members living outside the city limits have been assigned by computer to report to "precincts of residency."

Precinct Disaster Preparedness Map

A precinct disaster preparedness map was developed for the city of Buffalo. This map is grid-coordinated and is presently being used by the Conrail Railroad System, Buffalo Police and Fire Departments, and other city departments. By having a collective map and using grid coordinates as reference points, all city departments share a common language in pinpointing disaster sites. The map also includes all the plotted railroad tracks and railroad identification points within the city of Buffalo.



A coded legend lists:

- 1) Emergency vehicle routes. When disaster strikes, civilian traffic is restricted, allowing emergency vehicles to move freely in, out, and around the city without the hindrance of congested civilian vehicle traffic.
- 2) Civilian evacuation routes. During a disaster requiring evacuation of persons from the city, some or all of the designated civilian evacuation routes will be employed. These predetermined routes will become one-way, outbound from

downtown to the city limits.

For clarity, this map is a simplified version of the original developed for the city of Buffalo.

- 3) High-exposure areas, Hazardous materials concentration that have been identified in each precinct.
- 4) Critical evacuation areas. Nursing homes and hospitals in each precinct that would be targeted for evacuation, if necessary,
- 5) Stationhouses. Precinct stationhouses are identified.

The map legend lists the names of emergency and evacuation routes, as well as the names, addresses, and precincts of high-exposure and critical evacuation areas. To facilitate the development of the precinct disaster preparedness map, each precinct commander was given the task of identifying the precise location of potential hazards within his precinct. Buildings difficult to evacuate, such as nursing homes and hospitals, were also identi-

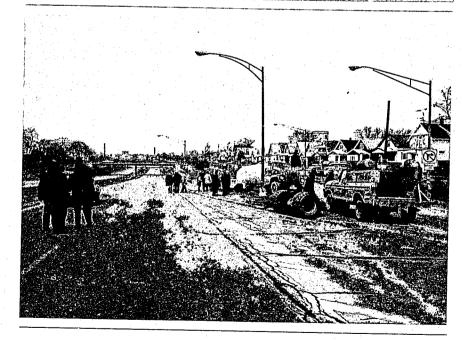
In order to educate and involve all 1.100 sworn members of the department, the Buffalo Fire Department provided instructional training classes to every member of the police department on handling hazardous materials and boiling liquid expanding vapor explosion (BLEVE) incidents.

Coordinating City/County Disaster Plans

Before finalizing the city's comprehensive disaster plan, it was of paramount importance to provide the evacuation route information to the communities that adjoin the city. Coordinating of city/county disaster plans was handled by the city of Buffalo and Erie County Offices of Disaster Preparedness. They addressed the problem of identifying the county's evacuation routes of the surrounding communities so as not to conflict with the city's evacuation routes which would carry the traffic flow from the city through their community.



"Preparedness and response planning must become key objectives for the Nation's police departments."



During a total or sectional evacuation of Buffalo, the traffic flow patterns of certain city streets would be altered, forcing all traffic to flow one-way from the center of the city out to the city limits.

Implementation

In March 1981, a portion of the disaster plan was put to trial when a propane tank truck lost a set of wheels and crashed to the pavement of a local expressway. A small amount of highly flammable vapor began to leak from the truck. Because of the high density of population in the immediate area, the expressway, which winds its way through the heart of the city of Buffalo, was the worst possible place for such an accident.

The existence of the disaster plan facilitated the quick and efficient closing of the expressway. A command post was established and evacuating the immediate area was considered; however, because the leak was small and winds dispersed the fumes that had leaked, evacuation was not necessary.

Cooperation between the police and fire departments and emergency crews was excellent. The propane was successfully transferred to an undamaged truck. During this entire period, the immediate area of the expressway was sealed off from traffic, minimizing the possibility of personal injury should any adverse incident occur.

The importance of disaster planning in meeting our obligation to the public cannot be stressed too highly. No police department can be totally prepared for every type of disaster, but planning is the keystone in providing the decisionmakers with the information they must have to be effective in periods of crisis. The time spent in developing a disaster plan will be repaid a thousandfold should tragedy strike, and success may be measured in the number of lives and amount of property saved through preparation.

FBI

Photos: William M. Shephard

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