Emergency Management: Strengthen basic elements to prepare for disasters
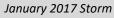
Why this audit is important

The Metro region is vulnerable to natural and human-made hazards. Metro has a variety of operations and facilities that span three counties. To deal with emergencies, organizations and governments use emergency management. We reviewed four recent emergency incidents to see whether Metro's approach covered the basic elements of emergency management.

Eagle Creek Fire

Source: Curtis Perry/Flicker
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January 2017 Storm

Source: Metro

What we found

Metro's response was ad-hoc and did not cover many of the basic elements of emergency management. However, the impacts of the four incidents we reviewed were not severe. Because of this, and because of the experience and initiative of Metro employees, the effects of missing the basic elements were relatively minor.

Metro relied on employee experience and initiative during recent incidents

Event	Roles & Authority	Procedures	Inventory & Resources	Continuity	Communication
MRC Flood	●	○	●	○	●
Eagle Creek Fire	○	○	○	○	●
January '17 Storm	●	○	○	○	●
December '15 Storm	○	○	○	○	○

● Incident management and employee experience & initiative

○ Employee experience & initiative

Source: Metro Auditor's Office analysis of documents and interviews related to incidents

We determined that Metro was able to respond well to these incidents overall. However, we saw opportunities for improvement for managing emergencies. Metro needed a more formal structure to be prepared for severe multi-facility emergencies or disasters. We noted progress on the development of a disaster debris management plan and a continuity plan for solid waste.

What we recommend

We made recommendations for Metro to clarify roles, responsibilities and authority, and to formalize administrative procedures. We also recommended Metro plan for continuity of operations, and develop an inventory of emergency resources, backup communication system, and notification system(s) to cover all employees.