

# County has equipment ready for emergencies

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What if a disaster happened in Farmington Hills and police or fire officials couldn't get to you and your family until two days?

You'd have to know how to take care of yourself and your family.

That's the point behind Mayor Nancy Bates' launch of the city's Local Preparedness Committee that is meeting monthly to come up with a plan to organize the community's resources in case an emergency cripples the city.

But much of the plan is getting the word out to residents about the group's goals, said committee

members.

Farmington Hills is part of Oakland County, and the county is engineering its own local preparedness and emergency action plan.

But that group will not be the first to respond to an emergency or disaster, said Michael Sturm, administrator for Oakland County Emergency Response and Preparedness Unit.

Sturm spoke at the Hills preparedness committee meeting Monday to discuss the county's plan to help cities, villages and townships when disaster strikes.

"Ours is in a support mode," he said. "We don't have the first responder level."

He pointed out the county's bounty of equipment when it comes to emergency action.

The county plans to have two hazardous treatment vehicles and in the near future two more, a Sheriff's Department mobile command center, two Sheriff's helicopters and a mobile decontamination trailer where up to 300 people can be treated in one hour.

It also has 500 bio-chemical suits, 110 Geiger counters and training programs for disaster preparedness.

He pointed out the county is helping smaller communities that do not have the equipment or money to properly prepare for

emergencies.

To help neighboring communities, many fire departments have created consortiums and mutual aid agreements in the past year.

The county is also working with outreach programs, like enlisting the aid of large companies whose resources might come into play in case of need.

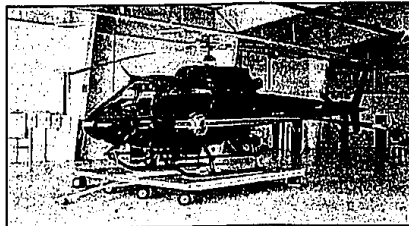
Working with hospitals, the national and state guard and other government agencies such as roads and airports is also part of the plan.

"The key to our success is communication, coordination and cooperation," Sturm said.

"We've made strides, but we got a hell of a lot of ways to go yet," he said.

Among other discussion by committee members was a concern for what residents expect in case disaster strikes.

Committee member Don Millington, who serves as president of his homeowners association, the Historic Halsted area, said the neighbors he has talked with just assume the fire or police department will come to the rescue.



Air support: The Oakland County Sheriff's Department offers communities support in crisis, with emergency equipment like this helicopter.

"I asked them, 'What if the cops can't get to you until two days?'" he said.

"It got us thinking about what we can do to utilize ourselves, how we could put down a plan for our association."

Member Ken Massey, who is also president of the Council of Homeowners Associations, said having neighborhood associations already in place is a great

resource to tie a community together about a plan.

That plan could include helping people with special issues such as those who speak another language and those who are disabled.

The group also plans to put together topics for shows for local cable broadcast. The committee will meet again on July 10.

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