



SUSAR

Alliance Newsletter

Summer, 2018

2018 SUSAR Conference!!!

The 2018 State Urban Search and Rescue Conference will be held In New Orleans Louisiana, November 4-8. We will once again be offering the EMAP Standards Class and TEEEX will be offering the Wide Area Search Class. There will be moderated break-out sessions and up to date presentations on current response initiatives. Watch our web site and Facebook page for updates and registration information!

SUSAR Membership

For over ten years, SUSAR has been a no-cost membership driven organization. As the organization grows offering increased benefits for its members, and expands the scope, relevance and credibility within the disaster response community, costs have outpaced the Organization's ability to operate effectively.

Here are just some of the reasons why SUSAR membership can benefit your organization:

- SUSAR and its member agencies strive to not just meet but exceed the NIMS standards established for US&R resources.
- The Training committee has finalized a Training Plan (SUSAR TPAM) and an instructor application process. Currently they are working to adapt position specific training to best serve the needs of SUSAR members.
- SUSAR led the way to establishing the US&R Typing as an ANSI standard and continues to work with the National Integration Center (NIC) to assist with authoring National typing documents.
- SUSAR has finalized a handbook for Mission Ready Packages (MRP) for deployments.
- SUSAR has embraced the FEMA standard enhancing the live-find standard and leading the way on the canine recovery standard.
- SUSAR has established a partnership with EMAC and continues its effort to develop a National database of resources.
- SUSAR has established a partnership with NEMA and IAEM which will ensure quick and appropriate response for communities in need.
- SUSAR is working to establish and expand operational partnership relationships with the National Guard and other DOD organizations.
- SUSAR is looking to establish relationships with government, non-government and private organizations for a variety of training and operational partnering initiatives.

To continue with this growth, the SUSAR Board of Directors has established membership options. To learn more about this, please see the informational brochure at: <http://www.susar.org/who-can-be-a-member>

Nominations

Nominations are now open for the **SUSAR Board of Directors**. Board Members serve 2-year terms and may serve a maximum of three terms. If you know of someone who would be interested in serving on this working board, please submit the nomination by going to: <http://www.susar.org/board-of-directors-nomination-form>

Nominations are also open for the Jim Riley Leadership Award. Please go

to: <http://www.susar.org/jim-riley-leadership-award-nominati> to submit someone for this prestigious award.

Both nominations close on August 1st, 2018.

Developing a Living Strategic Plan

From: Steve Coffman, Texas Task Force 2

One of the required elements of the US&R Standard for a Task Force is the Strategic Plan. Most of us are generally aware of the need for a Strategic Plan and most of our sponsoring agencies have one. But is it a useful Strategic Plan? Does it have relevance to the actions and development of the US&R Task Force?

I began my quest to really understand the significance of a Strategic Plan by reading through a number of other plans. I discovered some amazing things. Many of the plans I read were simply duplicates of other strategic plans. In some cases, the originating agencies names were still in the document. In other cases, the effective dates had simply been changed but the content had never been updated. In most cases, there was no Implementation Plan or Schedule for the goals and objectives outlined in the plan. In most cases there was no schedule of review and no documentation as to whether any of the goals and objectives had been completed or revised.

So...why have one then?

The Strategic Plan outlines the goals and objectives for the ongoing development of the organization over several years. It is a sort of roadmap for where the organization is going. One of the key elements of the Strategic Plan is the "mission statement". The mission statement defines why the organization exists. It is important to be able to articulate exactly what the organizations purpose is. Most of us know why our US&R teams exist but putting succinctly into a few words is a good exercise for the leadership to

clearly define not only what the organization exists for, but in the process of writing it, it also serves as a set of boundaries for why the organization exists. It helps keep “mission creep” (the tendency of an organization to take on functionality not intended) in check.

Along with the mission statement are the “vision” statement and the core “values” statements. The vision statement is all about where the organization sees itself in the years to come.

Accomplishing the organizational goals and objectives should be leading to achieving the “vision” of the organization. If an organization doesn’t have a clearly defined “vision”, then how does it know what the goals and objectives are meant to accomplish?

The core “values” are those things that define the character of the organization. These are usually phrases such as “honor and integrity”, “compassion”, etc. One organization I’m very familiar with has as one of their core values “intolerance of mediocrity”. For them this was a significant value and defined the expectations of all members of the organization to always do their very best. Adherence to their core values was expected and mandatory. Core values can be extremely powerful in defining not only the character of the organization but also of the expectations for it’s members.

We had a Strategic Plan sitting on the shelf when I became the Program Manager for TX-TF2, and it met most of the criteria I have just discussed...on paper. For TX-TF2 to move forward in a positive way, we needed to take Strategic Planning seriously. We setup a series of meetings with the Task Force Leaders and the Program Staff to start looking at the idea of creating a real life workable Strategic Plan that met all of the criteria outlined by the US&R Standard but more importantly defined where we wanted to be as a US&R Task Force and to develop a road map for how to get there.

We started by looking at the US&R Standard. The current US&R Standard addresses the Strategic Plan in three places:

Standard 3.3.1

The US&R Resource shall have a formal planning process that incorporates key stakeholder engagement in the development of a Strategic Plan, Mobilization Plan, Administrative Manual, Operations Manual, Training Plan, and Equipment Management Plan. The review/update process is recorded and documented on a schedule established by the US&R Resource.

Standard 3.1.4

The US&R Resource has an established and current multi-year strategic plan. The US&R Resource has a documented schedule and an evaluation process that incorporates criteria established in 3.2 through 3.7.

Standard 3.3.2

The Strategic Plan shall be a multi-year plan, utilizing national, state, local and/or tribal objectives and milestones. The plan shall include the following items:

- 1) Mission and Vision of the US&R Resource;
- 2) Core sustaining values;
- 3) Strategic Readiness Objectives;
- 4) Training/deployment standards, field exercises, readiness evaluations;
- 5) Cache equipment, maintenance, storage and accountability;
- 6) Member's health, safety, security, succession development policies;

and

- 7) Financial considerations of the US&R Resource.

The structure and content of the Strategic Plan is spelled out in these three Standards.

Key Stakeholder Engagement

First of all, the Strategic Plan must incorporate key stakeholders in the development of the Strategic Plan. The US&R resource must define who the key stakeholders are. This is extremely important because it begins to define who has a vested interest in the success of the organization. In our case, that included the team leadership, representatives from our Task Force Advisory Board, Dallas Fire-Rescue chain of command, and the US&R

Program office staff. These stakeholders were brought together in the beginning for a two-day workshop to rewrite the Mission, Vision, and Values and to perform a SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) of the current status of the Task Force. Properly done, the SWOT analysis takes a hard look where the organization really is. Candor is required of the participants for the SWOT analysis to be effective. However, properly done, the analysis can be used to define major goals and objectives for the Strategic Plan that are aimed at strengthening the weaknesses and shoring up the strengths of the organization.

Schedule and Evaluation

Secondly, It has to include a documented schedule and an evaluation process. This is significant. It has to include an implementation schedule of when goals and objectives will be achieved. But it must also include an evaluation process. There needs to be a defined and documented review process that takes a hard look at the status of the implementation plan and the current relevance of the goals and objectives. The plan should document how and when the evaluation process will occur. Sometimes the review process will find that certain goals or objectives are no longer relevant or unachievable at this time. This can happen due to changes in funding or changes in sponsoring agency support for specific goals.

Standards Criteria

Third, it has to incorporate criteria established in 3.2 through 3.7. In other words, the Strategic Plan must address Program Management, Finance, Planning and Procedures, Incident Management, Alert and Mobilization, Training and Exercises, and Resource Management and Logistics. When the Standard Development working group began to work on writing the US&R Standard, the goal was to define all of the key elements that a well-functioning Task Force must have in place. These key elements were grouped into these seven functional areas. If the Strategic Plan is truly defining goals and objectives for the strategic direction of the US&R Task Force, it should address each of these functional areas.

Required Elements

Fourth, in addition to defining goals and objectives in each of the functional areas of Task Force administration the Standard defines more specifically content that must be included in the Strategic Plan. It must include a Mission and Vision statement, the Core Sustaining Values, Strategic Readiness Objectives, Training/Deployment standards including field exercises and readiness evaluations, Cache equipment and maintenance, Members health, safety, security, and succession development, and lastly Financial Considerations.

In order to simplify the presentation of these elements, it makes sense to organizationally structure the Strategic Plan to include these elements from the beginning. You might consider including each of these into the Table of Contents of the Strategic Plan. This will make it easier for a reviewer to reference each element during a review of the plan.

Conclusion

In retrospect, looking back on my tenure as the Program Manager for Texas Task Force 2, there are two things that I wish I had when I started. One is a well-developed Strategic Plan, and the other is the US&R Standard. From an administrative standpoint, these two documents would have provided the roadmap for where we needed to spend our time and effort. Like most of you, I had no doubt about our ability to put “boots on the ground” and do a good job. The dedication of the members along with their knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform rescue was never a question. Our weakness was providing them with the proper leadership and management that they deserved in order to have a well-rounded functioning organization.

If you haven't done so, spend the time to take a look at the US&R Standard and ask yourself if your organization were to honestly self-evaluate on each of the forty-four standards, how would you do? Secondly, sit down with your leadership and stakeholders and talk about working toward a Strategic Plan that truly provides a roadmap for where you want to be as an organization.

Steve Coffman is retired from the Dallas Fire-Rescue Department and served as the Program Manager for Texas Task Force 2. He is a past President of

SUSAR Alliance and served on the US&R Standard Working Group for EMAP and the EMAP Technical Committee.



Member Profile - AL-TF1

As a Gulf Coast Team, Mobile is well experienced in dealing with natural disasters and has always taken a proactive approach to emergency preparedness. The Mobile Fire-Rescue Department began developing an Urban Search and Rescue capability in January 2002. From the beginning we have strived to meet or exceed the federal standards established by FEMA. Our program was officially recognized in 2003 and designated Alabama Task Force 1 (AL-TF1) by the Alabama Emergency Management Agency and Homeland Security Division. Since then we have continued to grow through Homeland Security grants and with the full support of our City leaders.

Alabama Task Force 1's sponsoring agency is Mobile Fire-Rescue Department. However, the team would not be where it is today without our participating agencies and volunteers. The Poarch Creek Tribe is a huge supporter of the team, providing personnel, equipment, and financial support. There are several other participating agencies such as Saraland and Rainbow City Fire Departments.

The University of South Alabama Medical Center is the core of the teams Medical Section. Nurses, trauma surgeons, and paramedics from Mobile Fire, make up this section. Our canine team is comprised mostly of civilian volunteers whose dedication plays a big role in our program's success. AL-TF1 is truly a community and regional effort.

From the Program's inception we have strived to incorporate the US&R Team into the daily operations of Mobile Fire-Rescue by using the Rescue, Search, Planning, HazMat and Medical Sections as subject matter experts within the department. The Rescue & Search sections are standalone fire stations and serve as the Technical Rescue Team for local and regional responses.

The Medical Section uses the paramedics on the team, and who are also assigned to the Technical Rescue Stations, as the primary medics for confined space medicine, suspension trauma, and crush injury responses.

The Planning portion of AL-TF1 is also imbedded in the emergency operations of both the Department and the City's Emergency Operations Center. Planning section members, which consist of City GIS and Mobile Fire Department personnel, support and manage both EOCs. They also serve as the Planning Section Chiefs for both the City and Fire Department during a local disaster. Recently, the Department started a pilot program which assigned a new engine company to help assist the Logistics Section with the day to day operations of the warehouse. The plan is to have Logistics personnel that are on Mobile Fire be assigned to this station which is less than a mile from AL-TF1's cache.

Over the course of our development we have had several opportunities to test our capabilities, responding to a wide variety of emergencies when called upon for assistance.

Deployments

August	'04	Gulf Shores, AL, Hurricane Ivan
October	'04	Frisco City, AL, Child Trapped in a well
September	'05	Gulfport, MS, Hurricane Katrina
November	'05	Plaquemines Parish, LA, Hurricane Katrina
January	'06	Cameron Parish, LA, Hurricane Rita
March	'06	Alabama State Docks, Container Crane Accident
March	'07	Enterprise AL, Tornado Strike
August	'08	Louisiana, Hurricane Gustav
December	'09	Citronelle, AL, Boulder on child
April	'11	Birmingham, AL, Tornado Outbreak 2011
May	'11	Hackleburg, AL, Tornado Outbreak 2011
May	'11	Tuscaloosa, AL, Tornado Outbreak 2011
September	'17	Texas, Hurricane Harvey

In all of the above incidents, AL-TF1 performed in an exemplary fashion, earning the Task Force both local and national recognition.

For the 2011 tornado outbreak AL-TF1 was deployed as a Type I Team. Because of the wide spread damage AL-TF1 was tasked by the State with coordinating both State and Federal assets including State Mutual Aid Teams (AMAS), SUSAR, National Guard, Department of Defense, and State Troopers. Since then, AL-TF1 hosts training/exercises for our State Military Units annually.

Readiness

In 2012, AL-TF1 was administratively evaluated by FEMA US&R which resulted in a score that exceeded their requirements as it applies to their standards for deployment status.

In 2016 Alabama Task Force 1 became the first team to be Administratively Certified under the EMAP Standard.

In the future, the Program hopes to continue to build on our 8 year relationship with the National Guard, DOD, and State Troopers as we take our team to the next level. Like all state teams, we wish we had access to the federal system in the form of training and opportunities. However, we believe AL-TF1 is strong enough to continue to grow if we maintain the frame of mind to aim higher than the “norm” or

“average” of what US&R should be and continue to exceed the national standard in every way possible.



Tornado Outbreak, Tuscaloosa, 2011



DOD Air Operations Assigned to AL-TF1

Sponsorship Opportunities

Does your company provide a product or service that SUSAR member organizations use? A sponsorship of the SUSAR Alliance will allow you greater access to our members, advertising on our web site and social media sites and other great benefits. To learn more, check out our sponsorship brochure here: <http://www.susar.org/premier-elite-sponsors>

Upcoming Course Plans

SUSAR is working to collect information and post it out to the membership regarding any and all courses being offered through or at a SUSAR member organization. If your organization will be offering a course that may be opened to others, please email susar.board@gmail.com and we'll get that

posted on our web site and other social media outlets.

Links of Interest

<https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/167249>

Newsletter Content

SUSAR is looking for content for this newsletter. Please submit any and all articles to susar.board@gmail.com! The next newsletter will post in mid-July!