

**Franklin County MORPC
Somali –Bantu Forum at Community Center
Special Emergency Transportation Needs
Forum Discussion
April 7th, 2010
Time 9:30-11:00 am
(Draft Minutes)**

Representatives participating in the discussion

English Second Language
Somali Women
Bantu tribe Women
Somali Men

Agencies/Groups that observed forum

Baker Group for first 20 minutes of forum, no other agencies present except staff from facility.

Total Attendees -26

Discussion Format

This forum was held at the Somali Community Center 3248 Cleveland Avenue, Columbus, OH. This location was coordinated by the Burhan Ahmed of Ocean Accounting and Tax Service. Coffee was provided for all the attendees at the beginning of the meeting. The meeting was started at 9:35 am. This meeting was arranged to coincide with a class that was provided to assist local immigrant women to better assimilate into the Columbus community. Burhan provided translation services for the women and Mike and Dave.

Introductions were provided by Michael Pompili, of the Kettering Foundation. The forum discussion was moderated by Dave Patton from the Kettering Foundation on behalf of the Mid Ohio Regional Planning Committee's Plan for Populations with Mobility Needs. All attendees were encouraged to participate.

Discussion

Dave Patton asked the participants how long they have resided in the United States. The answers ranged from one and half years, to 12 years, with most of the women being in the United States between 4-7 years. Answers were as follows in years: 9, 2.5, 5, 6, 5, 4, 10, 12, 9, 4, 2, 2, 11, 2, 3, 5, 1.5, 3, and 11 years.

The discussion was initiated by having the participants discuss their experiences that they encountered with the Hurricane Ike windstorm in September 2008. Most participants discussed that they lost electricity and that they didn't know what to do. They wanted help but did not know where to go for assistance. Even the elders did not know what to do in this emergency.

Specific General Comments received (not all comments)

How did the storms affect you?

- Loss of power, and then it also cause loss of water or heat and phones;
- We're very pleased when electricity was restored;
- Elders were frustrated as to where to go;
- Didn't know what to do, and did not want to get separated from their children; and
- Really did not know what to do?

Communication during the emergency.

- Used battery powered radios;
- Didn't know if to go to community centers;
- No specific emergency sites had been identified;
- Used the radio and friends;
- Because of our culture, most people do little reading and writing-“We Talk!”
- Will contact 911;
- Talking is by far our major means of communication for our culture; and
- Would use TV's but language is a problem.

How did you receive emergency information?

- Radio was the common way this group received their emergency information – predominately 610 Radio;
- Most have back up batteries for their radios;
- Everyone in the group could hear their emergency sirens;
- When they hear the sirens they turn on the TV's to see where the tornado was, and then determined if they impacted them;
- Radio was the preferred method of communication;

What kind of information do you want the most and other comments?

- Where to get basic resources such as food and water;
- Going to basement suggestion, does not work in our neighborhoods because of lack of basements;
- Have no problem of leaving their belongings and pets, because of their past experiences of frequently moving in their homeland;
- Major difference between their responses and other forum responses is that pets are a non issue with this group- they would leave their pets; and
- Would try to identify friends that have autos for transportation in an emergency.

Would use a shelter?

- Yes they would, but we want to know where our other family members are;
- Pets will not be taken to the shelter; and
- Had no problem going to shelter, but would like to know where they are.

Trust Items

They were trusting of local media in the event of an emergency; and
They would check multiple sources to verify the information.

Voluntary Registry System

- Registry for special populations was supported; and
- The participants strongly supported such a program;

Other comments

This group of participants was far more emphatic that responding to natural or man made emergency events was of far less importance than the other REAL issues that they are facing such as education, crime and other social issues. They really wanted to be heard on those issues and asked the facilitators to send that message back to other governmental agencies. Mike and Dave stated that they would. (Mike did contact 211 and MORPC to schedule a forum meeting with these participants.)

Attendee's knowledge of Franklin County Agencies

211

Not really aware of this service, yet were extremely receptive to such services –Referral made to 211 Call Center to address this group.

EMA

No real knowledge of their duties.

Mid Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)

No real knowledge of their duties.

Health Department

Vaccines and Health Care

Summary

The discussion was very informative, especially as it related to the specific needs of the women and how they would respond to a local emergency. The representatives were very forceful in their discussions and had no problem in expressing their views.

Main points of the discussion were as follows:

- **Main Point** -Because of our culture, most people do little reading and writing-“We Talk!” was the response, and as such, any response plan has to incorporate communications from person to person as a main focus into any education plan for the Somali population;

- Do refer to TV stations though in the event of a tornado, or other siren warning notice, as they look to television station weathermen for location and direction of a tornado (Sirens are used only for Tornado warning and nothing else);
- Like the idea of the registry, and did not see the privacy issue as being a real issue;
- This group was the most vocal in documenting that they wanted answers in to the other social, crime and educational needs that exist in their community;
- They were very comfortable in being moved to a shelter since in their home country they had to move a great deal;
- Therefore as long as they knew where the rest of their family was they would leave their belongings and pets with no real problem;

Mike Pompili and Dave Patton promised the group that they would contact other groups to present additional information to them to hopefully start to address the other concerns they raised to emphasize that their opinions mattered.

Mike thanked them for their effort and their openness.

The Forum adjourned at 10:45 am.

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