

SAFETY TOWARD BUILD-OUT

Chandler's strategies for protecting the safety of the public require periodic adjustment. Approaching build-out, with its increased urban intensities, marks the City's transformation from outer suburb to major, central place. Location, population, density and higher profile have altered its status in responding to natural or human-caused threats.

Citizens urge that safety planning, staffing and preparedness are revised to keep pace with the changing conditions of community growth. Although State statutes emphasize planning to combat disastrous events, this Element also addresses day-to-day hazards.

GOAL: UPDATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANS.

Objective: Revisit Emergency Plans in greater detail.

Objective: Conduct regular preparedness exercises under the auspices of City public safety departments pertaining to evacuation, triage and crisis containment.

Objective: Coordinate interoperable state-of-the-art telecommunications within the City and with other jurisdictions.

Objective: Address physical threats to human health and safety -- air-borne, flooding, fire, geological instability, water contamination.

GOAL: FOCUS ON TRAFFIC SAFETY.

Objective: Ensure direct, safe routes for emergency response vehicles.

Objective: Reduce traffic congestion and other driving hazards.

Objective: Strictly enforce regulations for yielding to emergency vehicles and evaluate policies for safe police, fire, emergency operations.

Objective: Maintain adequate visibility/lighting for pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular safety.

GOAL: STRENGTHEN PUBLIC SAFETY RESPONSE.

Objective: Provide adequate public safety personnel for protection of Chandler's citizens.

Objective: Conduct comprehensive observation/prevention programs keyed to public events and spaces, older neighborhoods, hazardous areas (airport, industrial).

Objective: Strive for improved emergency response times.

Existing Conditions

Arizona Revised Statutes require preparation and annual review of a municipal emergency response plan. The plan addresses emergencies as a result of noxious materials released from facilities or transportation vehicles as well as other hazardous situations. A county-wide local emergency planning committee must identify resources that are critical to executing the plan and conduct at least a biennial exercise of its emergency plan.

Chandler's emergency operations plan includes:

- Identification of key officials who will make decisions involving the execution of the plan.

- Provision of an inventory of trained personnel, facilities, equipment, and organizations that are needed to carry out the plan.
- Compliance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS).
- Agreements with other agencies and communities to exchange aid in time of crisis.

Regional emergency management coordination is conducted through the Maricopa County Emergency Operations Center located at the Papago Military Reservation. In Chandler, the responsibility for overall emergency management resides in the Fire Department.

Assets. The City has formulated an effective, basic Emergency Operations plan. It is fully coordinated with recommended Maricopa County Emergency Management Department procedures. Development standards required by the City of Chandler generally assure sufficient right-of-way widths/improvements, building setbacks, drainage control and related engineering criteria to maintain safe conditions. Preventative measures advocated in this Element are supported by planning principles in other General Plan components such as: Circulation, Land Use, Public Buildings, Public Facilities and Services.

Chandler's public safety departments are well-trained and equipped. Performance statistics compare favorably with other metropolitan area jurisdictions. The Fire Department, for example, meets or exceeds all emergency response standards and guidelines as set forth by its international accreditation with the Center for Public Safety Excellence.

Challenges/Issues. Maintaining adequate safety responsiveness entails committing resources for state-of-the-art emergency service. Establishing decentralized locations for getting personnel and equipment more quickly to all parts of the community should be evaluated.

Developments in county islands follow different standards than developments located within the City's limits. Infrastructure conditions that facilitate the City's response to emergencies, such as streets and water, will need to be considered and addressed upon receiving petitions for annexation of areas that were developed in the County.

New development forms -- such as larger/taller buildings or more dense mixed uses -- will require special emergency precautions pertaining to ingress-egress, communications infrastructure (e.g., radio repeaters), security and evacuation procedures. Preparedness plans for individual sites or structures should conform with the City's Emergency Management Plan.

Opportunities. General Plan principles can provide direction for Chandler's public safety departments to maintain their recognition for innovative leadership in dealing with emergency situations. Growth Area planning, for instance, could literally "build-in" physical features such as buffered perimeters, emergency only access, or dedicated substation space if warranted as part of site plan or structure design.

Expanding emergency support readiness by involving members of the public (currently including citizen academies, Volunteers in Policing and CERTS programs) represents a

major Safety opportunity. Neighborhood and civic organizations could mobilize significant human resources to serve in auxiliary capacities (e.g., traffic control, public communications, first aid, food/shelter services) during natural or human-caused disasters.

Build-Out Policies

Joint public-private initiatives are called for to achieve higher levels of emergency preparedness. Some basic policies in this regard include:

- ◆ Emergency planning considers potential impacts at multiple levels: site, neighborhood or Area, community-wide and regional.
- ◆ Property owners have responsibility for hazard mitigation.
- ◆ Evacuation management priority must be reflected in proposals for increased urban density.
- ◆ Appropriate Emergency Plan information should be shared with businesses, institutions and neighborhood associations.

Absorption of Chandler's remaining land resources, including revitalization efforts, highlights the need for emergency response refinements.

Implementation Recommendations

Consistent with Safety Goals, Objectives and Policies, the following suggestions may lead to implementation steps:

Planning. General Plan updating triggers a comprehensive assessment of Chandler's emergency procedures. Fine-tuning revisions may be desirable for planning consistency.

Recommendation: Sponsor annual practice/training exercises prior to the yearly emergency operations plan review to identify needs for improvement. Complete and maintain background information regarding: hazardous material storage, fire separation distances and fire prevention related physical conditions. In addition, work with Maricopa County and the Arizona Division of Emergency Management to gather background information regarding: geologic, water and other related potential natural hazards.

Accessibility. Appropriate reaction to critical situations requires optimum ingress/egress. Surface and air transportation to emergency scenes, or to disperse potentially-impacted citizens, must be unobstructed.

Recommendation: Reevaluate, prioritize and secure, as practicable, designated routes for localized citizen evacuation and emergency vehicle response.

Actions taken in coordination with other Elements, especially Circulation, will avoid congestion for smoother traffic flow during times of disaster.

Improved Response Resources. Capacity to deal with safety-threatening occurrences requires trained human resources operating proper equipment. The entire community shares this responsibility.

Recommendation: Continue policies that assure adequate staffing and cross-training of emergency personnel. Augment Fire and Police operations with citizen volunteers who are prepared to provide support in times of crisis.

The General Plan, throughout, intends to encourage closer cooperation among citizens and public service providers. Emergency conditions should bring out the best of Chandler's teamwork.