

2 Defining Roles, Responsibilities, and Relationships

Corpus Christi Customer Service Center

By Annie Leal, Customer Service Center Manager, City of Corpus Christi, Texas

The customer service center functions as the emergency phone bank during an emergency activation. An operating procedures document is updated annually, which defines the business processes for activations during the hurricane season or any other type of emergency.

Prior to full activation, a partial activation may be necessary. In this case, the city workstations are set up with computers and telephones for four to six call representatives with a supervisor who arranges the partial activation of the emergency phone bank.

Once full activation is deployed, all call reps and supervisors in the customer service center activate the emergency phone bank by signing onto the Cisco agent and supervisor with a “9” and their sign-on user identification numbers. The Cisco Internet Protocol Contact Center (IPCC) express telephone system automatically shuts off the call flow for the customer service center, and a message is uploaded to advise residents that the city offices and services are closed due to an emergency.

The emergency phone bank is made up of a majority of the staff in the customer service center, other designated staff from city departments who are essential employees, and others who were not eligible to be granted a waiver. Waivers are normally applied for and approved before June 1 each year.

Human resources staff members update the customer service center manager (CSC manager) on the city staff assigned to the phone bank. Employees are assigned to five shifts, with five or six employees per shift. Once a full activation is announced, the employees on the first shift are sent home for two hours to secure their properties and ensure that their

families evacuate the city and/or are ready to remain at home during the emergency.

Once staff members report back to the phone bank, they remain there until the next shift reports to duty or until the end of the emergency.

The CSC manager and Information Technology (IT) security manager direct the city’s website during an emergency. The CSC manager receives updates on the situation, whether it is a hurricane or another emergency, from the fire department’s Office of Emergency Management through a system called Web EOC.

Web EOC allows staff working at the emergency operations center to post updates. The public information office posts media updates that are accessible on Web EOC to the news media, the CSC manager, and IT security manager. Other groups in the emergency operations center—logistics, finance, planning, and operations—post information through Web EOC about road closures, status of shelter setups, and any infrastructure situations.

After the emergency, it may be necessary to set up a partial activation of the phone bank for customer calls regarding disaster recovery items such as downed trees and flooded areas.

This year, the city is coordinating with Nueces County’s emergency management office personnel, 211, the regional transportation authority, and other county safety personnel to form a consolidated emergency phone bank and provide assistance to 211 for transportation to citizens with special needs.

Finding a primary location to consolidate the 311 emergency phone bank and other service entities continues to be a problem.