

2007 NWACUHO CONFERENCE
Emergency Management in Housing and Dining

CASE STUDY: Winter Storm 2006

Early in the week preceding Thursday, December 14, 2006, weather forecasters in Western Oregon and Washington predicted an extreme weather pattern anticipated to hit on Thursday. The National Weather Service issued an extreme weather warning indicating a high probability of extreme winds, precipitation, and flooding throughout the northwest.

At approximately 5:00 PM on the day of the storm, Oregon State University activated an emergency operations center (EOC), bringing together key individuals to coordinate response efforts. Later in the evening, a representative for University Housing & Dining Services (UHDS) responded to the EOC.

OSU was on winter break at the time, however, approximately 150 students remained on campus in 5 different residence halls and up 280 residents were present in the family housing apartment complex.

The UHDS representative in the EOC had responsibilities for housing operations and had just taken over maintenance and facilities. He started calling in staff and quickly found that a large portion of the housing operations staff were out of town at a coworkers wedding, much of the residential education live-on staff were on vacation, and a majority of the residential education and maintenance management lived greater than 30 miles from campus—making response dangerous with the weather conditions. The EOC staff asked UHDS to provide meal provisions for response staff.

By the end of the evening, the strongest wind storm in over a decade had plowed through the Northwest causing widespread damage, power outages, and three deaths. Most of the damage was due to fallen trees, weakened by earlier wet weather. Wind exceeding 55 mph was noted on the OSU campus. Power throughout campus was knocked out quickly, and trees fell on one residential facility as well as a connected structure.

Severe winds knocked down utility poles, brought down wire and caused trees to tangle with lines and transformers. About 158,000 Portland General Electric (PGE) customers and 77,000 Pacific Power users still lacked power at noon Friday, including the OSU. Impassable roads in some areas hampered restoration efforts, and utility officials warned powerless customers that some might not get service for several days.

Discussion Questions:

- a. In this situation, what key functions would need to be completed by a housing and dining response team to achieve the primary goals of:
 1. Ensuring resident safety and security
 2. Continuing resident and responder foodservice
 3. Maintaining facilities and physical plant
 4. Occupancy management

- b. What personnel (positions) would need to be involved at the following phases of managing this emergency:
 1. Prevention
 2. Preparedness
 3. Response
 4. Recovery

- c. What are the key components to communications plan that would ensure an adequate housing and dining response to this type of incident?