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DISASTER
CONTROL

A
PRELIMINARY
REPORT
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Following World War II and upon the encouragement of the federal government, state and local governments involved themselves heavily in the field of civil defense. Most civil defense plans were predominately oriented towards nuclear passive protection but included some phases of disaster control for a community as an adjunct. The State of Oregon, the City of Portland, and Multnomah County were quite heavily involved in this field of civil defense.

About two years ago, Multnomah County discontinued its civil defense program, and this discontinuance was followed quite closely by the City of Portland abolishing their civil defense program. The last legislative assembly reduced the state's program so drastically that it bears little resemblance to what it had been. Most of these moves were predicated upon the inability of the various municipalities to meet local disaster conditions. The legislature was quite disturbed about the state's civil defense activity in the Columbus Day storm of 1962.

Since the discontinuance of civil defense as operating programs within Multnomah County and the City of Portland, both the county commissioners and the mayor and council concluded that a program of disaster control was a necessary element of service to the community. Accordingly, the City-County Coordinating Committee, composed of the Board of County Commissioners and the Mayor and Council of Portland, directed a study be undertaken to develop a joint city-county disaster plan. The committee has reported back to the joint City-County Coordinating Committee and has developed a plan that is workable on a cooperative basis but is very likely not legally enforceable, even in time of emergency.

In the span of the last twenty years there have been three major disasters in Multnomah County, namely the Vanport flood, the Columbus Day storm, and the floods of December, 1964. Other than the recommendations of the Disaster Study Committee for a city-county disaster plan (which has not been adopted by the Board of County Commissioners of Multnomah County), Multnomah County does not have a disaster plan. Each department of county government performs those functions in time of emergency that they view as their role. It would appear that there is a need within the government of Multnomah County for a disaster control plan, affixing the coordinating responsibility for the various necessary functions in a central command post.

It would appear that there is a need for a disaster control planning unit within the framework of Multnomah County's government. If the organization of Multnomah County were to include a Department of Public Safety, disaster control would appropriately fall in this category.

A disaster plan for Multnomah County should include many facets. It should affix responsibility for the coordination of activities of Multnomah County with a single individual possessing the authority to direct all activities in case of emergency. He should be empowered to render decisions on priorities of both manpower and material.

The permanent disaster control unit of Multnomah County should involve itself in the development of a master disaster control plan. It should be the responsibility of the disaster control unit to perform the following minimal functions in preparation of a major disaster:

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<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develops disaster control plan for Multnomah County.2. Ascertains training of police and fire reserves.3. Plans communication network including coordination of amateur radio operators.4. Maintains inventory by location of equipment and materials needed such as road equipment, sandbags, medical supplies, etc.5. Maintains inventory of key employees with addresses and telephone numbers.6. Maintains inventory of volunteer doctors and nurses.7. Maintains liaison with volunteer groups such as American Red Cross, Salvation Army, etc.8. Acts as assistant to disaster control commander in time of emergency.

The foregoing functions are illustrative only and are by no means intended to be complete. A copy of the disaster plan for emergency services developed by the Disaster Study Committee for the joint City-County Coordinating Committee is on file in the Home Rule Charter Committee office.