Like most of you, the warmer months of the spring season can’t happen soon enough for those of us at UWEM! The long, wet, cold days of winter are slowly fading away to thoughts of warmer breezes, flowers blooming and longer, sunnier days. Unfortunately, like houseguests who have long since worn out their welcome, our nasty La Niña winter is expected to hold on in Western Washington at least until early May. We may have to postpone our springtime wishes a few more months. But your friends at UWEM and our partners have been quite busy since we last published our newsletter. From a January winter storm of historic proportions (which closed down the entire UW system for three days), to two Seattle campus electrical power outages, and even a mini “flood” in our own building (see stories later in this edition), it has been a busy few months here in Emergency Management. While not necessarily our “BIG ONE,” each of these smaller incidents and events provides our UW emergency response team with a slew of “lessons learned” that we are applying and learning from. From each, we continue to review what worked well, as well as actions and responses that could be improved.

It is never a dull moment here thinking of the “unthinkable.” From the recent reports of increased sunspot activities (which can impact GPS and cell phones and potentially entire power grids), to the ongoing weather and other global novel disease outbreak threats, UWEM continues its public outreach and training programs – all FREE for the asking. We are also excited to have two new student employees joining our UWEM team through the end of the calendar year. They will be a wonderful addition to assist us in some long-neglected projects to enhance our planning and response capabilities.

Finally, I’d like to take this opportunity thank all of our readers for their comments, suggestions and compliments on our quarterly newsletter. We appreciate your input and welcome your thoughts regarding the content of the Disaster Digest. Please continue to send your comments to us at disaster@uw.edu so that we can continue to improve our campus and community disaster preparedness outreach efforts. Emergency management is truly a team effort, and each of you are part of this team in protecting this great university. Thank you for your continued support!
SPRING 2012 Partner of the Quarter:
Tamlyn Thomas, RN

Tamlyn Thomas of the UW Medical Center is our Partner of the Quarter. Tamlyn is a career RN in the STAT ICU at UWMC. Tamlyn has also been instrumental in the development of emergency planning and emergency management at the UWMC in her role as the UWMC Emergency Management Coordinator, which she has filled for several years.

Tamlyn has been a strong supporter of UWEM from day one! She has selflessly donated endless hours assisting with campus and EOC drills, CERT training and planning. Tamlyn’s support and dedication has helped to make the UWEM program and the Emergency Operations Center what they are today.

UWEM Staff Expanding

We are excited to announce that we have hired two new part-time student employees, Noah Tunick and Tom Jenkins. Although these positions are temporary, we are happy to have their assistance in projects that have needed completion for nearly five years. UWEM applied for and was awarded monies from the UW Provost’s Reinvestment Fund to hire our new employees.

Noah will be helping us implement a Web-based decision-support tool in the UW’s EOC. Working with the entire UWEM staff and under the guidance of the UW’s Emergency Management Planning Committee and the current cadre of over 100 UW Emergency Operations Center volunteer responders, Noah will implement, install, test and train the EOC responders in the WehEOC online response tool that currently is not being utilized by the UW.

Noah brings experience from his work as a research intern for the Seattle Office of Emergency Management. He is currently in the Masters program in Infrastructure Planning and Management with the University of Washington.

Tom will help us develop Critical Emergency Plan Annexes and Procedures. Working with our UWEM staff and under the guidance of the UW’s Emergency Management Planning Committee, Tom will research and draft critical/core emergency planning documents as Annexes to the UW’s All-Hazards Emergency Management Plan. Tom spent eight years in the Air Force as weather forecaster as well as preparing mission-oriented reports and as watch duty to protect personnel and material from dangerous weather. He is currently enrolled in the Program on the Environment at the University of Washington. Welcome Noah and Tom!!
Spotlight on EOC Volunteer

We would like to thank Marya Dominik, one of our many EOC volunteers, for her participation in our UW-wide campus drill last September! Marya has worked for the University of Washington for six years, starting out at UW Bothell and presently working under the Office of Research as an Administrative Specialist. During her time here she has had the chance to volunteer as a floor warden and most recently in the Emergency Operations Center.

Marya's interest in emergency preparedness can be traced back to memories of tsunami evacuations when she was a child and when she lived on the coast. Those memories of evacuation centers and people frantically packing up heirlooms, photo albums and personal items stuck with her. Being prepared for whatever might happen was incorporated into her lifestyle, and it was with great excitement that she attended presentations by Scott Preston and Siri McLean and was then able to be a volunteer in the EOC.

The support and mentorship of the EOC staff has allowed her to meet other Emergency Management professionals and ultimately decide to get more education in the field of Emergency management and disaster behavior health. Last November she attended the International Association of Emergency Managers Conference as a student and met other students with the same interests and excitement about the field.

Marya's time at the EOC has involved training by EOC staff and FEMA Incident Command System (ICS) courses. She was also able to participate as a member of the Planning section during the last emergency drill, and it was a great experience! Allowing her to fully understand the complexities and nuances involved with multi-unit coordination on the UW campus, she learned more about all the different groups on campus in that one drill than she had in previous years working at UW.

In January during a FEMA Think Tank Conference Call, it was announced that an idea she and another student posted to the suggestion board would be implemented by FEMA. Marya stated, “If not for the experience and opportunity of volunteering in the EOC I never would have met my fellow students and submitted the idea.” Thanks, Marya, for your interest, enthusiasm and participation. It’s volunteers like you that make the difference!!!

When The Feds Are in Town....

Over a dozen national officials from the US Department of Homeland Security visited the UWEM office and EOC on March 26, 2012. They were in town as part of a series of workshops and meetings related to emergency communications and coordination between federal, state and local officials. Their tour of our new EOC, which was funded mostly via DHS grant funds, provided yet another opportunity to showcase the UW’s ongoing partnership with our federal response partners.
Nexus Between Process Improvement And Business Continuity

Facilities Services (FS) has been instrumental in promoting business process improvement activities through the various LEAN projects that are taking place around FS.

Process improvement is an important consideration in streamlining operations to reduce operating costs and ensure the departments undergoing LEAN are as efficient as possible. An additional benefit to this process is better business, academic and research continuity (BARC) planning.

Departments and units that have identified their core processes that support their primary mission (reason for being) AND have had those processes improved in terms of efficiency will find that their core processes are more resilient to disruption and less costly to recover if a disruption does occur. This becomes a competitive advantage for those departments and units that have BARC planning in place when seeking those increasingly elusive research grants or when attracting the best and brightest among students, staff and faculty.

Husky Ready Growth & BARC Updates

To date, Husky Ready has a combined total of 185 users across 56 separate plans in various stages of use. Husky Ready is the FREE online continuity planning tool for all UW units!

UWEM continues to support and actively recruit new users to the Husky Ready tool and encourages all departments and operating units in the UW community to partner with UWEM to pursue BARC planning. To learn more about BARC or Husky Ready. Please contact us at disaster@uw.edu.
The UWEM staff was proud to host our new UW President Michael Young and his entire UW leadership team in the new Emergency Operations Center (EOC) on January 24, 2012. The purpose of the two-hour visit was to allow President Young, Provost Ana Mari Cauce and the rest of the UW senior leadership to receive its annual review of the UW’s disaster management and response/recovery programs. The Cabinet received a formal briefing from Associate Vice President Charles Kennedy and UWEM Director Steve Charvat. Afterwards, they visited the EOC facilities and UWEM offices for the first time, with a detailed tour provided by UWEM staff members Siri McLean and Scott Preston. The President and Cabinet were quite impressed by the EOC facility and ongoing programs developed by the UW to prepare for, respond to and recover from most major emergencies and disasters. President Young noted how important disaster preparation was to the entire institution and committed his personal support to the UWEM office – including a promise to participate in our next upcoming drill on June 5th!

April: 72-Hour Comfort Kit
Chances are you will have to rely upon supplies you have available in your home for at least the first three days following any major disaster. Store these items in something that is portable and easily carried, like a plastic tub with a tight-fitting lid. In the event of fire or rapid evacuation, you’ll appreciate having more than just the clothes on your back.

May: Important Documents
After a major disaster, you may need financial assistance and will want to document any property loss for insurance and income tax purposes. Having ready access to the documents necessary for completing application forms, as well as those which could be difficult to replace, will help reduce delays and frustration.

June: Extended Events
Coping with the impact of a disaster is never fun. However, much of the inconvenience and discomfort the disaster causes can be reduced by planning alternative ways to take care of your needs.
January Snow/Ice Storm

For three days in a row all three UW campuses (Seattle, Bothell and Tacoma) functioned under suspended operations. La Niña was sure to bring us one final blow. It began as a Winter Storm Warning that eventually turned into an Ice Storm Warning with freezing rain that would blanket the entire Puget Sound region with sheets of ice. The UW Emergency Operations Center was activated each day during business hours and remained on-call/standby during overnight hours, with UWEM staff collecting and disseminating critical information internally and externally to our community/regional and state partners.

UW emergency response personnel and essential services personnel (including payroll, animal care, facilities, security, police, transportation, emergency management, food services/custodial, grounds, and campus operations) continued to work tirelessly throughout this unprecedented event. Kudos to everyone who ensured that our institution remained safe and accessible throughout this event.

UW-IT Steps up to the Plate in Response to Tower Flood

A burst radiator pipe that caused a flood on the C-3 floor in the UW Tower put the emergency procedures of UW Information Technology (UW-IT) to the test. The UW-IT Unit Response Center (URC) and other UW-IT staff responded quickly to the event on Monday, March 5, sending communications to staff and customers, getting the water shut off, and working with UW Facilities staff in the cleanup. Around 100 staff members in the affected area were evacuated, and the Technology Service Center was temporarily moved to the URC in the 4545 Building. The leak did not affect operations in the UW Tower Data Center (although tarps were at the ready) and no services to the UW were impacted. UW-IT Tower staff were able to return to their offices on Wednesday. An After Action Review and Follow-Up will be completed later this month. - Alexis Raphael
March 13th Campus-wide Power Outage

Where were you when the power went out at 3:16 pm on Tuesday, March 13th? Most of you probably were in the dark. However, if you were one of nearly 60 UW officials, you were soon on your way to the EOC to begin coordinating the UW’s response to our first “true” test of the EOC since we moved into the new facility last January. Due to a failure of a substation in the Seattle City Light’s (SCL) distribution system, nearly 13,000 SCL customers lost all electrical power for anywhere from two to four hours. The UW was in the middle of this outage area that extended from the Laurelhurst neighborhood on the east to Ballard on the west with the UW smack-dab in the middle. The EOC responders quickly put into practice the plans that they rehearsed many times during our annual drills and exercises. The EOC was fully activated and staffed within 30 minutes of the lights going out — a huge improvement over our old EOC where it took nearly four hours just to setup the room and computers! The old adage of you play like you practice was quickly evident as the EOC came to life for the first time under a real-world event.

Within the hour, the EOC responders, representing nearly 25 UW departments and external agencies, were assessing the extent of the outage, developing public information and social network updates (via UW Alert), contacting external partners at the City, County and State and calling-in additional resources. We were planning for the worst while hoping for the best. To make things more of a challenge, the UW would be hosting the nationally televised NIT opening-day game at HecEd Pavilion in less than four hours, and the power went out during the middle of winter quarter finals. EOC officials determined power restoration priorities (such as the UW Medical Center) to ensure that the UW’s core academic, research, service and business functions were preserved as soon as emergency and permanent power was restored.

Follow us on Facebook

Congratulations to the UWEM Website Treasure Hunt winners from our January Newsletter: Dorsee Zaballero (UW Medicine) and Nicole Hewitt (Primate Research Center)
April is Earthquake Awareness Month

On April 25th, Washington State will be conducting an annual earthquake drill. The UW as a whole will not be participating, but many departments will be conducting their own individual drills on this day. This is a great opportunity to practice DROP, COVER and HOLD. Take a few minutes to physically practice getting under your desk.

Learn more at our UWEM Earthquake website.

Evergreen Quake Exercise 2012

On June 5th, 2012, the University of Washington will activate the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at the UW Tower as designated responders participate in a statewide earthquake exercise known as Evergreen Quake 2012. This exercise will simulate five surface faults rupturing at the same time throughout the Puget Sound region (Seattle Fault, Devils Mountain Fault, South Whidbey Fault, Tacoma Fault and Olympia-Nisqually Fault). The fault of most concern for those of us at the UW is the Seattle Fault. This fault is approximately 14 miles long and runs east-west from the islands to the mountains. Unlike the Nisqually earthquake back in 2001, which was considered a deep earthquake occurring 32 miles below ground, a surface fault is shallow and has the potential to cause surface rupture. Geological evidence indicates the Seattle fault ruptured 1,100 years ago and caused about 6.5 feet of surface displacement near Vasa Park on Lake Sammamish.

An earthquake along the Seattle Fault is the worst-case scenario for the UW campus. It is not an isolated event affecting just our campus, but would hinder the entire region and quickly overwhelm resources. The Evergreen Quake exercise is a wonderful opportunity for the UW to practice our plans and ability to coordinate as a cohesive response team. The UW is required to conduct an annual exercise to test our EOC function and personnel abilities. Each year a different scenario is selected as we continue to test the various hazards that face the UW. This year’s exercise is unique in that we will be participating in a statewide exercise and coordinating with outside agencies like City of Seattle Emergency Management and State of Washington Emergency Management.

If you would like to learn more about the Seattle Fault and other earthquake faults that could potentially impact the Puget Sound region, check out our earthquake page.

Stay tuned for our July Newsletter and see how we did!
The Seattle Fault: A Sleeping Monster