

CHAPTER 4
EMERGENCY FOOD AND SHELTER
Bob Obana

Introduction

Food and Shelter services will always be necessary in any type of natural disaster such as an earthquake. If Berkeley were to experience an earthquake of considerable magnitude, food and shelter services would have to be provided for the homeless and others seeking food. In the San Fernando earthquake of 1971, ten emergency shelter facilities were open for an accumulated total of 36 days, and two mass feeding locations were open for a total of 19 days. These facilities housed and fed 28,400 people, and a total of 175,100 meals were served.³ The San Fernando experience highlights the importance of food and shelter services in a seismic disaster.

Expected Situation

Berkeley is expected to suffer extensive damages in an earthquake centered on the Hayward Fault. In a large earthquake of 7.0 Richter magnitude, an estimated 16,600 people (in the wet season) to 25,900 (in the dry season) can be expected to be left homeless in Alameda County.⁴ Since Berkeley's population is approximately 12-20% of the total Alameda County population, approximately 5,000 people (in the wet season) to 8,000 people (in the dry season) can be expected to be left homeless in Berkeley.

Over 10,000 people may be seeking food services in Berkeley after such an earthquake.⁴ Homeless people, those with no utilities in their homes to cook, and emergency workers are some of those that will be in need of food services. Although food services are not as urgent as search and rescue, medical, fire, and law enforcement in the first 24 hours, they are an important response unit.

Shelter Plan

All Berkeley schools and churches are expected to be open for temporary emergency shelter. The Berkeley Unified School District has planned the school shelter response, and the Red Cross will help with the coordination of the church food and shelter services. The Red Cross will also provide a disaster action team to do damage assessment of the shelters.¹ The Emergency

Operations Staff will be responsible for the coordination of a disaster committee, which will assist in damage surveys of the shelter areas.² The director of the Housing and Development Department will act as the shelter service chief. The staff will consist of personnel from the Housing and Development, Park and Recreation, and Comprehensive Planning Departments as well as from the Berkeley Unified School District and the Red Cross. Each of these personnel has been assigned tasks during an emergency. Transportation to and from the shelters will be provided by Law Enforcement, Transportation, and Traffic Control services if possible.²

Food Plan

Food is expected to be procured via primary stocks such as food wholesalers, processors, livestock, and food on farms, and secondary stocks in retail establishments such as restaurants, stores, hotels, and schools. The food service will procure food from secondary sources first, and then rely upon primary sources if it is necessary. If both food stocks are inadequate to supply the food demand, mutual aid would be called in from the state.² Manpower for the food service is expected to be coordinated by the Finance Director. Personnel from the Finance Department and the Red Cross are expected to staff the service. Allocation of food is expected to be done at the schools and churches.²

Conclusion

Food and shelter are major concerns for victims in an earthquake. But in the first 24 hours, it is not likely that they will be of top emergency priority as compared to fire, medical, and law enforcement services. The Berkeley Emergency Operations Plan, along with the Red Cross, seem to have the Food and Shelter Program well coordinated. The Plan's only flaws seem to be that there is not enough emphasis on non-nuclear disasters, and that it does not actually specify food and shelter services and what the process for allocation will be. Also, I suggest that public education on the whereabouts of food and shelter services should be made available to prevent possible panic and chaos by people seeking these services.

REFERENCES CITED

1. Bibel, Barbara, Assistant to the Director of Emergency Services, American National Red Cross Association, Berkeley Chapter, Berkeley, California, oral communication, 1979.
2. City of Berkeley, Mar. 1, 1978, Berkeley Emergency Operations Plan, Berkeley, City of Berkeley, p. 80, Annex 7, 19.
3. Department of Commerce, 1973, San Fernando, California, Earthquake of February 9, 1971, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Washington, D.C., pp. 41-56, 278-286.
4. Office of Emergency Preparedness, 1972, A Study of Earthquake Losses in the San Francisco Bay Area, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Washington, 220 pp.