

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA:
MITIGATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN DISASTERS**

**AN ISSUES AND ACTION REPORT
FOR PROVINCIAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES
AND WOMEN'S SERVICES**

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**B.C. Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs
Victoria, British Columbia**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report raises a new emergency planning issue for communities across British Columbia. In consultation with key stakeholders (see Appendix 1), policies and procedures in emergency management and women's services were reviewed to identify system gaps and propose strategic changes mitigating violence against women in disasters.

The review concluded that the life safety of women in provincial emergencies is at risk. A consistent, province-wide initiative is essential to effectively mitigate violence against women in the event of a major disaster.

Violence against women in disasters: a life safety issue

Reported increases in violence against women in the aftermath of devastating earthquakes or floods uniquely endanger women. Transition houses and safe homes are lifelines for women whose lives and well-being depend on anonymity and security. If these facilities are unsafe or insecure during emergencies, women's safety is compromised. Women's life safety is endangered if they cannot safely access designated reception centres or group lodging facilities, especially in smaller communities. Women's services also provide critical intervention services vital to the safety and well-being of sexually assault victims.

Women are at increased risk during and after disasters

North American case studies and accounts from field workers and responders suggest that sexual assault and domestic violence are likely to increase in the aftermath of disaster. Little research is available about Canadian women's experiences in disasters, but the experiences of other communities suggest that provincial emergency authorities should anticipate increased violence against women.

The Loma Prieta earthquake offers many lessons. A City of Santa Cruz report noted that women lacking income, affordable housing, reliable transportation, child care, and other resources after the quake were especially vulnerable to men wanting to renew violent relationships. Many antiviolence agencies were damaged or destroyed and their resources redirected away from direct service in the urgency to meet new needs created by the earthquake. Yet abused or sexually assaulted women needed their services more than ever as the incidence of rape and battery increased. For example (See Section 3.1):

- reported domestic violence rates increased nearly 600% in the four months after the quake and reported sexual assaults rose 300%;
 - requests for restraining orders rose 50% after the quake;

- domestic-violence related homicides dramatically increased when 3 women were murdered by their partners in the two months after the quake;
- five months after the quake, a survey of service providers found protective services for women, children, and elderly sixth among 41 unmet needs.

Similar patterns have been reported in the wake of Hurricane Andrew in Miami, the 1993 Missouri River floods, Red River flooding in the U.S. and other disasters impacting widely divergent societies.

Women's services responding to disaster

A 1997 study of 77 domestic violence programs in Canada and the U.S. found that crisis calls increased to agencies which were severely impacted by natural disasters. Most programs lacked disaster plans and were not integrated into local emergency management systems. Staff and volunteers struggled to keep these community-based agencies open, repair damages to offices and to their own homes, staff crisis lines, operate shelters, and continue providing other critically-needed services to women hit both by disaster and violence.

During the Saguenay flood, women's services strove without water, electricity, police support, and other resources to meet the new needs of flood-impacted clients experiencing violence. Antiviolence programs in Winnipeg searched for safe alternative group lodging for clients when the possibility of mass evacuation or flooding threatened the provincial capital. Journalistic accounts from the 1998 ice storm in Quebec suggested that violence against women was an unanticipated social impact of disaster.

Sexually assaulted and abused women depend on women's services for life-saving help though these grassroots agencies may themselves be directly and indirectly impacted when a community is hit by fire, flood, or earthquake.

Toward a safer community: mitigating violence against women in disasters

Women experiencing violence are not identified as a special-needs population with life safety concerns. Nor are women's services recognized as community resources during the periods of emergency response and long-term disaster recovery. This lack of an integrated system to mitigate violence calls for a new partnership between emergency managers and antiviolence women's services across British Columbia.

Five critical service gaps and stakeholder recommendations

1. Lack of a mandate for addressing violence against women as a risk factor in disasters. Existing emergency statutes, regulations, procedures and guidelines do not identify abused and sexually assaulted women as a highly vulnerable population with special needs during emergencies. Transition houses are not identified as critical care facilities. Key planning groups (e.g. the Inter-agency Emergency Preparedness Council)

and key responders (e.g. Emergency Social Service volunteers) are not mandated to identify risks in existing systems which endanger the life safety of women. Responding to violence in disaster contexts is also not explicitly the mandate of antiviolence women's services.

Anticipating and responding to women experiencing or at risk of personal violence must be included in the mandate of provincial authorities. Toward that end, these and other measures are recommended:

- Review and revision, if needed, of relevant emergency management legislation, policy, and procedures;
- Self-assessments by emergency management and women's services organizations regarding the mitigation of violence in disasters (see Self-Assessment Guidelines, Appendix 6)

2. Lack of knowledge about the link between violence against women and emergency preparedness. Violence against women as a concern in disasters has not been integrated into the training of emergency responders or women's services staff. The safety of volunteers and other responders during emergencies may be endangered by this lack of attention to increased family conflict. Violence against women is also not communicated to the public as a health concern in disasters, or addressed in Justice Institute courses or in other educational materials. Women's services across the province are unaware of the resources of local emergency authorities and generally lack personal networks with emergency coordinators.

Increased education, training, and awareness programs and resources are needed to close this knowledge gap. Toward that end, these and other measures are recommended:

- Development of curricular resources in support of training for emergency planners and responders and for antiviolence women's organizations responding to disaster (see Appendix 8);
- Development of a new JIBC course on *Life Safety for Women in Emergencies*;
- Increased staff and volunteer cross-training to increase awareness among emergency responders and in transition houses, sexual assault centres, and other women's services;
- Public education initiatives identifying violence as a public health concern in disasters and communicating prevention and resource information in all major community languages (see Appendix 9).

3. Lack of priority attention to the emergency needs of transition homes and related women's services. No provisions are currently in place to support the role of women's services as residential shelters or critical care facilities in emergencies. The structural integrity of facilities housing women's services has not been determined. Funding protocols are not in place to trigger increased funding in the event of increases in disaster-related violence against women.

The ability of antiviolence women's services to continue functioning or quickly recover from the effects of a major community disaster must be enhanced on a priority basis. Toward that end, these and other measures are recommended:

- Development of protocols with funding agencies to increase the capacity of women's services to respond to local emergencies;
- Assessment on a priority basis of the safety and location of transition houses and other facilities housing antiviolence women's services;
- Revision of local plans for emergency communications, utility connections, transportation and other lifeline infrastructure to support the continued operation of these community agencies on a priority basis.

4. Lack of an integrated emergency preparedness system fully engaging women's services and emergency managers. Interorganizational collaboration and networking is lacking between women's service agencies and emergency managers at the local, regional, and provincial levels. The Ministry of Women's Equality is not included on key emergency planning bodies such as the Inter-agency Emergency Preparedness Council, nor are women's services involved as partners with local emergency planning groups and organizations. Women's services have not networked on disaster planning with related agencies serving such highly vulnerable groups as older women, First Nations women, or women living with disabilities.

Formal and informal mechanisms increasing communication and interaction between women's services and emergency managers are needed to develop a fully integrated system. Toward that end, these and other measures are recommended:

- Representation of provincial associations of women's services on provincial emergency planning and response groups;
- Information exchanges at the local level between antiviolence women's groups and emergency authorities;
- Inclusion of antiviolence women's services in community exercises to test existing emergency response plans.

5. Lack of emergency planning in antiviolence women's services. The critical services provided by women's antiviolence agencies to women whose safety and well-being is at heightened risk during emergencies make effective organization disaster planning essential. Yet few concrete measures have been taken by women's services serving highly vulnerable populations located in or near known hazards (e.g. on flood plains, in seismic zones). Staff and volunteers have little knowledge of in-house emergency measures or of emergency planning resources in their region.

Increased disaster readiness must be fully supported to prepare women's services throughout British Columbia for all contingencies arising from an environmental or technological disaster. Toward that end, these and other measures are recommended:

- Development of a comprehensive step-by-step Emergency Planning Workbook for Women's Services, with regional and hazard-specific information as well as personal preparedness information for staff (see Appendix 7)
- Promotional materials to introduce the workbook;
- Follow-up technical assistance to users, user evaluation, and resources for workbook revision.

A new partnership: the BC Project on Violence and Disaster

The report concludes that this work cannot be accomplished with existing resources. The stakeholders strongly recommend a three-year BC Project on Violence and Disaster, with funding for a full-time Project Coordinator to be housed temporarily in the Emergency Management Division of the Justice Institute of BC.

The project coordinator position (Appendix 5) is essential to support the broad goals of the project and to facilitate implementation of strategic changes to remedy the system gaps identified in this report.

1. INTRODUCTION¹

Violence against women reduces the life safety of all women before, during, and after a disaster. The life safety of women in violent relationships and sexually assaulted or abused women and girls is at increased risk when their homes, relationships, and communities are impacted by disaster.

Field reports and case studies indicate that women's lives are at increased risk during and after disasters (see Appendix 3, *Violence Against Women in Disasters Fact Sheet*). Women's services can anticipate rising service demand as they respond to women impacted both by violence and by disaster. Yet their capacity to respond effectively is often greatly reduced during the difficult crisis period and the lengthy post-disaster recovery period (see Appendix 4, *Surviving Domestic Violence and Disaster*).² A damaged or destroyed transition house, for example, deprives women of potentially life-saving shelter.

Violence against women arising during major community disasters has not been taken up by emergency managers in British Columbia. A case in point is the provincial plan for earthquake preparedness which failed to identify violence against women as a planning issue for community preparedness, response, and recovery.

How would communities across the province respond to increased violence in the aftermath of a devastating fire or flood? This issue was addressed in 1998 by participants in a two-day symposium on *Women in Disasters: Exploring the Issues* in Vancouver. Sponsored by the Justice Institute of British Columbia, in conjunction with the BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counseling Programs, the symposium was attended by over 130 emergency managers, responders, planners, women's organizations, researchers, victim/survivors, and volunteers. Financial support from the BC Ministries of Human Resources, Attorney General, and Women's Equality helped bring large numbers of Emergency Social Services volunteers and women's services staff to the conference.

A number of recommendations addressing violence against women were developed by conference participants (see Appendix 2, *Conference Recommendations*), including a call for more education of emergency management and women's services on the link between disasters and violence against women. This report is one response. Making the connection is the critical first step toward building safer and more disaster-resilient communities.

1.1 Outline of the Report

This is an action-oriented report for policy-makers to help identify and address violence against women in disasters. It is intended to inform key stakeholders about the link between violence against women and emergency management, to clearly identify existing system gaps and needs, and to put forward effective strategies for mitigating the risk of increased violence against women in the event of a major provincial disaster.

The report specifically addresses the Provincial Emergency Program (Ministry of Attorney General), Emergency Social Services (Ministry of Human Resources), law enforcement agencies and other provincial ministries with responsibilities in this area, municipal and regional emergency program coordinators, the Emergency Social Services Association, the Emergency Management Division of the Justice Institute of BC, and private sector disaster planners and responders such as the Salvation Army. It also addresses lead organizations with responsibility for responding to violence against women before, during, and after disasters, including the BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counseling Programs, BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses, Stopping the Violence counseling programs, sexual assault centres, specialized victim assistance programs, transition houses, and provincial departments and programs in the area of violence prevention.

It is to be hoped that Emergency Preparedness Canada, Health Canada, Status of Women Canada, and other authorities at the federal and provincial levels will find this work a useful template for proactive mitigation of violence against women in disasters.

The first section of the report summarizes patterns of violence against women in British Columbia and the resources of provincial women's organizations responding to violence, followed by a synopsis of North American research findings on violence against women in disasters. Key gaps in British Columbia's emergency preparedness system are then identified, drawing on case studies of disaster-affected service agencies and active consultation with emergency managers and women's services representatives, including meetings, telephone conferencing, and written responses to a draft report. (See Appendix 1, *Stakeholders Advisory Group*).

The report concludes with a plan of action for mitigating violence against women in provincial emergencies in a consistent and thorough manner. Five broad areas of action and corresponding specific objectives are recommended. Appendices 5, 7, 8, and 9 include project descriptions and budgets for strongly recommended follow-up projects.

2. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN DISASTERS: A LIFE SAFETY ISSUE

The social impacts of disasters are complex and multidimensional, affect population groups differently, and have both negative and positive dimensions. Case studies suggest that a (short-lived) period of community solidarity and altruism emerges in the wake of many disasters, especially those triggered by natural events. This "therapeutic community" is believed to unite otherwise divided communities and help sustain individuals through loss and recovery.³

But emergency managers anticipating this cooperative spirit must also recognize the potential for increased violence against women. Gender inequalities, including gender-based violence, put women at special risk before, during, and after disasters.⁴ While often socially invisible before these events, violence against women may be starkly revealed in the aftermath of damaging earthquakes, floods, or ice storms. This was one of the lessons

of the Loma Prieta earthquake.⁵ For example, the Santa Cruz Sex Assault Team reported that sexual assaults rose after the quake by 300 percent. Domestic violence homicides increased significantly when three women were murdered by their partners in the two months after the quake. A representative of the Santa Cruz Emergency Operations center cited a 600 percent increase in domestic violence reports during the first four months after the quake.

Earthquakes, oil spills, forest fires, or floods do not create social conflict and division but do reveal the underlying structure and fabric of households and societies, including social problems created by economic disparities, racial and ethnic inequalities, the vulnerabilities of an aging population, the gendered division of labor and gender inequality.

2.1 Intersecting Vulnerabilities to Violence and Disaster

Assessing patterns of social vulnerability helps local emergency managers direct scarce resources more effectively. Local and regional planners seek to identify and anticipate the needs of such vulnerable populations as low-income and poor individuals and households, residents of hospitals and other special-care, those living with physical and/or mental disabilities, the frail elderly, and children.

Emergency planners also analyze housing conditions, the location of area schools, the capacities of special care facilities, and language or cultural groups with special needs. Indeed, anticipating the needs of pets and pet owners in crisis is a recent concern of emergency management. It is unconscionable that violence against women has received less attention.

While their needs have received little attention, social trends and patterns suggest that increasing numbers of women will be at increasing risk of disasters in the future. Community vulnerability is increased by such gendered patterns as: women's reproductive needs; increased longevity and hence an older and more female-dominated population; rising rates of single mothering; the feminization of poverty; women's expanding caregiving roles to dependents such as infants and children, disabled or seriously ill family members, and aging parents; the increase in pre-disaster homelessness among women with children; and rising rates of reported sexual and domestic violence.⁶

Women are also vulnerable as members of aboriginal communities and racial and ethnic minority groups, when they lack dominant language skills, if they are transient migrant workers, new immigrants, or undocumented residents, if they reside in socially isolated rural communities, or if they are among socially marginalized groups such as sex trade workers.

Disaster studies and field reports suggest that the most self-sufficient individuals and households in emergencies are those able to access such key survival resources as: safe, secure, and affordable housing; financial assets (employment, insurance, savings, credit);

physical and mental health; private transportation; literacy, education, and dominant language skills; and strong family and social networks.

Gender violence significantly impedes women's access to these resources. Women living with the "daily disaster" of violence or subject to sexual abuse and assault are highly vulnerable when disasters transform landscapes, institutions, and relationships. In the vicious dynamic of power and control, abused women live in a world of increasingly narrow social networks, often isolated, unable to take or keep paid work, and lacking transportation and financial independence. Like their physical and emotional health, their sense of self-worth and efficacy diminishes in the face of continued violence. This dynamic also affects women experiencing sexual abuse or recovering from rape.

This report focuses on women whose life, safety, and well-being are endangered in disaster contexts, recognizing that violence cuts across all social divisions. Disabled women, for example, are at heightened risk of gender-based violence and also face unique barriers preparing for and recovering from the effects of disasters. Poor women are often poorly housed (e.g. in flood-plain trailer parks) and thus highly exposed in disasters; if also experiencing violence, they are more likely than affluent women to depend on women's services for vitally needed protection and counseling.⁷

Emergency planners must address intersecting vulnerabilities based on violence, economic status, racism, disability, and other factors because they magnify community vulnerability in emergencies. Identifying the capacities and resources of women and women's organizations is an equally important part of emergency preparedness.

Violence against women is a public health issue in Canadian communities across the nation. It can be a pressing mental and physical health concern when relationships, homes, and institutions are damaged or destroyed by disastrous events like ice storms, forest fire, flood, or earthquake.

2.2 Violence Against Women in British Columbia

How likely is violence against women to increase following disasters in British Columbia? Part of the answer lies in understanding how prevalent abuse and sexual assault are in 'normal' predisaster contexts.⁸

A 1994 *Violence Against Women* survey conducted by provincial authorities reported that 50 percent of Canadian women are afraid to walk alone at night, 76 percent fear using public transportation at night, and 83 percent are afraid to walk alone to a car parked in a garage. Their fear is well-grounded as women are sexually assaulted every six minutes in Canada, impacting one out of every five Canadian women at some point in their lives.

Statistics Canada data (1993) suggest that fear and violence are part of women's daily reality. Half of Canadian women (51 percent) have experienced sexual and/or domestic violence since turning age 16. One in six Canadian women are beaten by their spouses and two women each week are murdered by their male partners.

British Columbia has the highest reported rates in the nation of violence against women: 59 percent of women over 16 have been subject to sexual and/or domestic violence. On an average day in our province, 167 women together with at least 175 children are sheltered in transition houses or safe homes. One quarter of Vancouver's 41 homicides in 1991 were a result of male violence within the family. Nor is violence an urban phenomenon. A Prince George study of 500 women from nine neighbourhoods found that 60 percent had experienced physical violence from their husbands or boyfriends.

Over 200,000 women in British Columbia either have been or will be sexually assaulted sometime in their lives; one in five of these women attempt suicide. An estimated 35 percent of all Canadian women were sexually abused as children; at this rate, 300,000 women in British Columbia were victims of child sexual abuse.

The threat or reality of violence shapes the lives of all women in the province. But incidents of violence are particularly high among First Nations women, disabled women, and women of colour. The Law Society of British Columbia's report on *Gender Equality in the Justice System* notes that immigrant women and women of colour may not report violence due to "cultural differences, social isolation, minimal understanding of Canadian laws, lack of English language skills, fear of racism, and a general distrust of the justice system."⁹ These same factors reduce hazard awareness, information about emergency preparedness, and disaster survival capacity, putting women of colour at higher risk during disasters.

Disabled women are also especially vulnerable during disasters; while the risk of sexual abuse to people with disabilities appears to be 150 percent greater than for others of the same sex and age, only 20 percent of cases of sexual abuse involving disabled people are reported. The vulnerability of older women both to violence and to the lingering socioemotional and economic impacts of disasters makes planning for senior women essential as well.¹⁰

2.3 Networks of Provincial Women's Services

Emergency planners need information about the capacity and resources of women's services responding to sexual assault and abuse. Which organizations in the province will best be able to help women hit both by disaster and violence?

Antiviolence women's services are located in large and small communities across the province and are identified in large part as the primary responder for all violence-related needs of women in their area. Many developed during the 1970s and 1980s as small grassroots organizations and have developed into large social service agencies responsible for large budgets and staffs. They are considered by law enforcement, Crown, and other authorities for justice, social services, and health to be integral in the immediate crisis response and provision of ongoing services. At the present time, these include:

- 23 sexual assault/woman assault centres
- 45 specialized victim assistance programs

- 85 transition houses, safe homes programs, and second stage houses
- 79 stopping the violence counselling programs
- 50 children who witness abuse programs
- 37 women's centres

In British Columbia, a wide range of community-based women's organizations work in conjunction with other victim services to assist sexually assaulted and abused women. The BC/Yukon Society of Transition Houses and the BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counseling Programs are the primary organizational networks serving the great majority of direct-service agencies responding to sexual and domestic violence.¹¹

Programs belonging to these associations work with related agencies to offer a continuum of integrated services to women impacted or at risk of violence, including:

- women-centered 24-hour crisis lines;
- immediate crisis intervention response at the hospital;
- emergency shelter;
- individual and group counseling, and support for children, family, and friends;
- support for front-line responders, e.g. counselors, police, and hospital staff;
- offender programs;
- a wide range of prevention and education programs.

Women's lives are at stake before, during, and after disasters. It is essential that emergency planners be alert to the hazards facing women and understand that women's services are a vital lifeline and place of last resort for many of the most vulnerable residents of British Columbia.

3. WOMEN'S SERVICES RESPONDING TO DISASTER

Violence against women in disasters has only very recently been examined in North American contexts. Social impact studies often consider such factors as alcohol abuse, looting, truancy, interpersonal conflict, and post-traumatic stress but rarely investigate possible changes in the incidence of gender violence after disasters.

Because violence against women is endemic, it is unlikely not to be present in any community before and after disaster. But does violence increase because of the effects of disasters? Barriers to reporting complicate the investigation of personal violence and other law enforcement issues during disasters. Lack of transportation or communication, closed courtrooms and police stations, non-functional crisis lines and other factors may deter women from reporting violence or seeking protection.

Disasters are multi-dimensional and long-lasting social events with diverse and complex effects on such factors as local employment rates, various types of criminal behavior, divorce, mental and physical health, school achievement, business decisions, labor migration, and household mobility.

No simple causal model is warranted to explain post-disaster social changes. Regarding rates of violence against women, disaster homelessness and overcrowding in damaged homes, reduced income, health problems, lack of transportation, disrupted social services and other disaster effects impact women disproportionately, exacerbating pre-existing power imbalances between women and men and making violence more likely. Fatigue, substance abuse, and feelings of frustration, powerlessness, and uncertainty are often reported by disaster survivors.¹² Loss of control is a common emotion, reported both by women and men; feelings of inadequacy rooted in the male provider role are also very common and potentially dangerous to women.

3.1 North American Case Studies

Drawing on law enforcement reports and statistics, observations from emergency responders, and service records from women's services, researchers suggest that Canadian and American communities should prepare to meet the needs of women hurt both by violence and disaster.

The Loma Prieta earthquake

A report by the Commission for the Prevention of Violence Against Women following the Santa Cruz, California Earthquake in 1989 is illustrative.¹³ Many women's service agencies were closed, disrupted, or damaged by the quake and women were more exposed to violence. The Director of the Cabrillo College Rape Prevention Program noted that unemployment and lack of affordable housing narrowed many women's options and reduced their ability to leave dangerously abusive situations. The executive director of Men's Alternatives to Violence suggested that "men seemed angry at women for their feelings of fear," and observed that "many men used the quake as a way to get themselves back into an old relationship."

The Program Manager of Pre-Trial Services reported being pressured for the early release of perpetrators by family members in need of their assistance during an extremely difficult time. A Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Education Project coordinator recalled that her agency needed to focus all its efforts meeting clients' survival needs for shelter and food, limiting their ability to provide essential services to rape and battery survivors after the quake.

These conditions did appear to contribute to increases in reported violence. For example:

- the local battered women's shelter reported a 50 percent increase in requests for temporary restraining orders;
- a representative of the Santa Cruz Emergency Operations Center reported that "the rates went up almost 600 percent in terms of the reports of domestic violence. . . in a four-month period after the earthquake;"¹⁴
- the Santa Cruz County Sex Assault Response Team reported an increase of 300 percent in reported sex assaults;
- the District Attorney's Office reported a "very heavy" workload the first week after the quake and filed its first reported gang rape case;

- homicides related to domestic violence increased--three women were murdered by their partners in the two months after the quake;
- the Santa Cruz Sheriff Department also reported that crimes of violence against women seemed “stranger than usual” during this period;
- a Family Service Association manager reported indirect effects of the trauma, noting that people had “old wounds opened” and needed help with issues not immediately linked to post-quake conditions;
- Women’s Crisis Support reported that more adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse called with requests for support groups and individual counseling, adding to already long waiting lists;
- five months after the quake, a United Way survey of over 300 service providers ranked “protective services for women, children, and elderly” sixth least available among 41 community services.¹⁵

These patterns led to a public information campaign making the link between quake-related stress and violence against women. Widely distributed flyers and press releases advised area residents about the hazard and about local resources available to them to help prevent or respond to violence.

The authors of a qualitative study of three disaster-impacted communities in California, Florida, and Texas concluded that when community, antiviolence, and disaster organizations are aware of the existence and extent of violence before a disaster, they tend to be more sensitive to its presence following disaster.¹⁶ Their analysis suggests that it is critically important that violence against women be made socially visible before disasters to encourage proactive post-disaster responses.

Hurricane Andrew in Miami

This woman’s story illustrates the complex roots of violence in relationships and communities hard hit by disaster.¹⁷ She and her husband, a retired police officer, had moved to Miami from Chicago just before Hurricane Andrew hit their neighbourhood:

And of course the shock of just losing things that got broke in the hurricane—my husband went crazy. He couldn’t take the pressure—being used to everything, and then coming down to no eating, because we could not find food . . . The car got destroyed in the hurricane . . . I’m not even working--of course the school where I was working got destroyed, it was in Cutler Ridge. And my husband, of course he wasn’t working because his business got destroyed . . . At this point, my husband’s like, just berserk. He was fighting me. I’m trying to work at a gas station pumping gas . . . And then he was beating me up, taking my money—there was just so much going on that I just couldn’t—he was really going berserk! I was getting beat up pretty bad. . . I came [to the shelter] with one shoe, ended up going to the hospital, the emergency room . . . He really went crazy. . . [A]fter the hurricane it all got worse . . . It was really rough for a female. I ran across a lot of women suffering too with their children—husbands beating them up and leaving them. It was pretty bad.

Spousal abuse calls to the local community helpline increased by 50 percent following Hurricane Andrew in Miami.¹⁸ In a county-wide survey, more than one-third of a mixed-sex sample of 1,400 residents reported that someone in their home had lost verbal or physical control in the two months since the hurricane. Although their children's area and other supplies and equipment were damaged, the domestic violence shelter was functional after the hurricane; however, staff reported that occupancy dipped after the storm as many clients assumed the shelter was destroyed or closed.

As recovery began, an influential business leader was appointed to spearhead a small and predominantly male and Anglo group (*We Will Rebuild*) charged with disbursing private relief monies donated to hurricane victims. Based on personal observations in women's shelters, child care centers, immigrant services, and other direct-service agencies, many professionals objected that the needs and interests of hard-hit women and children were neglected in the distribution of these funds. The multicultural women's coalition *Women Will Rebuild* was one response.¹⁹ One of five member committees lobbied for increased funding of services for women at risk of violence. In a survey of domestic violence programs five years after the storm, shelter staff reported that demand for services continued to be high and that in-house emergency preparedness had increased as a result of the hurricane.²⁰

1993 Missouri River flood

Massive flooding along the Missouri River in 1993 was followed by a marked rise in the demand for protective services for women.²¹ For example, the average state turn-away rate at domestic violence shelters in flood-impacted areas rose 111 percent over the preceding year.

To help address the problem, the statewide coalition of women's services worked with the Missouri Governor's flood committee to amend an existing grant increasing funding for substance abuse programs in flooded areas. Successfully arguing that domestic violence programs also needed support, they received federal funds through the state to increase the capacity of local programs serving flood- and violence-impacted women. Service statistics to flood-impacted women were maintained to document the link.

In a final report to funders, women's services reported sheltering 400 percent more women and children from violence than they anticipated would need shelter in flood-impacted areas during the period of the grant. This innovative state and federal initiative was the first such partnership in the U.S. to proactively address violence against women as well as substance abuse as disaster-related public health issues.

1997 Red River Valley floods

An unexpectedly high river crest forced the emergency evacuation of East Grand Forks, Minnesota, and its sister city Grand Forks, housing one-fifth of North Dakota's population. The area experienced widespread flood losses as well as fire damage to downtown businesses, agencies, and low-income housing units. No provisions were in

place for emergency evacuation of women and children housed in nearby motels because the existing shelter (later destroyed in the flood) was full, and staff lost contact with these families during the midnight evacuation crisis. The women's crisis center was seriously damaged and many staff and volunteers lost their homes. The program relocated to a series of temporary locations over the next 18 months as the city made decisions about redevelopment and future dyking, making it difficult for women at risk of violence to locate counselors and access safe space.

Six months later, the crisis center reported it was still 'a huge struggle' and a long drive to an out-of-area courthouse to process protection orders. Upriver in Fargo and in other rural communities along the river, sister programs reported similar problems as they struggled to cope with flood-displaced families moving into their area, out-of-town relief workers, and new referrals from disaster hotlines. Many agencies found that their traditional sources of funding were redirected to 'flood relief.' Some lost funds when private fundraising events were cancelled or curtailed due to sandbagging, evacuation, relocation, or recovery efforts.²²

But did violence increase? The question has been more thoroughly investigated in this flood than elsewhere. Hit by floodwaters in late April, the Grand Forks Community Violence Intervention Center reported that:

- crisis calls rose by 21 percent;
- counseling of on-going clients increased by 59 percent between July 1996 and July 1997;
- 18 percent more protection orders were processed in August, 1997 than in the same period a year earlier;
- 20 protection orders were issued prior to the flood (January-March, 1997) and 33 protection orders issued in 1998 during this same period;²³
- more direct referrals came from emergency rooms, suggesting a rise in physical assaults;
- in the first three months of 1997, before the April 1997 flood, 3,475 volunteer hours were recorded, a figure which declined to 1,903 in 1998 during this same period.²⁴

Also in Grand Forks, a household survey of reported violence and other flood impacts found that elderly women were over-represented among residents reporting domestic violence.²⁵ An ethnographic portrait of two flood victims impacted by abuse illustrates two prototypic types of violence.²⁶ In an affluent neighbourhood heavily damaged by flooding, "Karen's," husband grew increasingly frustrated and angry as they struggled to rebuild the family home, and she experienced the first physical violence in their relationship in twenty years, an assault severe enough to necessitate a protection order. She explained:

He likes things ordered and when things are out of order he doesn't like it. So the flood was a nightmare for him. It's not like his temperament completely changed with the flood, but I definitely do consider us to be a flood casualty. The flood did bring on his anger.

In contrast, “Liz” was a low-income mother and wife living with severe physical disabilities whose abuse escalated after the flood in an already violent relationship. Her physical disability, low income, and other factors keep her in the town where her abuser lives, making crisis intervention essential:

When he got back to town, I’d call [my crisis counselor] all the time. Boy, did I need them then. If I couldn’t make it in, we’d do the counseling over the phone. . . It wasn’t easy. Had the Center not been there, or my daughter, you know, I wouldn’t have made it. There were times in the middle of the night when I’ve needed the Center and called.

The shelter study: US and Canadian domestic violence programs in disasters

A 1997 survey of US and Canadian domestic violence programs impacted by and responding to natural and technological disasters reported that demand for services rose, as long as six months to a year later, in the 13 most severely impacted direct-service agencies.²⁷ Survey respondents suggested that abuse tends to subside during the immediate crisis. As the community begins to recover, however, domestic violence programs in hard-hit areas received more crisis calls, requests for protection orders and emergency shelter, and requests for counseling, both from on-going clients and from women newly impacted by violence after the flood.

For example, a staff counselor from the flood-impacted Saguenay program in Quebec reported a “great increase in crisis management,” of existing cases, adding:

Everything actually came to a standstill. The police services were overworked and stretched. There were no phones, no electricity, no water. All the energy was spent fending off the most immediate problems and responding to essential needs. It required great flexibility on the part of the staff.

In a nearby agency, staff reported that court cases were postponed during the flood, women stayed longer in shelter, and women were displaced from transition houses damaged by floodwaters.

When the flooded Red River threatened the provincial capital of Manitoba with massive flooding, women’s services staff in Winnipeg tried to prepare their facilities against possible sewer back-up and flooding but supplies were scarce at the last moment. Without prior planning, two transition houses worked under great pressure as Winnipeg observed the massive flooding across the border and awaited the river’s crest. They reallocated space and equipment, made arrangements for joint cooperation, and located alternate evacuation space sufficiently large and secure to keep clients and staff together in the event of mandatory evacuation. Without prior planning, women’s services staff anxiously preparing for potential flooding found themselves in conflict with other agencies over these plans for possible relocation.

The need for Canadian research

No specific research has been conducted on gender violence in disaster-impacted Canadian communities. National press reports during the massive 1998 ice storm in Quebec and Ontario reported journalistically on increased domestic violence.²⁸ A Montreal Urban Community Police Chief reported that 25 percent of the calls received during the week of the height of the ice storm involved violence against women. The local crisis center reported that calls had not increased to their office, but staff also noted that women's access to the crisis line had been disrupted as the crisis line had been shut down by the storm for two days at the height of the emergency. A female-dominated sample of respondents in the Winnipeg area reported increased disagreements and conflicts within the family and with others following the Red River flood, especially in flood-impacted but also in evacuated-only households.²⁹

The absence of Canadian research handicaps emergency managers charged with identifying and responding to the needs of vulnerable populations. While there is a real need for timely, theoretically-informed, action research on violence against women in Canadian disasters, increased violence against women can be anticipated on the basis of experience from other jurisdictions.

3.2 The Special Needs of a Vulnerable Population

Women subject to violence as well as the effects of a major community disaster have unique survival and recovery needs. Mothers and children already displaced from their own homes by violence and residing in transition houses or safe homes cannot necessarily access designated reception centres or other evacuation spaces known to their abuser and the abuser's family. As this shelter worker remarked:³⁰

[The abusers] are just going to put two and two together and say, 'OK, well, where is she going to go?' And I think this really shows that we need to have a plan of action ahead of time. . . . Because they're there for a reason. It's specifically because they're in danger.

Women may be at greater risk of sexual assault due to inadequate public lighting in heavily damaged areas and in temporary housing sites such as trailer camps. These camps or other group lodging sites rarely include specific mental and physical health services needed by abused or sexually assaulted women. The dense social networks of friendship and kinship sustaining women through crisis are frequently disrupted by emergency evacuation and subsequent relocation. While abused and sexually assaulted women need specific mental and physical health care services, these are rarely provided in post-disaster temporary housing camps.

A flood or earthquake can coerce women back into a violent relationship because either they or their abuser need emergency living space, help making home repairs or responding to children's needs, or assistance securing disaster relief services. Women report having to remain in or return to unsafe homes because local shelters were closed, alternative affordable housing was damaged or destroyed, and private autos were destroyed. Compounding these issues is the pressing need of survivors to solve

immediate problems, access relief and recovery resources, repair damaged homes, provide care for impacted dependents, and generally begin the recovery process.

Women living with past trauma, the threat of violence, or disaster-related sexual assault or abuse have unique needs during disasters. These include:

- personal safety in disrupted communities, homes, and neighbourhoods;
- continuity of access to police and such legal interventions as protection orders;
- continuity of hospital service for the treatment of injuries and collection of medical forensic evidence;
- counseling and support to enable self-reliance through the disaster period;
- physical security while accessing an agency's on-site services;
- physical security while residing in a transition house or other shelter;
- access to counselors knowledgeable about the social impacts of disaster and violence against women;
- continuity in on-going counseling relationships;
- services for disaster-impacted children;
- affordable, safe, and accessible housing after the event;
- reliable transportation to locate new housing and access needed child care, employment, health care, and other social services through the recovery period;
- temporary financial, employment, and legal assistance with disaster losses.

Abused and sexually assaulted women, and those at risk of personal violence, are less able than others to meet the challenges of the disaster period unassisted. As one crisis center counseling noted, fragile support systems make them especially vulnerable following disaster:

Now here's this person that's holding on, just barely holding on—the disaster hits. It's not just them, but everybody around them, they scatter. The little bit of support that's been helping that victim hold it together is gone...I mean, it just mushrooms—the stress level of that victim.

Women and children already displaced from their homes by violence before a disaster, and temporarily residing in a transition house, motel, or safe home cannot draw on their normal survival and recovery resources. While residing in shelter, they have particularly compelling needs for:

- safe and secure evacuation space;
- emotional and practical support services relating to violence;
- police intervention and protection orders;
- anonymity and protection accessing reception centers and group lodging facilities;
- emergency preparedness and personal safety awareness;
- emergency food, water, and other supplies;
- help accessing available disaster relief funds and goods;
- assistance returning to prepare their own homes if advised by authorities (e.g. in a flood or fire) and if feasible and safe.

These needs can be identified, anticipated, and addressed through increased disaster preparedness in anti-violence women's services. Both women's services and emergency managers benefit when households and organizations are more prepared for disaster and its social impacts.

Effective disaster planning to identify service needs and to support agency work throughout the disaster cycle is needed. The structural integrity of facilities housing women's services, for example, tends to be assumed rather than demonstrated. Women's service facilities and transition houses are rarely a priority for inspection or retrofitting; nor are women's services likely to command the resources to fully prepare their own staff, residents, equipment, supplies, and facilities. Yet these facilities are lifelines for women in crisis and should be as safely sited and secure as possible.

Reception centres and group lodging sites may not always be safely accessed by all women, especially in smaller communities. Agencies usually able to provide back-up and auxiliary support may also be disaster-impacted and unable to communicate without prior arrangement. Many voluntary and professional disaster responders working in an impacted area will encounter women living with violence or the threat of violence but may not be trained to recognize gender issues like violence in disaster contexts, or be knowledgeable about the range of community resources available to women.

Similarly, staff and residents in women's services and transition houses are rarely trained in disaster education and preparation. A 1997 survey of preparedness in 77 U.S. and Canadian domestic violence programs, including 35 programs in British Columbia, found that among programs not yet affected by disasters, levels of emergency preparedness were low. For example, 12 percent reported staff trained in disaster response, 15 percent reported structural protection such as earthquake bracing, and 25 percent reported stockpiled food, water, batteries and other supplies. Disaster-impacted programs reported somewhat higher levels of post-disaster planning and preparedness.

Lack of resources in women's services is a major barrier, as this staff person explained when asked what limited her agency's disaster readiness: "Time and money. Demand for our services is very high and no increases in funding are like funding cuts to us." Lack of knowledge about local and regional emergency management systems is also common. There is some indication that disaster readiness is stronger in women's services serving First Nations women on reserves where bands have developed strong emergency preparedness programs.

Preparedness models ill-suited to domestic or sexual violence programs also discourage action, as in this account from an earthquake-zone transition house:

I called earthquake readiness at City Hall and we didn't have a big enough group to warrant a meeting. They wanted us to organize our block or neighbours. I don't have that time and worry about safety issues. Besides, we live in an upscale neighbourhood that doesn't like us very much.

4. NEW PARTNERS FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES

Typecast by the media as hapless victims rescued by strong-armed men, the vulnerabilities of women are often more visible than their capabilities and resources. Yet the “lessons learned” by disaster-impacted communities indicate that women’s services and other local direct-service agencies play central roles in identifying and addressing the needs of at-risk women in disasters.

It follows that women’s services are important potential partners with local emergency managers to enhance effective community-based disaster mitigation. Women’s services bring to the table:

- knowledge of the link between violence and disaster and local knowledge of women highly vulnerable in disasters;
- skills to assess the dangerousness of women’s situations;
- skills and services to provide crucial emotional support;
- inter-sectoral relationships with local and provincial agencies serving other vulnerable populations;
- facilities to shelter and counsel women in crisis during emergencies;
- staff and volunteers highly trained in crisis management and intervention;
- inter-sectoral relationships with police, hospitals, and child protection services.

Emergency management coordinators have responsibility for preparing local communities to respond to emergencies and disasters, with attention to life support issues, the special needs of particularly vulnerable groups, post-disaster reconstruction, and disaster mitigation. Provincial, regional, and local emergency management offices, agencies, and individual specialists collaborate, as feasible, to anticipate and address the needs of all residents. They help households, neighbourhoods, businesses, and governments develop and test comprehensive emergency preparedness plans. Emergency authorities work with community volunteers to provide food, lodging, clothing, registration, personal services and other critical services in emergencies. Provincial training institutes offer courses of study on emerging issues in emergency planning and response. Out-of-area and local relief responders in the private sector also play vital roles in the post-disaster period.

In addition to trained and skilled personnel, emergency management organizations bring to this partnership with women’s services:

- expertise and experience in emergency preparedness;
- hazard and risk information;
- assistance to agencies developing disaster response plans;
- comprehensive emergency response services and recovery resources;
- inter-organizational local and regional planning networks;
- expertise in public education about emergency preparedness.

Women’s services invite a community-based partnership with emergency managers. The Honourable Art Eggleton, Minister for National Defence and Minister Responsible for

Emergency Preparedness affirmed the significance of local partnerships in a recent address to key stakeholders.³¹

We believe it is important for all stakeholders to be involved if we want to achieve safer communities across Canada. Canada has a proven record of effective emergency response and recovery, and Canadians have much to be proud of with emergency management in this country. *The next step in better protecting Canadians from disasters is to address prevention. This would involve a mitigation partnership between the public and private sectors as well as non-governmental organizations.*" (emphasis added)

Antiviolence programs in Canada and the U.S. surveyed in 1997 expressed high levels of interest in heightened disaster readiness, including such measures as developing an in-house disaster plan; ensuring that their facility is included in existing evacuation and response plans; establishing emergency response protocols with relevant agencies; providing staff training in disaster response; attending area meetings on disaster preparedness; and requesting a technical evaluation of the security of their facility.³² This high interest level suggests a solid basis for a new partnership

4.1 Identifying System Gaps

Women's health and well-being must be safeguarded during periods of emergency or disaster, both from the effects of the disaster and from post-event violence. Consultation with stakeholders and consideration of relevant North American research suggests, however, that significant gaps exist in current emergency preparedness regarding violence against women in British Columbia. The five primary areas of concern are summarized below:

A. Lack of a mandate for addressing violence against women as a risk factor in disasters. Anticipating and responding to women experiencing or at risk of personal violence must be included in the mandate of provincial emergency authorities.

The life safety of women subject to violence is not presently a priority planning and response role for local, provincial, or federal authorities. A consistent province-wide initiative to address violence issues in the aftermath of a major disaster is absent at the level of law, regulation, plan, procedures, and guidelines.

- The 1993 Emergency Program Act enabling emergency management in British Columbia has not been modified to include a mandate to protect the safety and well-being of women at increased risk of violence throughout the disaster cycle.
- Women at risk of violence are not presently identified as a vulnerable population with identifiable special needs by the Provincial Emergency Program, Emergency Social Services, or other provincial authorities.

- Mitigating or preventing violence against women in disasters had not been adopted, for example, as a formal strategy by the BC Inter-Agency Emergency Preparedness Council.
- Guidelines developed by the Provincial Emergency Program for municipal and regional emergency planners (e.g. *Local Authority Planning Guide, 1996*) do not address the safety needs of women at risk of violence.
- Municipal authorities are responsible for planning and conducting relief operations in disasters, but cannot do so effectively without specific knowledge of the risks facing particular population groups. PEP guidelines encourage local planners to assess the vulnerabilities of local populations, specifically identifying school-aged children, and ambulatory/non-ambulatory hospital patients and residents of homes for the aged (*Local Authority Planning Guide, p. 21*). Assessing the needs of women housed in safe homes, motels, or transition houses to prevent life-threatening physical assault is not at present included.
- PEP guidelines outlining responsibilities for the designated Emergency Medical Health Representative include advising authorities on matters adversely affecting public health, and working with the Public Information Officer to communicate with the public on health and safety matters arising in emergencies. Emergency medical communications guidelines at this level do not identify violence against women as a public health issue in this context.
- The mobile Provincial Emergency Social Services Team is designed to assist local communities in the event of a major disaster which overwhelms local resources. The BC Housing Management Commission is a member of this team with a mandate to help communities set up and operate group lodging facilities. At present, there is no attention to the special needs of women who cannot safely access publicly designated group lodging facilities.
- The Salvation Army is the team partner responsible for personal services, such as screening evacuees at the door of reception centres and providing immediate crisis counseling when required. Abused women or women who fear for their safety at the moment of evacuation are not specifically recognized in their mandate as a vulnerable population needing special consideration in housing and counseling.
- Violence against women in disasters is absent in the mandates and guidelines of other provincial team partners, including the BC Telephone Pioneers Amateur Radio Club, with expertise and resources in emergency communications, and ESS nonprofit partners such as Mennonite Disaster Services, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, and Adventist Development Relief Agency. Volunteers and staff in these community organizations can anticipate encountering women who are experiencing or

threatened by sexual assault or domestic violence, but their organizational mandates and guidelines do not help them anticipate this role or these women's unique needs.

- Community-based preparedness programs tend to adopt a “neighbourhood” block-watch model which is inappropriate for abused women sheltered in transition houses. PEP materials such as the *Individual and Family Neighbourhood Preparedness Workbook* naturally focus on preparing private homes; the concerns of women unable to safely access their own homes during a community-wide crisis (e.g. preparing for anticipated floodwaters) are not addressed.
- Transition houses, sexual assault centres, and other facilities providing essential prevention and recovery services to women are not presently identified as special care facilities. The *Emergency Planning Manual for Special Care Facilities*, developed under the auspices of (then) Health and Welfare Canada, provides no information on the unique security concerns of women endangered by abuse or sexual assault. Other manuals in this series identify the resources of day care centres and other community-based agencies, but the resources of women's services are not included.
- The Women's Health Strategy of Health Canada encourages gender-based policy, analysis in the areas of “population health, risk management, and direct services and research.”³³ However, this perspective has not been utilized to anticipate needs and develop strategies mitigating violence against women in disasters.
- Justice Institute training materials are available on a wide range of emergency management issues, including the needs of pet owners. Ironically, corresponding materials are not yet available, under development, or even anticipated regarding the life safety of women at risk of violence in a BC disaster.
- Regarding the reception centre model of emergency response, coordination gaps exist between Emergency Social Services and key ministries with overlapping concerns for women's health and well-being, i.e. the Ministries of Health and Women's Equality.

B. Lack of knowledge about the link between violence against women and emergency preparedness. Increased education, training, and awareness programs and resources are needed to close this knowledge gap.

The general public, as well as emergency managers, women's services, and mental health and social service professionals, presently lack specific knowledge about the likelihood of increased violence against women in disasters. This mutual and reinforcing lack of information is conducive only to missed opportunities and miscommunication.

- With exceptions, the emergency management community at the local, regional and provincial levels is not aware either of the vulnerabilities of women at risk of violence or the needs and resources of antiviolenence women's services.
- Local emergency management coordinators are not aware of the role women's services play responding to disaster victims; many, if not most, are also unaware of where transition houses or other essential antiviolenence women's services within their planning jurisdiction are located. While the security of transition houses is a concern, this information is available to local authorities with a need to know.
- At present, violence against women is not recognized as a source of disaster vulnerability and the issue is, therefore, not included in the professional training of emergency managers, front-line responders, emergency social service volunteers, and other practitioners.
- Training materials on violence against women are not available for the more than 5,500 Emergency Social Services volunteers in 140 communities across the province, although every community will have women's services and women at risk of violence in the aftermath of disaster.
- The Provincial Emergency Social Service Team which assists local communities in the event of a major disaster overwhelming local resources does not provide training to its members on the vulnerability of battered and sexually assaulted women.
- Courses and course modules developed by the Justice Institute's Emergency Management Division do not presently incorporate the issue of violence against women; coursework on emergency planning for Residential Care facilities, for example, has not been revised to include the special needs of transition houses where the life safety of abused women is paramount.
- Training materials geared to tribal, municipal, and provincial law enforcement officers do not integrate violence against women in disaster contexts, although the safety of officers responding to domestic abuse calls in disaster-impacted homes and neighbourhoods warrants attention.
- Protecting the safety of volunteer responders is of paramount importance, but information is not available to trainers about the increased risk to emergency responders due to disaster-related domestic and sexual violence.
- Health and human service professionals will be involved in long-term disaster recovery in hard-hit communities and can be a lifeline for women impacted by personal violence. Yet the training of mental health professionals, for example, does not include the cycle of gender violence in disaster contexts or

the particular needs of sexual assaulted or abused women in the context of a devastating flood or fire.

- Published assessments of hazard, risk, and vulnerability in British Columbia identify age, ethnicity, population density, mobility, and many other factors which should guide community-based emergency preparedness, but these assessment guides do not incorporate gender-based vulnerabilities such as women at risk of violence.
- Violence against women in disasters has not been addressed in articles for key publications (*Emergency Preparedness Digest*), in newsletters (e.g. from the provincial ESS Association or the national SAFE GUARD program), or through brochures designed for the general public (e.g. ESS's "Coping with Disaster," or SAFE GUARD's on-line flyer "Expect Emotional Reactions").
- Educational materials on the link between violence and disaster are generally not available in on-line resource collections maintained by the UBC Disaster Preparedness Resources Centre, EPIX, and SAFE GUARD NET. The on-line EPIX emergency preparedness information system is under-utilized as a medium for public and professional education on this issue.
- A recent bibliography distributed by UBC's Disaster Preparedness Resources Centre (*Current Publications and Organizations Reference Manual, 1997*) does not include materials on gender issues in emergency planning and response.
- Information about increased violence is not presently included in emergency communication designed for the general public because it is not identified as a risk factor during disasters or a long-term recovery issue for individuals and families. Communicating with the public about feelings, problems, or concerns likely to arise after a major disaster is as important as emergency communication about household preparations or business recovery.
- Preparedness communication with the general public (e.g., flyers included with water bills, messages printed on milk cartons) does not educate women and families about the socioemotional impacts of disaster or the possibility of violence.
- Contact information for local women's services or hot lines operated by local or provincial antiviolence agencies is not routinely included in press kits on emergency preparedness designed for the general public.
- With exceptions, women's service representatives are rarely knowledgeable about the role, resources, or capacities of their local emergency management organizations.

- Training for women's services staff regarding disasters is generally limited to routine fire drills and fails to consider the emergency needs of women and children in a fully-booked transition house suddenly threatened by forest fire or ordered to evacuate a flood or toxic-spill zone.
- Issues likely to arise for women dealing with violence through all phases of the disaster cycle are not routinely included in training materials for women's services staff.

C. Lack of priority attention to the emergency needs of transition houses and related women's services. The ability of antiviolence women's services to continue functioning or to recover as fully and immediately as possible must be enhanced on a priority basis.

These system gaps compromise the safety and well-being of women in disaster contexts. The life safety of women dependent upon violence crisis intervention services is directly reduced when personal violence occurs, or increases in frequency or severity, during major community disasters.

- Transition houses and other women's services responding to the immediate and long-term needs of abused and sexually assaulted women are not presently identified as critical care facilities.
- No provisions are in place with BC Tel to enable women's services to communicate and function on a priority basis, nor are provisions in place with BC Hydro to ensure recovery of disrupted utility services on a priority basis to shelters and other antiviolence women's services.
- Women's services staff are not identified as disaster responders with a priority need for access to restricted disaster zones in some cases, as are emergency social services volunteers.
- No prior arrangements are in place for emergency transportation of key women's service staff to and from impacted areas, if feasible and needed, or for assistance transporting abused women and children from an evacuated transition house to an alternate and safe location.
- Contact information is not routinely exchanged at the local level between front-line responders, law enforcement, local emergency management offices, and representatives of women's services.
- The physical integrity of facilities housing women's services has not been systematically investigated. Programs may be located in hazardous areas, unsafe structures, or both.

- Contingency plans are not in place to protect the integrity of existing hot lines for women in crisis, to increase their capacity if needed, or to operate additional crisis lines for victims of violence in disaster contexts.
- Most importantly, the prospect of increased service demand in the aftermath of disaster has not been recognized by funding agencies. No plans are in place to trigger increases in core funding for increased disaster-related service, though agencies impacted by forest fires, earthquakes, or mass murders cannot afford to divert time and resources to fundraising during the emergency period. Indeed, women's services can expect a decrease in charitable donations as these funds may be diverted to disaster relief funds.
- Contingency plans are not in place with funders to ensure that emergency shelter maximizing continuity and security will continue to be available to those whose lives are endangered.
- Nor are plans in place to replace or increase other organizational resources which may be damaged or destroyed, including program office files, computer equipment, office supplies, and furnishings.

D. Lack of an integrated emergency preparedness system fully engaging women's services and emergency managers. Formal and informal mechanisms increasing communication and interaction between women's services and emergency managers are needed to develop a fully integrated system.

Emergency planning in British Columbia is correctly recognized for its commitment to citizen engagement and the principle of neighbourhood preparedness. Provincial authorities have not, however, integrated women's services into the growing network of agencies and organizations involved on a local level in making communities across British Columbia safer in the event of disaster.

These gaps create a pattern of missed opportunities for fruitful collaboration and consistent provincial planning which engages women's services and emergency managers as partners through disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. In a period of declining budgets and staff cutbacks, a more integrated system is needed to utilize the skills, energy, resources, and knowledge of community-based organizations like women's services.

- The Inter-agency Emergency Preparedness Council includes representatives from Ministries likely to be involved in disaster planning and response; however, the Ministry of Women's Equality is not included, nor is it represented on the Emergency Planning Committee involving deputy ministers and key agencies.

- Provincial women's services are 'out of the loop' in emergency planning in British Columbia. In the Lower Mainland, regional emergency planning groups do not include liaison with women's services.
- Women's services are absent from the table in Organizations Volunteering Emergency Response and Recovery in British Columbia (OVERBC).
- With few exceptions, women's services do not exchange mailings or otherwise communicate regularly with local emergency management organizations or coordinators. They are not included in mailings of announcements, newsletters, reports, and other materials from the Provincial Emergency Program, Emergency Social Services, or the ESS Association of volunteer responders.
- Women's services do not typically recruit board members and volunteers from among local ESS volunteers. Emergency Social Services also misses this opportunity for integration and collaboration by not recruiting volunteers from among the staff and volunteers of local women's services.
- Disaster readiness is also absent from the agenda of community organizations whose clients are women likely to be hard-hit both by disaster and violence, for example advocacy and service organizations of First Nations women, women living with disabilities, new immigrant or non-English-speaking women, seniors, and homeless women.
- Representatives from antiviolence women's services do not take part in the development or review of community disaster plans.
- Women's services staff with direct responsibility for women's safety in the event of disaster are not included as stakeholders or responders when emergency plans are tested in community-wide exercises.
- Presentations on violence against women in disasters to regional emergency program coordinators or to the IEPC have neither been solicited nor offered, though this would both increase awareness of violence against women and build professional and personal networks between these two professional communities.
- The national initiative to increase mitigation has not included women's services in nonprofit partnerships, e.g. in the national series of Emergency Preparedness Canada workshops co-sponsored with the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction.
- Violence against women in disasters has not been addressed by speakers or sessions in the annual Emergency Preparedness Conference conducted in Vancouver. Nor has the issue been integrated into the annual West Coast

Disaster Response conference, reducing the prospect for cross-border integrated disaster response in this area.

E. Lack of emergency planning in antiviolenence women's services. Increased disaster readiness must be fully supported to prepare women's services throughout the province for all contingencies arising from an environmental or technological disaster.

The impact of Vernon's mass domestic homicides, accounts from Santa Cruz after the earthquake, and the public visibility of environmental disasters in the 1990s have increased levels of hazard awareness among BC's antiviolenence women's organizations. Disaster readiness, however, has not increased. On balance, the province's community-based transition houses, sexual assault centres, and other facilities housing critical antiviolenence services are not prepared for the immediate or lingering social impacts of disaster. Emergency preparedness competes for scarce resources in already overburdened antiviolenence women's organizations and continuity of services cannot be assured.

- Most women's service organizations do not have written disaster plans as required by Contract Reform. They rarely store food, water, and other supplies in quantities sufficient to meet the needs of on-site staff, volunteers, clients, and residents for the first 72 hours after a major event.
- The agencies do not own alternate power supply sources like generators for emergency use.
- They lack protocols for communication with emergency responders and mutual-assistance agreements with related agencies for resource sharing and integrated services.
- Staff do not receive basic training on disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.
- Few agencies have identified alternate evacuation sites for clients unable to safely access designated reception centres or group lodging facilities in the event of a major disaster.
- Emergency telecommunications provided through amateur radio volunteers do not presently include women's organizations in their networks.
- Women's services lack contingency planning for protection of computers, files, and business records; for continuity of payroll and other administrative functions; for emergency staff communication and designated lines of authority following the event; and for staff policies regarding postdisaster payroll and absenteeism. Most lack an emergency preparedness committee or designated liaison.

- Business continuity planning guides such as those developed by the Emergency Preparedness for Industry and Commerce Council have not been revised to help nonprofit organizations like women's crisis centers.
- Women's services are also ill-prepared to meet the post-disaster needs of new clients whose abuse or sexual assault was directly related to the flood, fire, or earthquake. Staff are not trained to assess the intersecting vulnerability of particular clients to disaster as well as violence, or to recognize the socioemotional effects of disasters on survivors.
- Few staff are knowledgeable about provincial and federal disaster relief procedures. In a disaster-impacted region, however, women's services will be contacted by women who, in addition to recovering from or fleeing from personal violence, are challenged to recover from the effects of damaged or destroyed homes, workplaces, cars, and schools.
- Counseling materials and other resources have not been developed for children witnessing abuse and also experiencing the effects of a major disaster in their home, school, and neighbourhood.
- No provisions have been made to document for funding agencies any changes in the demand for, or provision of, disaster-related services to women through the response and long-term recovery periods.

5. ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

Disaster preparedness anticipating the possibility of increased violence against women breaks the silence around violence issues and empowers women with potentially life-saving resources and information. An integrated and consistent province-wide system which fully engages women's services and emergency managers will substantially increase the self-reliance of local communities and enhance disaster recovery. Most importantly, women will be safer before, during, and after disasters.

British Columbia can provide a national model of effective intervention to help build safer and more disaster-resilient communities. Toward that end, we recommend that Provincial authorities undertake to support a new **BC Project on Violence and Disaster**. On the basis of increased risk to women and identified service gaps we recommend a three-year implementation period. Possible sources of funding for include provincial ministries, municipal authorities, the federal violence prevention program, and the Joint Emergency Preparedness Project.

The primary goal of the **BC Project on Violence and Disaster** is to prevent violence against women rooted in the social impacts of disasters. Project outcomes include:

- more fully integrating emergency management and women's services in all communities across the province;
- increasing the level of disaster readiness in antiviolenence women's services;

- facilitating disaster readiness in related organizations serving women at high risk both of disaster and violence;
- increasing knowledge among emergency planners and responders and women's services about the link between violence and disaster;
- increasing public awareness and prevention efforts regarding violence against women in disasters.

Neither women's services nor emergency management organizations are presently equipped to carry this project forward with existing resources. We urge positive review of our recommendation for the position of a temporary coordinator to oversee and implement the project. *This critical work will not be accomplished without coordination.*

Recommendation 1: Violence and Disaster Coordinator (see Appendix 5)

We recommend funding of a full-time coordinator to advance this project over a three-year period, subject to renewal. We urge coordination among senior managers from the Ministries of Attorney General, Human Resources, and Women's Equality to identify and utilize existing staff resources or jointly support the employment of a qualified coordinator. The coordinator might be housed administratively in the offices of the Justice Institute of BC or in the offices of the relevant ministries.

The primary responsibilities of the coordinator are to promote the specific projects recommended in this report and to provide overall coordination and liaison between provincial emergency authorities and antiviolence women's services. Additional responsibilities are detailed in Appendix 5.

Recommendation 2: Legislative and policy review

2a. Review of existing mandates in policies and legislation for provincial and local emergency authorities regarding women at risk of violence as a special needs population. Among others, these include:

- Emergency Program Act (1996);
- Emergency Program Act guidelines and regulations;
- PEP Local Authority Planning Guide (1996);
- selected municipal and regional emergency plans from diverse hazard zones and population areas.

NOTE: Emergency Preparedness regulations in BC are currently under review. It is essential that the recommendations of this report be addressed in this review process.

2b. Specific revisions of statutes, policies, and practices suggested by this review of system gaps, e.g. including provincial antiviolence women's organizations as planning partners where appropriate, identifying transition houses and other antiviolence women's organizations as critical care facilities, incorporating the special needs of sexually assaulted and abused women into the 'personal needs' care provided by Emergency Social Services.

2c. Organizational evaluation utilizing *Self-Assessment Guidelines for Emergency Managers* and *Self-Assessment Guidelines for Women's Services* (see Appendix 6). This process will help agencies evaluate formal and informal policies and practices which may affect their capacity to respond effectively to women at risk of gender violence during disasters. The self-assessment process will help assist agencies in identifying both internal strengths and areas for improvement.

Recommendation 3: Increased collaboration between women's services and emergency managers.

It is essential that these recommendations be taken up at senior levels by government and emergency preparedness managers in order to foster collaboration and build on existing resources and initiatives within key provincial ministries.

As provincial emergency preparedness measures evolve, new opportunities for interagency collaboration will emerge. At this juncture, we recommend the following:

3a. Coordination at senior levels between Emergency Social Services and key provincial ministries to identify women's health and other needs with respect to disaster;

3b. Inclusion of the Ministry of Women's Equality on the IEPC;

3c. Representation of provincial associations of women's services on such regional and provincial planning and response policy groups as the Emergency Planning Committee, OVERBC, and regional ESSA chapters;

3d. Participation of women's services representatives in community-based emergency preparedness exercises;

3e. Development and implementation of coordination protocols for disaster response for inclusion in existing protocols for victim service community coordination;

3f. Increased communication between women's services and emergency organizations through newsletters, shared mailings, conference participation, etc.;

3g. Information exchange between women's services and organizations representing women highly vulnerable both to violence and to disaster (e.g., First Nations, disabled, and older women) to increase the salience of disaster readiness in these vulnerable populations.

Recommendation 4: Support antiviolenence women's services as priority agencies

We urge new funding priorities and enhanced program support from provincial authorities to enhance the response capacity of women's services during emergencies.

- 4a. Development of protocols with funding agencies for increased funding triggered by specified disaster events;
- 4b. Immediate technical analysis of the structural integrity of women's service facilities utilized in BC;
- 4c. Priority attention to the emergency needs of transition houses, e.g. alternate evacuation space, utilities and communications, staff and client transit;
- 4d. Immediate provision of back-up generators to transition houses and safe homes sheltering women from violence.

Recommendation 5: Emergency planning workbook for women's services (see Appendix 7)

Disaster readiness is enhanced by consistent and integrated emergency planning. An emergency planning workbook will help antiviolence women's organizations across the province plan effectively for a wide range of emergencies and disasters. The workbook will support the efforts of individual agencies to develop comprehensive disaster plans specific to their unique circumstances. Utilizing this workbook for disaster planning will also help integrate women's services and emergency management authorities.

The proposed planning guide will provide a step-by-step guide to shelters, crisis centres, and other agencies housing antiviolence women's services, including specific information and resources tailored to their location, services, and needs. It should also address the home planning needs of individual service providers to allow them to more quickly resume providing critical services.

Funding should be provided for:

- 5a. Developing, reproducing, and distributing the emergency planning workbook;
- 5b. Promotional materials introducing the workbook;
- 5c. Follow-up technical support to users as services adopt the workbook;
- 5d. Follow-up evaluation of the planning workbook and subsequent revision.

Recommendation 6: Increased cross-training (see Appendix 8)

An integrated system entails mutual understanding, hence cross-training of women's services and emergency management professionals and volunteers. Support is needed to promote:

- 6a. Training for designated women's services staff in emergency response, the social impacts of disaster, and post-disaster recovery resources;

6b. Training on life safety concerns of sexually assaulted and abused women in disasters for first responders, ESS and Partner Agency volunteers (e.g. Red Cross, Salvation Army, St. John Ambulance, Victim Services), mental health specialists, emergency management students, and others;

6c. Development of training materials (electronic and print) in support of violence against women in disaster training, e.g. fact sheets, planning checklists, brochure;

6d. Curriculum development and implementation of a workshop on violence against women in disasters for regional ESSA volunteer training;

6e. Informational presentations by women's services to provincial emergency authorities, including the IEPC, BC Chiefs of Police, Union of BC Municipalities, and others;

6f. Curricula revision workshop for disaster educators (JI, UBC, SFU);

6g. Development of course modules to help faculty and trainers integrate violence and disaster materials;

6h. Development of an emergency management course on the intersecting vulnerabilities of gender, class, race, age, and disability as well as violence;

6i. Translation and/or revision as necessary to ensure that curricular materials are accessible and culturally relevant to all women.

Recommendation 7: Increased public education on violence prevention in disasters (see Appendix 9)

Effective public communication on this topic is essential. Funding is needed to help support this initiative and encourage local responsibility for emergency preparedness.

7a. Inclusion of violence and disasters issues in the provincial antiviolence advertising campaign supported by the BC Broadcasters Association;

7b. Technical assistance to agencies revising emergency preparedness brochures, pamphlets, flyers, training materials, etc.;

7c. Development of a generic press kit on violence in disasters (i.e., fact sheets, PSAs, contact information, etc.) for communities to revise as appropriate;

7d. Development and promotion of an informational brochure on violence against women in disasters targeting the general public;

7e. Review and revision, as needed, of outreach materials on disaster readiness from emergency organizations and women's services to reach women across ethnic and language groups, women in different age groups, and hearing or sight impaired women.

APPENDIX 1

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We gratefully acknowledge all stakeholders for their contributions to this report.

APPENDIX 2

Recommendations from the conference *Women in Disasters: Exploring the Issues* Vancouver, May 1998

<h4>A CALL TO ACTION: MEETING THE NEEDS OF WOMEN IN DISASTER</h4>
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To address emergency planning issues specifically impacting violence against women services, we recommend:

1. Innovative strategies to assist antiviolence programs with in-house emergency planning, including an emergency planning workbook geared to specific issues confronting these programs in the event of a major community disaster;
2. Producing and distributing to governmental and community agencies a comprehensive report educating social and human service planners and emergency responders about the social impacts of disaster on women, including the risk of increased violence;
3. Implementing proactive agreements with provincial and federal agencies which provide post-disaster financial assistance to ensure that timely and adequate financial resources are available for antiviolence organizations responding to increased service demands in the aftermath of disaster;
4. Revising relevant provincial brochures and materials to include information on the likely social and psychological effects of disaster, including increased violence;
5. Incorporating violence issues into training materials for mental health disaster outreach teams and developing mutual aid agreements between women's services and mental health agencies;

6. Developing alternative plans for women unable to safely access existing evacuation sites;
7. Initiating agreements with BC PEP and lifeline services such as BC Tel to maintain accessible services by according priority status to crisis lines during disaster;
8. Implementing mutual aid agreements among neighbouring antiviolence services to foster timely crisis and recovery assistance to hard-hit programs and services;
9. Arranging for inspection and evaluation of the physical facilities of women's services in seismic regions;
10. Educating and preparing staff and volunteers in women's services for their personal safety and for more effective assistance to others.

To increase the visibility of women's vulnerabilities and resources in disaster and enhance effective response to their needs, we recommend:

1. Women speaking out strongly within their own organizations to voice their views and create a climate for change;
2. Fully engaging women in proactive planning for violence-free and culturally-sensitive disaster response in every community;
3. Women participating in developing emergency plans within their agencies and reviewing, evaluating, and amending existing emergency plans, if any;
4. Community-based hazard assessment identifying the location and specific needs of vulnerable women and children, among them women living with disabilities, mental illness, or serious medical problems, senior women, new immigrant women, minority-language speakers, single mothers, poor and low-income women and others;
5. Extended and culturally-appropriate post-disaster responses, including long-term recovery outreach teams and alternative mental health models such as healing circles;
6. Developing and distributing emergency response materials in different languages and geared to different communities, including deaf and impaired-hearing women and others with special needs;
7. Funding to support Canadian research into the role of gender in the planning, response, and recovery activities of emergency responders, planners, volunteers, and the community at large;
8. Implementing a national mitigation strategy with the active participation of women, taking into account women's visions of more sustainable communities and gender issues in community planning and emergency response;

9. Facilitating women's participation in developing post-disaster recovery and reconstruction plans empowering to women, including providing child care at community meetings;

10. Integrating gender analysis into existing and new emergency management training at the provincial and national levels;

11. Distributing through traditional and new media the proceedings and recommendations of this conference to all relevant provincial and federal agencies and to women's service organizations throughout the province.

To integrate women's services into all aspects of emergency management at the local, provincial, and national levels, we recommend:

1. Including women's services as full and equal partners in community-based emergency planning, contributing their knowledge and expertise to more effective emergency response;

2. Developing a workbook for women's organizations undertaking emergency planning, including specific guidelines and resources, information on individual preparedness, local emergency management resources and structures, and relevant gender and cultural issues;

3. Employing diverse media and delivery strategies to educate women's organizations that serve disaster-vulnerable groups about community-specific hazards, existing resources and response plans, and other aspects of emergency management;

4. Developing or extending existing and new organizational partnerships, for example between emergency managers, women's services, and regional health care agencies.

To support women in emergency management and women's service roles across organizations and agencies, we recommend:

1. Increasing opportunities for formal and informal networking between women's services and emergency planners and responders at the local level;

2. Creating opportunities for informal mentoring, job exchange and other initiatives which will increase communication between women emergency managers and women's service providers;

3. Developing a BC PEP-hosted web-site and using existing women's service web-sites to share information and increase electronic networking between women's services and women emergency managers.

To support and sustain women undertaking voluntary relief work, we recommend:

1. Developing a comprehensive informational packet and video about how relief workers and their families are likely to be impacted by this work;
2. Providing public recognition and other incentives for employers who support the voluntary relief work of their employees, and informational materials for unions and business encouraging proactive policies and procedures, e.g. protecting the vacation time of employees accepting emergency relief assignments, and financial assistance with out-of-pocket expenses such as child care;
3. Increasing local support for the families of emergency response workers on assignment, for example neighborhood family networking, meals-on-wheels assistance through local religious and non-religious organizations, and contact through the emergency assignment between the sending organization and the relief worker's family;
4. Encouraging a range of comprehensive child care options for the families of emergency response workers, to be provided by the sending organization or employer, or available on-site as appropriate;
5. Funding extended trauma teams to provide response workers with long-term, confidential mental health services as needed, to be provided through task numbers assigned by the Provincial Emergency Program under the terms of the Emergency Program Act;
6. Mandating on-site crisis counseling and critical incident stress debriefing for all relief workers, and effective orientation of incoming relief workers by those departing.

APPENDIX 5

VIOLENCE AND DISASTER PROJECT COORDINATOR

System gaps and needs: There are no measures in place to advance a consistent, province-wide initiative mitigating violence against women in disasters. No local or provincial authorities currently carry this responsibility, and the present resources of both antiviolence women's organizations and emergency management offices are insufficient to meet this need.

Recommendation # 1: Coordinator, B.C. Project on Violence and Disaster

In the absence of coordination and material support, the recommendations of this report will not move forward. The primary goal of this *three-year project* on violence and disaster in B.C. is to prevent violence against women rooted in the social impacts of disasters. Secondary goals include integrating women's services and emergency management, enhancing disaster readiness in antiviolence women's services and other community organizations serving at-risk women, and increasing specialist and general education about the links between disaster and violence.

Job qualifications and description: This is a full-time contract position for a period of three years. It will be held by an individual with expertise both in violence issues and in emergency planning. The primary responsibility of the Project Coordinator is to oversee the implementation of recommended measures mitigating violence against women in B.C. Specific responsibilities include:

- coordinating and consulting with senior representatives from emergency management and violence against women programs;
- promoting institutionalized consultation between emergency managers and women's services at the provincial, regional, and municipal levels;
- providing technical assistance to emergency managers and women's services in support of recommended outcomes;
- consulting in the development of additional initiatives;
- soliciting and responding to opportunities for public presentations, e.g. to regional emergency authorities, law enforcement, disaster mental health professionals;
- outreach to related provincial organizations serving women highly vulnerable both to violence and disaster;

- developing a clearinghouse of materials on gender issues in disasters, the social impacts of disasters, violence against women, children's needs in disasters, and related issues.

Budget: *To be developed*

APPENDIX 6

RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN DISASTERS

What's the issue? Violence is a life safety issue for women

Violence against women has been shown to increase in the aftermath of major community disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes, and floods. After the Loma Prieta earthquake in California, for instance, requests for temporary restraining orders rose 50% and reported sexual assaults rose 300%. Police reported that homicides related to domestic violence increased: three women were murdered by violent partners in the two months after the earthquake.

Battered women and their children already forced from their homes into transition homes or shelters may not be safe during a crisis or able to safely access designated evacuation and relief centres. Group lodging facilities and reception centres are logical places for a perpetrators to look for women who sought refuge in shelters before the flood or fire.

Coping with disaster losses (housing, transportation, schools, jobs, friends, money, possessions, time, sleep) increases stress in many relationships. Women in volatile relationships and girls and women experiencing sexual abuse are especially at risk. During reconstruction, poor lighting, empty neighborhoods, and transient populations during reconstruction increase the risk of sexual assault.

Why is action needed now?

Preventing and responding to violence against women is a major community issue across Canada. It is especially important when families and communities are hit by disaster.

Women already receiving services from local women's organizations will need this assistance more than ever. First-time crisis callers hit by disaster and violence at once

will also need help. But can these grassroots organizations ensure continuity in the lifeline services they offer women? Can they meet the new needs of disaster victims impacted by personal violence?

Counseling programs, transition homes, support agencies and other organizations working against violence can expect both increased demand for their services and reduced resources. If the facilities, staff, and volunteers of women's services are directly impacted, services will still be needed; all programs will be indirectly impacted if their sister agencies and service partners are damaged or destroyed.

Emergency management authorities must also respond to women and children in crisis because of personal violence during or after disaster. Shelter residents will need emergency communications and security on a priority basis and may require help transporting residents to alternate locations during evacuations. Later, emergency responders helping families to recovery will encounter women threatened or impacted by violence who may have special needs. Women living with sexual or domestic violence are an especially vulnerable population with unique needs for post-disaster counseling, safe evacuation space, assistance securing emergency relief and recovery services, and related services.

What are some solutions?

Working together, women's services and emergency managers can anticipate and plan to meet these needs. Preparing for the worst isn't just a job for "the experts," but everyone's responsibility.

Organizations working with such highly vulnerable populations as the frail elderly, physically or mentally disabled, new immigrants, the homeless, and women experiencing violence can let local emergency managers know what the special needs of these groups are, and what their own agency resources and capacities are.

Specialists experienced in emergency preparedness can work with women's services to help make their facilities more secure and train staff and volunteers in emergency response. Emergency planners and responders can also learn more about violence and how it affects women and families before, during, and after disasters.

The first step is simple—communication. Communities with strong inter-organizational networks have been shown to recover faster following major disasters, even when these networks are informal. Talking together as partners in emergency preparedness is the first step toward safer and more disaster-resilient communities.

What next?

Two *Self-Assessment Guides* are attached, for use by public and private emergency planning and response organizations, and antiviolenace women's services, respectively. Use the checklist to help identify the capacities of your agency and areas for improvement. Upload this information to appropriate websites or chat rooms.

For more information, contact the B.C. Association of Specialized Victim Assistance & Counseling Programs. Call them at (250) 995-2166. Fax: (250) 995-2167. Or email them at: bcasvacp@islandnet.com. Your local emergency management office has more information on community preparedness. Contact information is in your local telephone book.

APPENDIX 6 (continued)

Self-Assessment Guidelines for Emergency Managers

Preparedness

- ___ Have you identified and located local women's organizations which serve highly vulnerable populations in your area?
- ___ Are antiviolenence women's organizations included in emergency exercises, community mailings, relevant mailing lists, etc?
- ___ Does your staff and volunteer training include knowledge about violence against women and other social impacts of disaster?

Emergency Relief

- ___ Are emergency communication systems with transition homes in place?
- ___ Is emergency transportation feasible, e.g. of critical staff or residents needing alternate evacuation or emergency shelter?
- ___ Are protocols in place to utilize trained crisis workers from women's services on a stand-by basis, if feasible, e.g. staffing disaster response hot lines, family assistance, reception centres
- ___ Are alternate safe evacuation sites available for especially vulnerable women in transition homes or shelters?

Recovery

- ___ Are staff knowledgeable about the long-term recovery needs of abused and assaulted women in crisis?
- ___ Is information about violence in disasters included in community emergency preparedness flyers, brochures, handouts, and other public education materials?
- ___ Have you consulted with women's services to ensure that women at risk can safely access your recovery resources? Is their anonymity respected, if necessary?
- ___ Are antiviolenence women's services consulted in your planning for post-disaster needs assessment, reconstruction, and long-term recovery planning?
- ___ Does the training of outreach mental health teams include violence against women?

Mitigation

- ___ Are battered women and children considered a special-needs population?

- ___ Is emergency preparedness assistance geared to the special needs of shelters and transition homes available?
- ___ Is help available for women's services which are developing or revising disaster plans?
- ___ Are women's services included in local emergency management initiatives, e.g. community preparedness models, coalitions of responding organizations, disaster exercises?
- ___ Have women's services in your area been made aware of your agency's resources, e.g. through mailings, community meetings, or inter-organizational networks?
- ___ Do emergency management teaching materials include violence and other issues facing women after disaster?

APPENDIX 6 (continued)

Self-Assessment Guidelines for Women's Services

Preparedness

- ___ Is our facility structurally sound? Located outside of known hazard zones?
- ___ Have immediate hazards been assessed (nearby river? quake zone?)?
- ___ Have in-house measures been undertaken to reduce predictable kinds of damage, e.g. securing heavy bookcases
- ___ Is our staff trained in disaster response? Our volunteers?
- ___ Are contingency plans in place for safe, accessible, secure evacuation sites?
- ___ Have contingency plans been developed for administrative issues, e.g. absenteeism, decision-making, emergency communications, payroll?
- ___ Are written protocols in place with sister agencies for mutual support?
- ___ Is in-house emergency information for staff and clients available in community languages and accessible to women with special needs?
- ___ Are record-keeping systems in place to document service needs which are disaster-related?

Emergency relief

- ___ Are contingency plans in place in event of shelter damage or destruction?
- ___ Have alternate transportation plans been developed to relocate residents from unsafe transition homes or evacuation sites?
- ___ Are emergency supplies on hand sufficient for 72 hours? Generators?
- ___ Are evacuation kits available for residents of transition homes, if needed?
- ___ Are emergency communications systems with authorities in place?
- ___ Have contingency plans been developed to provide essential services?
- ___ Have essential agency resources like computers or records been moved?

Recovery

- ___ Is information on file to assist clients accessing private and public recovery resources?
- ___ Are members of our staff trained in applicable relief processes?
- ___ Have your agency's needs and resources through the crisis and recovery period been identified for your local emergency managers?
- ___ Does your agency participate in community-based networks of disaster response agencies?
- ___ Will you have sufficient staff and resources to meet increased service demands and to expand community outreach during the recovery period?
- ___ Is your crisis line publicized in disaster referral networks?

Mitigation

- ___ Do you have a disaster plan written? Regularly updated? Practiced?
- ___ Do you regularly update and exchange contact information with local emergency managers?
- ___ Is your agency represented in local and regional groups working to mitigate disasters?
- ___ Are the special needs of your clients, residents, staff and volunteers known to local emergency managers?
- ___ Are your agency needs, resources, and capacities known to local emergency managers?
- ___ Is cross-training available for disaster outreach workers and antiviolence counselors?
- ___ Have the post-disaster needs of women especially vulnerable to violence been anticipated, e.g. undocumented women, disabled women?
- ___ Do your public education initiatives identify risks to women during disasters?

APPENDIX 7

EMERGENCY PLANNING WORKBOOK FOR WOMEN'S SERVICES

System gap and needs: There is a clear lack of emergency planning in antiviolence women's services. Increased readiness must be fully supported and sustained until women's services across the province are prepared for all contingencies arising from an environmental or technological disaster.

Recommendation (#6): *Emergency planning workbook for women's services*
Disaster readiness is enhanced by consistent and integrated emergency planning in provincial networks of women's services responding to violence. The proposed workbook provides background material on provincial emergency management resources and procedures and local hazards, and offers a step-by-step guide to developing an agency disaster plan. It helps staff plan for emergencies in their own household and anticipate the particular needs of women with intersecting and reinforcing vulnerabilities based on mental or physical abilities, ethnic or racial status, age, and other factors. *See attached Table of Contents.*

Timeline: The workbook will be developed over the period July-August, 1999, subject to funding. One or more meetings and/or telephone conferences are anticipated between the author and representative users and emergency planners. The workbook will be circulated in draft form for feedback from emergency management and women's services. The revised manual will then be distributed for final review to key stakeholders (September-October, 1999) before being distributed to all provincial women's services with antiviolence programs (January, 2000). Promotional materials such as flyers will be developed (October, 1999) and follow-up telephone support provided through the BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs to assist organizations using the workbook to develop disaster plans (January-March, 2000).

Personnel: The workbook will be written under contract by an individual with demonstrated writing and communication skills, knowledge of provincial emergency

management, and sensitivity to the needs of antiviolenace women's services. The project will be administered through the BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counselling Programs.

Budget: *See attached.*

EMERGENCY PLANNING WORKBOOK FOR WOMEN'S SERVICES

Proposed Project Budget

Expenditures

Professional fees (27 days @ \$500)	13,500
BC Association professional fees (25 days @ \$450)	11,250
Stakeholder group/reviewers honorarium	1,000
Travel (author consultations with users and planners)	500
Meeting costs/stakeholders consultations (coffee, lunch)	250
Telephone (long-distance)	500
Photocopies/printing/binding	3,300
Supplies	700
Postage/courier	600
Stakeholder group travel/accommodation (2 meetings)	3,000
Desk top publishing	1,500
Editing	600
Clerical (180 hours @ \$20)	2,700
Administration	3,940
TOTAL	43,340

APPENDIX 7, cont.

EMERGENCY PLANNING WORKBOOK FOR WOMEN'S SERVICES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Purpose and Scope

- A. The problem: violence against women as a life safety issue in disasters
- B. Anticipating needs and contingencies: the workbook as a planning tool
- C. Intended audience
- D. Workbook structure
- E. Definitions and abbreviations
- F. Using this workbook: contact information for assistance and feedback

II. Background

- A. Hazards and risks in [your area]; a brief local history
- B. Emergency preparedness in B.C.
 - 1. The Emergency Program Act
 - 2. How federal, provincial, and local emergency management structures relate to B.C.
- C. How do these measures currently protect women from violence in disasters? What services are currently available?

III. Women's services responding to violence in disasters

- A. Increasing violence and declining resources: a life safety issue
- B. Brief overview of North American case studies
- C. Responder stress and safety issues
- D. Mitigating violence: why your agency needs to plan now

IV. Key planning steps

- A. Designating a coordinator/committee
- B. Analyzing local and regional hazards (environmental, technological)

- C. Documenting local vulnerabilities (client profiles in your area; the safety of your own facility; community needs/resources)
- D. Identifying local non-governmental capacities (of clients; of related organizations; in your region)
- E. Resources available through your local emergency manager (contact information/resource directory)

V. Planning for service continuity

- A. Establishing service priorities
- B. Identifying agency resources and capacities
- C. Household preparations for staff and volunteers
- D. Preparing your facility
 - 1. In-house supplies and equipment
 - 2. Inspection for structural integrity
 - 3. Internal preparedness, e.g. earthquake bracing, water-proofing
- E. Communication needs and resources
 - 1. staff and family
 - 2. between staff/volunteers
 - 3. with clients
 - 4. with other organizations in the community
 - 5. with emergency responders
- F. Evacuation
 - 1. identifying secure alternate locations
 - 2. transportation/communication
 - 3. evacuation kits for transition house residents/staff
- G. Mutual aid protocols with other agencies: who can help how?
 - 1. other antiviolenace services
 - 2. other related agencies
- H. Business continuity
 - 1. written policies for payroll, staff absenteeism, lines of authority
 - 2. written protocols with funding agencies for increased support
 - 3. protection of business equipment, records, etc.
 - 4. contingency planning for relocation and temporary operations

VI. Planning to meet new client needs

- A. Funding needs to meet post-disaster service demands
- B. Understanding the disaster cycle/socioemotional impacts
- C. The needs of women impacted by violence in disaster contexts
- D. Developing new training materials for staff
- E. Cross-agency collaboration

VII. Working with the local emergency planner

- A. Consultation with planners to develop your plan
- B. Beyond the fire drill: ways to integrate disaster readiness
- C. Staff training resources (local; JIBC courses; distance education)
- D. Training/information for residents/clients
- E. Making information available: planning now to communicate with clients with diverse languages
- F. Networking with local emergency managers and ESS volunteers (cross-mailings, informal networking, presentations, information sharing, etc.)

VIII. Disaster planning: use it or lose it

- A. The planning process: inclusive and on-going
- B. Sharing your plan with other agencies/partners
- C. Updating your plan with local emergency managers
- D. Testing and revising your plan
- E. Updating contact information and resource pages

IX. Resource directory

- A. Contact information for municipal planner, regional planners, PEP
- B. Other NGOs and disaster planning agencies or institutions in BC
- C. Ordering information for available pamphlets, books, etc.
- D. Resources for further study
- E. Resource for financial support of disaster readiness

X. Evaluation (tear out form for user feedback)

APPENDIX 8

CURRICULAR RESOURCES ON VIOLENCE AND DISASTER

System gap and needs: Little is known in British Columbia about the link between violence against women and emergency preparedness. At present, violence against women is not recognized as a source of disaster vulnerability and not identified as an emergency planning issue. Increased education, training, and awareness programs and resources are needed to close this knowledge gap.

Recommendation #7: Increased cross-training of women's services and emergency planners and responders

Effective training in this area assumes timely and targeted publications, manuals, articles, books, guides, checklists, brochures, audiovisuals and other teaching resources. These are not currently available to educators developing courses or workshops for Emergency Social Services volunteers, first responders, regional emergency managers, local emergency coordinators and others. Gender against women in disasters is not integrated into existing courses offered through the Justice Institute.

To support effective teaching and training in this area, funding is sought for the following initiatives:

- *Teaching Resources on Violence Against Women in Disasters* (25-35 pp.) a collection of fact sheets, checklists, selected readings, statistics, first-hand narrative accounts, and other resources suitable for training sessions and course work;
- *Readings on Violence Against Women in Disaster* for instructors and students, a reading packet (75-100 pp.) including excerpts from published articles on women and disaster and gender violence in disasters;

- *Violence Against Women in Disasters: A Curriculum Integration Workshop* (one day) for JI instructors to identify areas for revision in existing curricula, and develop supplemental course modules on violence, where appropriate;
- *Stopping Violence Against Women in Disasters: How You Can Help*, a color brochure describing the new provincial project on *Violence and Disaster*, providing a brief introduction and including contact information for women's services and provincial emergency authorities;
- *Emergency Social Services Association Regional Workshop on Violence Against Women in Disasters*, a train-the-trainer half-day workshop in support of subsequent local volunteer training;
- *Violence Against Women in Disasters: Issues for Planners and Responders*, a new emergency management course developed for the Emergency Management Division of the Justice Institute of BC and for subsequent adoption elsewhere;
- *Disaster Response Training for Women's Services*, material support for designated women's services staff and volunteers to attend existing and new JI courses or otherwise receive emergency preparedness training.
- *Life Safety for Women in Emergencies Training for Emergency Managers*, material support for women's services staff to provide training and resources to selected emergency managers.

Timeline: Resource materials will be developed in *Phase One* (October, 1999-March, 2000). This includes the informational brochure, teaching resources, and selected readings, made available in print and electronically and in appropriate community languages. *Phase One* also includes support for Disaster Response Training for Women's Services and Life Safety for Women in Emergencies Training for Emergency Managers. In *Phase Two* (March-August, 2000), the JI Curriculum Integration workshop and the ESS train-the-trainer workshop will be conducted. *Phase Three* includes development of the proposed new JI course (December, 2000). Evaluation and revision of these materials will take place during the final year of the provincial project.

Personnel: Professional expertise in this area will be employed on a fee-for-service basis, subject to available funding. This individual will develop curricular resources in close consultation with specialists from a broad range of emergency planning authorities (e.g., municipal planners, ESS, PEP), women's services (e.g., transition homes, sexual assault centres, etc.), and disaster educators (e.g., Justice Institute trainers).

Budget: *To be developed*

APPENDIX 9

PUBLIC EDUCATION RESOURCES ON VIOLENCE AND DISASTER

System gap and needs: Emergency communications geared to the general public do not presently address the prevention of violence against women during and after major community disasters. Community education does not include violence as a risk factor to women or identify resources for women and households experiencing increased violence. Increasing the level of community knowledge about possible violence enhances preparedness and helps prevent violence.

Recommendation # 8: *Increased public education on violence prevention in disasters*

Public education materials to be developed in selected community languages and made available electronically for use on B.C. and national websites serving emergency managers and women's services, including:

- Reproduction and mass distribution of the informational brochure *Stopping Violence Against Women in Disasters: How You Can Help* developed earlier;
- Reproduction and distribution of curricular resources and public education materials to selected community and provincial agencies, for use in existing violence prevention strategies;
- *Press Kit on Violence Against Women in Disasters*, including sample PSAs, fact sheet, first-person narrative accounts, contact information for emergency managers and women's services, etc.
- *Three public service announcements* suitable for radio and television, available in selected community languages, and targeting 1) violence against women as a possible disaster effect; 2) alternate strategies for dealing with family conflict and male anger in the aftermath of disasters; and 3) intersecting vulnerabilities of women especially at risk.

- *Informational insert* to be included with mailed utility or telephone bills, stressing violence prevention during disasters and providing contact information for local hot lines and women's services;
- *Poster presentation* on women's concerns during disasters, including violence prevention, suitable for travelling for display in municipal halls, at conferences, and during Emergency Preparedness Week functions.

Timeline: These materials will be developed, subject to funding, in the first year of the provincial Project on Violence and Disaster, in the following order: information insert, PSAs, press kit, poster presentation, reproduction and mass distribution of curricular and public education materials.

Personnel: Professional expertise in this area will be employed on a fee-for-service basis, subject to available funding. This individual will be experienced in mass communications and design, and develop materials in close consultation with specialists from a broad range of emergency planning authorities (e.g., municipal planners, ESS, PEP), women's services (e.g., transition homes, sexual assault centres, etc.), and disaster educators (e.g., Justice Institute trainers).

Budget: *To be developed.*

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Endnotes

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² For the full report, see E. Enarson, "Violence against women in disasters: a study of domestic violence programs in the United States and Canada," forthcoming in *Violence Against Women* 1999. The author gratefully acknowledges partial funding from the BC Institute Against Family Violence and the Vancouver-based Feminist Research, Education, Development & Action Centre. See also Alice Fothergill, "An exploratory study of woman battering in the Grand Forks disaster: implications for community responses and policies," forthcoming in *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters* 1999, and Jennifer Wilson, Brenda Phillips, and David Neal, "Domestic violence after disaster," in *The Gendered Terrain of Disaster: Through the Eyes of Women*, Enarson and Morrow (eds.), 1998.

³ See Charles Fritz, *Disasters and Mental Health: Therapeutic Principles Drawn from Disaster Studies*, 1996 (1962).

⁴ See Piers Blaikie, et. al., *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters*, 1994. Gender patterns in disasters are summarized by Alice Fothergill in "Gender, risk, and disasters," 1998, and analyzed by Morrow and Enarson in "Hurricane Andrew Through Women's Eyes: Issues and Recommendations, 1996, and Enarson and Morrow in "A Gendered Perspective: The Voices of Women," 1997. For an international perspective, see Ray Wiest, Jane Mocellin, and D. Motsisi in *The Needs of Women in Disasters and Emergencies*, 1994, and chapters in the international reader *The Gendered Terrain of Disaster: Through Women's Eyes*, Enarson and Morrow (eds.), 1998. See also Enarson and Scanlon, "Gender patterns in a flood evacuation: a case study of couples in Canada's Red River Valley," forthcoming in *Applied Behavioral Science Review*, 1999.

⁵ See City of Santa Cruz, "Violence against women in the aftermath of the October 17, 1989 earthquake," 1990. Some international field reports and case studies also cite increased sexual assault and domestic violence in post-disaster refugee camps and other emergency shelters. For example, see Sharif Kafi, "Disasters and destitute women," 1992, and League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, "Working with women in emergency relief and rehabilitation programmes," 1991. Reports of domestic violence rose in the aftermath of an Australian cyclone (see Honeycombe, 1994) and crisis calls to the local shelter

doubled following the 1996 Pt. Arthur massacre in Tasmania, as reported by Michael White, Executive Director, Children's Youth & Family Services, Education & Community Services, Australian Capital Territory, in a presentation to the International Sociological Association, Research Committee on Disasters, Montreal, July 1998.

⁶ See Elaine Enarson "Through women's eyes: a gendered research agenda for disaster social science," 1998.

⁷ Among other sources, materials on these general patterns are available on loan from the B.C. Institute Against Family Violence, #551-409 Granville Street, Vancouver, V6C 1T2. (604) 669-7055. Email: bcifv@bcifv.org.

⁸ Sources for statistics cited in the following section were drawn from government and private studies, as cited in *Stopping Violence Against Women*, available from the Ministry of Women's Equality; the *Report of the British Columbia Task Force on Family Violence*, 1992; and Victim Service Worker Handbooks on Sexual Assault, Child Sexual Abuse, and Wife Assault, available from the Victim Assistance Program of the Ministry of Attorney General. For more information, contact the B.C. Association of Specialized Victim Assistance and Counseling Programs at (250) 995-2166. Email: porteous@islandnet.com.

⁹ Cited in *Sexual Assault Victim Service Worker Handbook*, Victim Assistance Program, Ministry of Attorney General.

¹⁰ On the experiences of senior women in disasters, see Childers, "Elderly women in disaster: the interaction of age and gender," 1998; and Ollenburger and Tobin, "Women, aging and post-disaster stress: risk factors," forthcoming 1999.

¹¹ For more information about program services or local contact information for women's services, contact the BC Association of Specialized Victim Assistance & Counseling Programs (contact information above) or the BC/Yukon Society of Transition houses at Suite 1112-409 Granville Street, Vancouver, V6C 1T2. (604) 669-6943.

¹² Among others, see the social impact assessment conducted by Morris-Oswald and Simonovic (1997) in southern Manitoba following the 1997 flood threat.

¹³ City of Santa Cruz, "Violence against women in the aftermath of the October 17, 1989 earthquake," 1990.

¹⁴ Cited in Wilson, Phillips, and Neal, 1998.

¹⁵ United Way of Santa Cruz County. 1990. *A Post-Earthquake Community Needs Assessment for Santa Cruz County*. Aptos, CA: United Way of Santa Cruz County.

¹⁶ See Wilson, Phillips, and Neal, "Domestic violence after disaster," 1998.

¹⁷ Personal interview conducted with women in South Dade County women's shelter by Elaine Enarson and Betty Hearn Morrow, 1993. See Morrow and Enarson, 1996.

¹⁸ Cited in Betty Hearn Morrow, "Stretching the bonds: the families of Andrew," 1997.

¹⁹ See Elaine Enarson and Betty Hearn Morrow, "Women will rebuild Miami," 1998.

²⁰ See Enarson, "Violence against women in disasters," forthcoming 1999.

²¹ This account is drawn from Victoria Constance and Colleen Coble, The Missouri Coalition Against Domestic Violence, *The Missouri model: the efficacy of funding domestic violence programs as long-term disaster recovery*, 1995. I am grateful to the authors for making it available.

²² See Enarson, "Violence against women in disasters," forthcoming 1999.

²³ Cited in Fothergill, forthcoming 1999. My thanks to the author for making an early version of this manuscript available

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ See Clemens, et. al. "Flood Impacts on Domestic Violence," 1999. I am grateful to Dona Reese for making it available.

²⁶ Fothergill, forthcoming 1999.

²⁷ Enarson, "Violence against women in disasters," forthcoming 1999. An earlier version was distributed as "Responding to Domestic Violence and Disaster: Guidelines for Women's Services and Disaster Practitioners." Available from the author or on-line, with thanks to the Emergency Information Infrastructure Partnership: www.emforum.org (virtual library archive/live chat/June 3, 1998).

²⁸ Andre Picard, "Domestic violence rises in blackout." *Globe and Mail* June 14, 1998, p. A6. A similar account was aired on CBC national radio.

²⁹ Morris-Oswald and Simonovic, op.cit.

³⁰ All direct quotations in this section are taken from Enarson, “Violence against women in disasters,” 1999.

³¹ On-line news release. Ministry of National Defence; “National conference aims at reducing impact of disasters;” December 1998; <<http://www.newswire.ca/government/federal/english/releases/December1998/02/c3577.html>.

³² Enarson, “Violence against women in disasters,” 1999.

³³ As described in on-line materials from the Women’s Health Bureau; no date; <<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/datapcb/datawhb/mandat-e.html>.