

**A lot has been said and done over the last two months regarding the December 1, 2012 windstorms. Public safety and public utilities have been put to the test. Elected and appointed officials have asked some tough questions and are demanding answers. We no longer have the luxury of saying to the public that we didn't know what to expect; therefore, we were not able to prepare for an unknown. It has been said that the winds did not act like your typical Santa Anas and areas that were struck by fierce winds were completely caught off guard. We may say that we have never seen anything like this in our region.**

**I will tell you that we have seen this before and we know the destructive power of these winds. I was a patrol watch commander in early January 1997 working the night shift when the last windstorm of this type came through and affected exactly the same areas then as they did now. There were times that I would step out of my patrol car to move a downed branch and was knocked flat on my butt by the strength of the wind.**

**For eight hours we watched blue flash after blue flash all over the city as electrical transformers blew and wires arced. Even then we lost power to 90% of the city, trees and power poles were down everywhere, into homes, on top of cars, hot power lines dancing on school blacktops and playgrounds. Signals were out all over the city, with the only saving grace being that it was late at night and motorists were not on the road.**

**So we ask ourselves what is different this time. Do we have more and bigger trees? Certainly. Trees will grow a lot over 15 years. Certainly, we have more trees. South Pasadena is known as "Tree City, USA". We have very strict rules for trimming, or God forbid, removing a tree. Trees planted in front yards and parkways that are watered regularly develop shallow root systems that fail to anchor trees to the ground.**

**Communities all over the San Gabriel Valley cherish their trees, and South Pasadena is no different. But we also consider ourselves much better prepared today compared to 15 years ago. We have better trained personnel, better equipment, and emergency management systems designed to address these very disasters.**

**What else do we have? In 15 years, we have more computers connected to the internet through phone and fiber optic lines. We have cable TV and other entertainment systems powered by more and heavier power lines. We have**

**over-loaded power poles so that when the trees come down, they take the lines and the poles with it. As each pole falls, so do others in a domino effect.**

**We know the winds happen. We know the demands on our electric power grid. We know that meteorologists can and did predict this wind event. People were without power for days or a week, millions of dollars in damage was done to property and still millions more lost to the economic effect on business. Yet when the hard questions are asked, we hear, “We didn’t know; it caught us by surprise; we didn’t expect it to be this bad”.**

**Prior to September 11, 2001, we could get away with saying, “We don’t know what we don’t know” That’s not just a cliché. We were caught off guard because we never envisioned a maniac would steer a commercial jetliner into a skyscraper. More than a few people were surprised that the FAA would even allow box cutters, four-inch bladed knives, and tear gas or pepper spray to be carried on board a commercial flight.**

**Since 9-1-1 emergency managers now understand that we do need to know what we don’t know. Not that we have a crystal ball; we need to anticipate what can happen, how bad can it be, and how we will best respond to it. We have terror attacks, natural disasters, severe weather events, and the devastating earthquake that is 150 years overdue.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, we know everything we need to know. We may be challenged by events out of our control. We cannot control the weather, but we can control how we respond to it. Edison and many of our public entities did not do this as well as we could have. Public utilities are a critical component of our ability to prepare, respond, and recover from disasters.**

**I am not going to bash Edison. I know what it’s like to be criticized by the public for not meeting the needs of the community that we are responsible to protect. Where we will fail, and fail miserably, is if we do not learn from this, fix it, and be better prepared when it happens again. Excuses will not work. Cover up, delay, lack of transparency, failure to take responsibility will continue to haunt us if we don’t fix the problem.**

**Moving on to the failures of government, we have a lot of work to do as well. Speaking for South Pasadena alone, we have expended \$500,000 in overtime, clean-up costs, equipment, and private contractors who can charge a premium under the circumstances. I know for certain other cities and unincorporated**

areas have spent many times that much in their recovery costs. When disaster hits, we know we need to go into a response and recovery mode that is going to be very expensive and tax our personnel and financial resources beyond the breaking point. We do so with the understanding that state and federal assistance will be available to soften the blow to hard-hit budgets.

Local governments have spent hundreds of millions of dollars in an effort to be better prepared for disasters. We practice a federal National Incident Management system (NIMS) and a Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) for the very reason that it is mandated to be eligible for disaster relief.

Now we are told there is no money. We are told the state is \$160 million in the hole from past disasters. While attending a panel hearing facilitated by Congressman Adam Schiff we were told that the amount of damage fell about 10 million short of a federal declaration of emergency. The formula is based on state-wide population, and as a high populace state, the threshold is much too high to meet, despite the localized destruction.

Representatives for CalEMA admitted there is another formula used for localized damage concentrated to a limited area. Damage to the San Gabriel Valley meets that threshold but state officials did not request a declaration using the localized formula because the state lacks the matching funds necessary to apply the more liberal formula.

Meanwhile, city and county governments, financially obligated to quickly restore services, are left holding the bag. The millions of dollars spent by local governments to meet federal demands for emergency preparedness, demands that make local governments eligible for state and federal assistance, essentially are ignored. The state failed to prepare for emergencies while local governments have worked hard to do so. That's not how our emergency management system is supposed to work.

During the most severe periods of the windstorm, police, fire, public works and DWP crews were faced with conditions that did not allow for a quicker recovery. A lot of the criticism came from residents that couldn't traverse roads and sidewalks, trees on houses and cars, and truly hazardous conditions as they left for work and school, and to plan for the days ahead without power and heat.

**Edison crews told city and county public works crews that they could not restore power until the trees were removed. Tree crews could not remove trees because of energized power lines that could not be de-energized until the trees were moved. Disputes as to who was responsible to remove downed trees slowed recovery even more. When residents wanted answers all they got were empty replies. Had the ground been saturated with rain water, more trees would unquestionably have toppled, making conditions exponentially worse.**

**South Pasadena was faced with no firefighting capabilities in our southwest hills, an area that could face the loss of dozens of homes and/or lives in the event of a brushfire. The water tower that provides water pressure to this area was depleted when power failed to the pumps in San Gabriel that send water to the tanks. Power was not restored for more than 12 hours. A hot power line down in a residential area, surrounded by brush and hurricane force winds, is a recipe for death and destruction. Our own calls to Edison met with the same response: "We will get to it when we can".**

**We were forced to direct traffic around six malfunctioning light rail crossings for more than four hours Friday morning during rush hour while the Gold Line remained in operation. The power that energized the rails remained while power to the gates failed. At one point for two hours all of my field officers were tied up on traffic control to avoid a rail accident.**

**Trees could not be moved from critical roadways to allow the passage of emergency vehicles while the lines remained hot. There is no question that during windstorms, most power outages result from trees coming down on power lines and transformers.**

**Edison needs to have a sufficient number of trained tree crews available to respond along with power restoration crews so that the work of either is not slowed by one or the other being absent from the response and recovery function. These are the lessons that were not learned from 1997 or the many other public utility failures.**

**In order to properly prepare for disasters there are three components that must be met: preparedness; response; and recovery. Failure to meet these demands will mean that not only will millions of dollars be lost, but more importantly, lives will be lost. We were fortunate that injuries were minimal and no lives were lost. We cannot rely on good fortune and hope is not a strategy.**

**I am reminded of a photograph I have in my office of a man who is walking in chest deep water after the floods caused by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. This man is towing a Styrofoam plank that his girlfriend is sitting on trying to stay dry. Also on the plank are a few of the food items he was able to salvage from the refrigerator. The caption on the photo says it all: "The only thing harder than preparing for an emergency is explaining why you didn't".**

**Thank you for the opportunity to address this panel.**