



EPAD IN ACTION EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

“First responders need all the information they can get before they arrive at the scene. It would have been nice to have blueprints, personnel lists and data estimating blast effects and impacts to the buildings before rescue efforts began.”

Jon Hansen
Former Assistant Chief of the
Oklahoma City Fire
Department

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Emergency Response **Problem:**

Emergency response to the Oklahoma City bombing required complex coordination by a variety of organizations from the state and the country. They simultaneously participated in activities, requiring substantial management of critical information. Although many aspects of the response operations were successful and efficient, many lessons were learned regarding the critical need to improve interagency information flows.

From the beginning, responders lacked important information needed to understand damage from the blast and where victims might be found. In addition, voice communications proved to be unreliable because of overload and chaos, particularly in the first few hours. Many supporting agencies received duplicate requests for resources while others couldn't be reached or weren't contacted at all. The 9-1-1 center did not have a direct line to the Emergency Medical Services Agency (EMSA), so dispatchers couldn't transfer calls. This hindered EMSA's ability to understand the situation as it unfolded and its ability to manage available medical assets. In addition, hospitals were not incorporated into the command structure and weren't kept informed about injuries because the command center did not have accurate contact information for appropriate hospital departments. According to the Police Department Final Report, this situation highlighted the need for electronic data links between emergency entities and the need to extend data access into the field through mobile data terminals. This would have allowed all command centers to communicate with relevant entities.¹

¹ Manzi, Catherine; Powers, Michael J.; Zetterlund, Kristina. "Information Flows in the Alfred P. Murrah Building Bombing: A Case Study."
www.mipt.org/pdf/murrahcasestudy.pdf.

E-Safety and EPAD **Solution:**

An E-Safety Network would have solved many of the communications problems experienced during the Oklahoma City incident. As a data-sharing framework, it embraces the use of national data standards and encourages information exchange across jurisdictions and disciplines. By using the Emergency Provider Access Directory (EPAD), agency data users would have easily routed messages to the right agency destinations, without needing to know their electronic addresses. Responders would have had the information they needed when they arrived at the scene, the 9-1-1 center could have communicated with EMSA, and the hospitals would have been kept informed about injuries, casualties and requests for resources.

Registration in EPAD is an important first step for achieving efficient information exchange. Emergency agencies and authorized private entities register how and where they want data sent to them. They indicate their incident information preferences with corresponding geographic areas. This simple act of EPAD registration enables the geographic targeting and cooperative exchange of vital information about a mass emergency or a single event to all appropriate authorities quickly and securely.

COMCARE is a national non-profit alliance dedicated to **advancing emergency response**. We promote the adoption of modern, interoperable emergency systems and the development of new procedures, training, and tools to maximize their value for emergency responders. We encourage cooperation across professional, jurisdictional and geographic lines, seeking to improve effectiveness through solutions that integrate emergency response professions, government, the public and private industry. COMCARE's 100+ organizational members represent the wide diversity of the emergency response community.