

History of Disaster Management in the Philippines



Commonwealth to Post-Commonwealth Era

During the Commonwealth days, two (2) executive orders were issued by the late President Manuel L. Quezon, namely, Executive Order Nos. 335 and 337. Executive Order No. 335 created the Civilian Emergency Administration (CEA), which was tasked primarily through the National Emergency Commission (NEC) to formulate and execute policies and plans for the protection and welfare of the civilian population under extraordinary and emergency conditions.

The NEC, which was established to administer the CEA, was composed of the following official members:

1. Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) Manager
2. Director of Publicity and Propaganda
3. Food Administrator
4. Industrial Production Administration
5. National Welfare Warden
6. Director of Communications
7. Fuel and Transportation Administration
8. Other officials as may be appointed from time to time

Local emergency committees from the provincial, city and municipal levels were likewise organized with the following structure:

Chairman - Provincial Governor/City/Municipal Mayor

Members - Provincial/City/Municipal Treasurer

- Ranking Teacher or Principal
- Chief of Police
- Sanitary Officer
- Provincial/City/Municipal Agriculturist
- Representative of the Municipal Council Local Units - Volunteer Guard
- Air-raid Protection
- Protection of Utilities and Industries
- Food Administration
- Evacuation
- Public Welfare and Morale
- Transportation and Fuel Administration
- Medical and Sanitary
- Publicity and Propaganda
- Other services as may be authorized from time to time

The organization and training of volunteer guards and air-raid protection units were given much emphasis by the government during that time with the issuance of Executive Order No. 337 which empowered the volunteer guards to assist the maintenance of peace and order in the locality, to safeguard public utilities and to provide assistance and aid to the people during natural or man-

made disasters.



Japanese Occupation

During the Japanese occupation, the puppet government under President Jose P. Laurel issued Executive Order No. 36 which created the Civilian Protection Service (CPS) which was empowered to formulate and execute plans and policies for the protection of civilian population during air raids and other national emergencies. The Civilian Protection Service functioned through a Civilian Protection Administration (CPA) which was composed of three members, namely, the Civilian Protection Administrator, the Chief of the Air Warden and the Chief of the Medical and First Aid Service.

Executive Order No. 36 also provided for the establishment of the Provincial, City and Municipal Protection Committee with the Provincial Governor, City and Municipal Mayor as Chairman, respectively. Members of the local protection committees included the highest local official of the Treasurer's Office, Justice, Engineer's Office, Schools, Health and the Police.

It should be noted that the above executive orders had mandated the formulation of plans for the protection of the people during a national emergency but literatures on this regard were absent which revealed the sad state of the country's disaster preparedness program even during those times. This could have also been one of the reasons why we were caught unprepared on December 8, 1941.



1954 - 1968

Our experience during World War II, the country's vulnerability to all types of disasters particularly typhoons and floods, and the nuclear arms race of the three superpowers in the 1950's, have prompted the government to promulgate a law - Republic Act 1190, otherwise known as the Civil Defense Act of 1954.

Under this law, a National Civil Defense Administration (NCDA) was established which was tasked primarily to provide protection and welfare to the civilian population during war or other national emergencies of equally grave character. To support the NCDA in carrying out its mission, RA 1190 also provided for the establishment of civil defense councils at the national and local levels, namely: the National Civil Defense Council (NCDC) and the provincial, city and municipal civil defense councils, respectively:

The NCDC was composed of the following:

- NCDC Administrator-Chairman
- Chairman, Committee on National Defense and Security of both Houses of Congress-Member
- Chief, Philippine Constabulary-Member
- Commissioner of Social Welfare-Member
- Manager, Philippine National Red Cross-Member
- Manager, Philippine National Development Company-Member
- Manager, Price Stabilization Council-Member

On the other hand, the organization of the local civil defense council was not specifically provided for in

the locality but designated the Provincial Governor, City and Municipal Mayor as the Provincial, City and Municipal Civil Defense Director, respectively.

The municipalities and cities which were directly under the supervision of the Provincial Civil Defense Director relative to civil defense services, were the main basic operating units for the purpose.

The operating services of the national and civil defense organizations were as follows:

Warden Service;
 Police Service;
 Fire Service;
 Health Service;
 Rescue and Engineering Service;
 Emergency Welfare Service;
 Transportation Service;
 Communication Service;
 Evacuation Service;
 Air-raid Warning Service; and
 Auxiliary Service.

The National Civil Defense Administration, as a planning body under the Office of the President, has been constrained to carry out its functions effectively due to budgetary constraints and the apathy and indifference by the public and the government itself to NCDA's disaster preparedness and prevention programs. But the government's lack of interest to said programs was somewhat reversed when the Ruby Tower building in Manila collapsed in 1968 to a powerful earthquake, and created a National Committee on Disaster Operation through Administrative Order No. 151 issued on December 2, 1968. The composition of the Committee was as follows:

Executive Secretary-Chairman
 Secretary of Social Welfare-Vice-Chairman
 Secretary of National Defense-Member
 Secretary of Health-Member
 Secretary of Public Works and Natural Resources-Member
 Secretary of Commerce and Industry-Member
 Secretary of Education-Member
 Secretary of Community Development-Member
 Commissioner of the Budget-Member
 Secretary-General, Philippine National Red Cross-Member
 Executive Officer - A Designated National Coordinator-Member

Under this Order, the national committee was created to ensure effective coordination of operations of the different agencies during disasters caused by typhoons, floods, fires, earthquakes, and other calamities.

To carry out its functions effectively, the Committee Chairman issued a Standard Operating Procedure which prescribed for the organizational set-up for disasters from the national down to the municipal level, their duties and responsibilities and the preparation by concerned agencies of their respective SOPs for the

same purpose as the national SOP.



Formulation of the Disaster and Calamities Plan (1970)

On October 19, 1970, as an aftermath of Typhoon "Sening" which ravaged the Bicol Region, the flooding of Metro Manila for almost three months, a Disaster and Calamities Plan prepared by an Inter-Departmental Planning Group on Disasters and Calamities, was approved by the President. The Plan has provided, among others, the creation of a National Disaster Control Center which was composed of the following:

Secretary of National Defense-Chairman
 Executive Secretary-Overall Coordinator
 Secretary of Health-Members
 Secretary of Public Works and Communications-Members
 Secretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources-Members
 Secretary of Commerce and Industry-Members
 Secretary of Education-Members
 Secretary of Community Devt.-Members



Birth of the Office of Civil Defense (1973)

NCDA was abolished and transferred its functions and personnel and those of the NDCC to a newly-created agency - the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), which was entrusted the mission of ensuring the protection and welfare of the people during disasters or emergencies. Under Letter of Implementation No. 19, Series of 1972, the missions and functions of OCD are enumerated.



Presidential Decree 1566 and the Formal Establishment of the NDCC, RDCC and Local DCCs (1978)

On June 11, 1978, PD 1566 was issued to strengthen the Philippine disaster control capability and to establish a community disaster preparedness program nationwide.

Among the salient provisions of the Decree are the following:

- State policy on self-reliance among local officials and their constituents in responding to disasters or emergencies;
- Organization of disaster coordinating councils from the national down to the municipal level;
- Statement of duties and responsibilities of the National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC), RDCCs and LDCCs;
- Preparation of the National Calamities and Disaster Preparedness Plan (NCDPP) by OCD and implementing plans by NDCC member-agencies;
- Conduct of periodic drills and exercises; and
- Authority for government units to program their funds for disaster preparedness activities in addition to the 2% calamity fund as provided for in PD 474 (amended by RA 8185).

The National Disaster Control Center, which was created on October 19, 1970, is the forerunner of the

National Disaster Coordinating Council created under PD 1566. It serves as the highest policy-making body for disasters in the country and includes almost all Department Secretaries as members. The original composition of the NDCC was as follows:

- Minister of National Defense-Chairman
- Minister of Public Works and Highways-Members
- Minister of Transportation and Communications-Members
- Minister of Social Services and Development-Members
- Minister of Agriculture-Members
- Minister of Education, Culture and Sports-Members
- Minister of Finance-Members
- Minister of Labor and Employment-Members
- Minister of Trade and Industry-Members
- Minister of Local Government and Devt.-Members
- Minister of Health-Members
- Minister of Natural Resources-Members
- Minister of Public Information-Members
- Minister of Budget-Members
- Minister of Justice-Members
- Presidential Executive Assistant-Members
- Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of the Phils.-Members
- Secretary-General, Philippine National Red Cross-Members
- Administrator, Office of Civil Defense-Member and Executive Officer

The disaster coordinating councils (DCCs) from the regional, provincial, city and municipal level, on the other hand, are composed of representatives of national government agencies operating at these levels and local officials concerned.