

Disaster Management: Roles and Responsibilities of Royal Malaysia Police

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ABSTRACT: *The Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) is one of the main rescue agencies in managing a disaster, especially in coordinating actions with other agencies to carry out search and rescue operations and maintain security and public order. In managing a disaster, it is not sufficient to rely on an agency or an organization alone, but it still need the involvement of many other agencies who have their own skill and capability. A clear understanding of the role and responsibilities of RMP in disaster management can ensure that all the actions taken by other agency with more orderly and coordinated, thus avoiding any waste of energy and time, confusion, conflict and contradiction or conflict of interest while working in a disaster.*

KEY WORD: *Disaster, Disaster Management, Role and Responsibilities of RMP*

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I. INTRODUCTION

A disaster can be defined as any occurrence that cause damage, ecological disruption, loss of human life, deterioration, of health and health services on a scale sufficient to warrant an extraordinary response from outside the effected community or area (W.H.O.). However, in view that the definition of disaster under National Security Council (MKN) No.20 covers any incident which causes damage to a land property and the loss of many lives and such incident could occur in public areas and building such as housing estate or airport.

One of the disasters that often occur in our country including at the state of Perak is the flood. In 1926, a major flood occurred in Perak. J.M Gullick said that "December 1926 was 'the mother and father' of all floods"(J. M.Gullick, 1994,65).The floods have affected most areas in the state of Perak, especially in the settlement areas around Sungai Perak, Sungai Kinta and Sungai Batang Padang which involve the districts of Kuala Kangsar, Kinta, Batang Padang and Hilir Perak. This major flood occurred due to the rising water of the Perak River and tributaries such as the Kinta River and the Batang Padang River(R.O. Winstedt, 1927:295). This historic event is due to the low demographics of the Perak state and the very high river water level above the normal height due to the incessant heavy rains.Kuala Kangsar suffered the worst effects of the damage caused by these disasters where entire towns were flooded, including Istana Seri Sayong which located on the banks of Sungai Perak and The Ponton Bridge in Kuala Kangsar has collapsed. Approximately more than 800 of Malays houses who live near the river, disappeared and swept away during the flood incident.

The floods are also described as the third worst natural disaster in the world. Among the major floods that claimed hundreds of lives or lost and caused large-scale evacuations were major floods in 2011 in Thailand and in Beijing, China on July 17, 2011 (Fong, 2013). Floods are catastrophic events that can result in high risk to life, property and infrastructure and will adversely affect human psychology, especially flood victims.Floods are the most serious environmental disasters at the global, regional, national and local levels(Chan Ngai Weng, 1997, 197). As for that, disaster management should not be taken lightly, it leaves a huge impact on the community because it causes the destruction of property not only houses but also agriculture, infrastructure facilities such as roads, railways, electricity and telephone supply are also affected. This will have a lasting negative impact on the mental and physical of the involved victim.

II. DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Disaster management is the body of policy and administrative decisions and operational activities that pertain to various stage of a disaster at all levels encompasses all aspects of planning for responding to disasters, including both pre and post disaster activities. In order to manage a disaster, four important elements in the cycle of disaster management need to be understood to ensure that the whole of disaster management stage including before, during and after a disaster situation can be covered and implemented effectively. The important elements in a disaster management cycle are:

- i. Preparedness - Disaster preparedness is a proactive measure to avoid panic situations and reduce the effects of a disaster. People should be trained and always ready to face disasters and emergencies situation including the readiness of all agencies which is related to disaster management to react.
- ii. Response - Immediate response from related agencies in any disaster event through a mechanism set by the government in order to save lives, reduce health impacts and ensure public safety.
- iii. Recovery - After a disaster event occurs, rehabilitation measures and redevelopment of public infrastructure need to be coordinated.
- iv. Mitigation - to prevent a recurrence of a disaster, disaster mitigation must be carried out at all times by the relevant agencies to ensure the sustainability of the ecosystem and the environment. Measures taken in advance to reduce impact of disaster on society, individuals and environment.

Chart 1: Disaster management cycle



Source: Civil Defence Department

III. DISASTER MANAGEMENT LEVEL

Disaster Management is handled according to certain levels. For disaster situation which can be handled and managed by agencies from the district level management either without external assistance or with minimal external assistance is defined as Level I Disaster Management. Level II Disaster Management is the disaster situation occurs in more than one district in the same state and requires resource assistance at the state level management to handle and manage it. While the management of disasters which occurring in more than one state or complex in nature that requires resource assistance from the central level management is Stage III Disaster Management. When a disaster occurs, the Disaster Management and Relief Committee at the district, state or central level will be established according to the disaster management administration level. The Disaster Management and Relief Committee has to coordinate, monitor and implement search and rescue operations and other emergency assistance to disaster victims and make assessments to determine level of disaster management. The assessment of the disaster management level should be based on the following elements:

- i. Compilation and magnitude;
- ii. Destruction and damage;
- iii. Capability of financial resources, manpower and equipment;
- iv. Expertise
- v. Relief; and
- vi. Response time period

IV. MANAGING A DISASTER

In managing a disaster incident, the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) when receiving an information about a disaster incident is responsible to be on the scene immediately and make an assessment of the disaster to determine the level of disaster that occurred and manage it with the assistance of the Rescue Agency and other relevant agencies. Action to save lives and reduce damage and loss as well as controlling the disaster situation should be taken and coordinated immediately. The District Police Officer Chief, RMP has to open Control Post

On Scene and act as the Disaster Operation Commander. The Operation Commander further needs to coordinate all of the actions which should be taken by the Rescue Agency and other agency involved in search and rescue operation and emergency relief to the disaster victims. Agencies such as the Malaysian Fire and Rescue Department, Civil Defence Department and Social Welfare Department shall carry out their duties according to their respective division of duties and expertise as directed by the Operations Commander.

Chart 2: On Scene Command Post structure



Source: National Security Council Directive No. 20

V. THE ROLE OF RMP IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

The Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) plays an important role in disaster management. It covers the management of various aspects such as human resources, equipment and expertise and is implemented according to the circumstances, location and occurrence of a disaster. In managing a disaster incident, the roles and responsibilities of RMP are:

i. General

In generally, duties of the Royal Malaysia Police personnel are giving assistance in the protection of life and property and protecting public property from loss or injury (Section 20 (3) Police Act 1967).

ii. Management at the scene of disaster

The District Police Officer Chief, RMP is the Disaster Operations Commander who is responsible to make assessments of the disasters that occur. This includes to decide the safe zone by determining the Red Zone (an area surrounding the actual spot of incident), Yellow Zone (an area surrounding the Red Zone) and Green Zone (an area surrounding the Yellow Zone). This zone has to be purposely controlled in response to the security and movement by Royal Malaysia Police where moving in and out are allowed only to the authorized persons only. District Police Chief which is also entrusted to appoint members of Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) and members of other agencies through the agents to run the operation at this control post.

iii. Task coordination

As a Disaster Operations Commander, RMP also responsible to decide on which and how many units are needed to take part in search and rescue operation at the concerning zones. An organized and coordinated members in carrying out search and rescue operations can ensure necessary assistance can be delivered to the disaster victim accordingly.

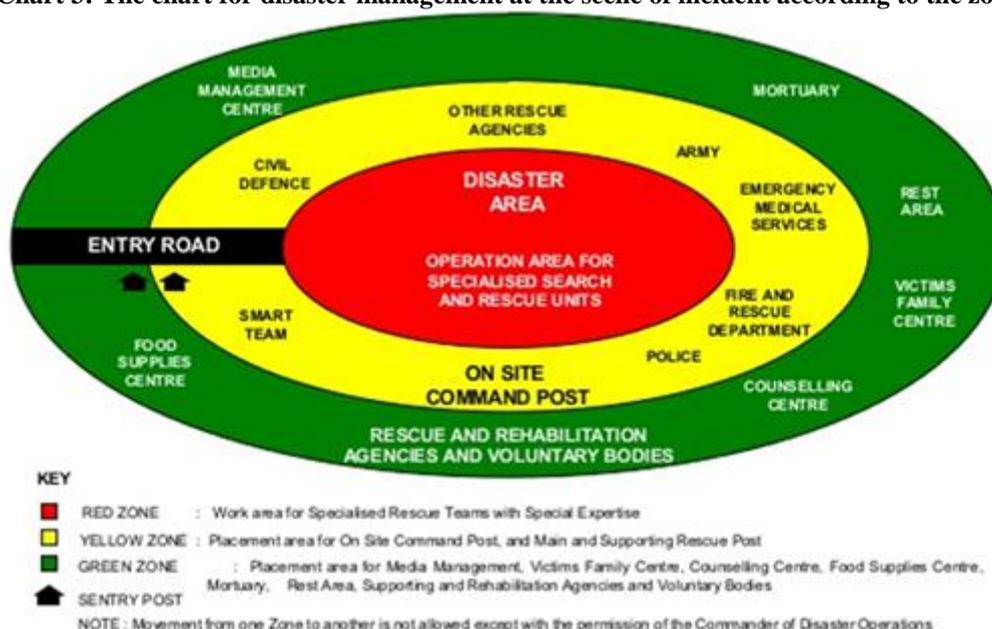
iv. Communication system

Royal Malaysia Police also entrusted to prepare a complete communication equipment to be used during the operation and also have to manage the communication equipment and to record all information on the commitment of agencies and the progress of search and rescue operation. To avoid communication and information delivery problems, the adjustment of the communication system will be standardized. The effectiveness of the communication system is very important in ensuring that disaster management can be implemented successfully.

v. Media management

In order to avoid mistakes in the delivery of information that can cause negative perspectives and concerns of the community that can further complicate the situation, Operation Commander is responsible for issuing media statements for a disaster that occurs based on current facts.

Chart 3: The chart for disaster management at the scene of incident according to the zones



Source: National Security Council Directive No. 20

VI. CONCLUSION

Royal Malaysia Police is the leading agency in handling disaster operations, especially in coordinating and controlling disaster rescue activities on the scene. The effectiveness of planning and action of RMP in dealing with disaster situations and public order is the core of the success to ensure all committees in disaster management operation can be able to carry out their duty smoothly and effectively. Therefore, the response plan of disasters needs to be refined and understood by every layer of RMP staff and should always be prepared up and make use of Standing Order Operation (SOP) in their action during the Disaster Operation. Every team involved in the management of a disaster must be able to carry out their duty and responsibility collectively and adhered to the standing order (National Security Council Directive No.20).

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