

# Town of Buena Vista

## Flood Response and Mitigation Plan



Prepared in Response to the  
Spring/Summer  
1995 Flood Threat



by The Colorado Water  
Conservation Board

and The Town of Buena Vista

Spring 1995



## PREFACE

In this day of  
shrinking  
government  
resources, what  
does a  
community do



That's the question the Town of Buena Vista asked itself as the snowpack continued to rise in March and April 1995. The community's response and the cooperative efforts of its citizenry clearly illustrate what any community can do to reasonably prepare for the potential of a catastrophic flooding event.

As the 1995 snowmelt flood season approached, most Colorado communities were keeping a wary eye on the Natural Resource Conservation Service's monthly snowpack readings. (None more so than the Town of Buena Vista!)

Reports from long-time local weather observers were revealing that at the end of March, one of the largest snowpacks on record was accumulating in the Cottonwood Creek watershed. These local reports were confirmed by the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB). The CWCB is a state agency which works with local governments to prepare for flood events and undertake the steps necessary to mitigate the effects of flooding.

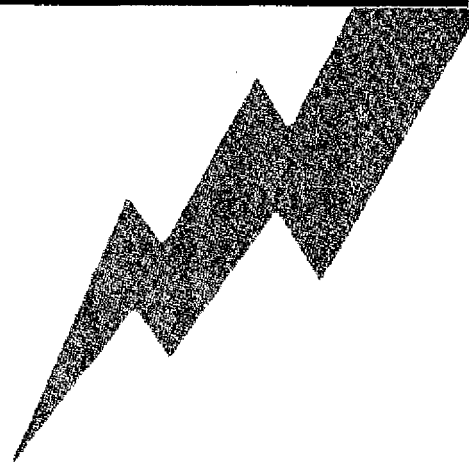
At the request of the town, a CWCB representative met with local officials in Buena Vista in April 1995 to begin preparation for potential flooding. A CWCB document titled "Local Pre-Disaster Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan" was presented to town officials for their consideration and use. The town embraced many of the plan's recommendations and implemented them as part of the community's response to the impending flood threat. However, in most cases, Buena Vista exceeded the plan's scope and developed one of the most comprehensive pre-disaster flood mitigation efforts ever undertaken by a small community in Colorado.

This report summarizes the Town of Buena Vista's flood mitigation efforts during the spring of 1995 and supplements it where appropriate. It is intended as a guide and resource document for other local governments who might face a similar threat in the future. It is not a substitute for a comprehensive Local Emergency Operation Plan (LEOP).



## INTRODUCTION

The Colorado Flood Event of 1995 began as a drought. Until the middle of April it appeared that the state would experience less than average snowfall and that preparations would be needed for drier than average conditions. About two weeks later things had changed dramatically. By the middle of May, the State's Flood Task Force had held its second weekly meeting with Denver television and newspaper media in attendance. By the end of May, heavy rains had caused flooding and storm drainage problems in several communities in the Front Range and Eastern Colorado. Shortly after the middle of June, the first significant snowmelt peak flows were experienced in many mountain and foothills communities, as well as plains communities along the South Platte and Arkansas Rivers and some of their tributaries. In the middle of July, the second significant snowmelt peak flows were experienced on a few mountain and foothills streams.



## FLOOD THREAT RECOGNITION

As the snowpack grew in the Cottonwood Creek basin, representatives from the Colorado Water Conservation Board contacted Buena Vista Town officials to discuss flood threat potential. It was determined that a significant flood threat did exist based on NRCS snowpack data as well as local observations. Consequently, Buena Vista began receiving the CWCB bulletin "Weekly Flood Outlook".

The bulletin provided a weekly assessment of flood threat potential. Use of the report allowed town officials to determine at what level of snowpack and streamflow response activities would be undertaken. Daily field observations by town personnel augmented the bulletin information to provide real time information for the decision-making process.



## COMMUNITY RESPONSE AND ACTIONS

Following the April flood threat recognition meeting between town officials and the CWCB representative, actions were undertaken quickly to begin implementing flood threat response and pre-disaster mitigation measures. Those actions included:

- Finalization of the "Buena Vista Flood Plan and Response Plan".
- Development of contact lists for:

Homeowners and businesses located in the floodplain

Chaffee County Emergency Response

Chaffee County Commissioners

Chaffee County Sheriff's Department



State Agencies including Colorado State Patrol, Colorado Office of Emergency Management, Colorado Water Conservation Board, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado Department of Corrections and Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area

Federal Agencies including the Bureau of Reclamation and FEMA Town Agencies including town hall, public works, fire and police departments

Local utility companies including electric, gas, phone, cable television and railroad

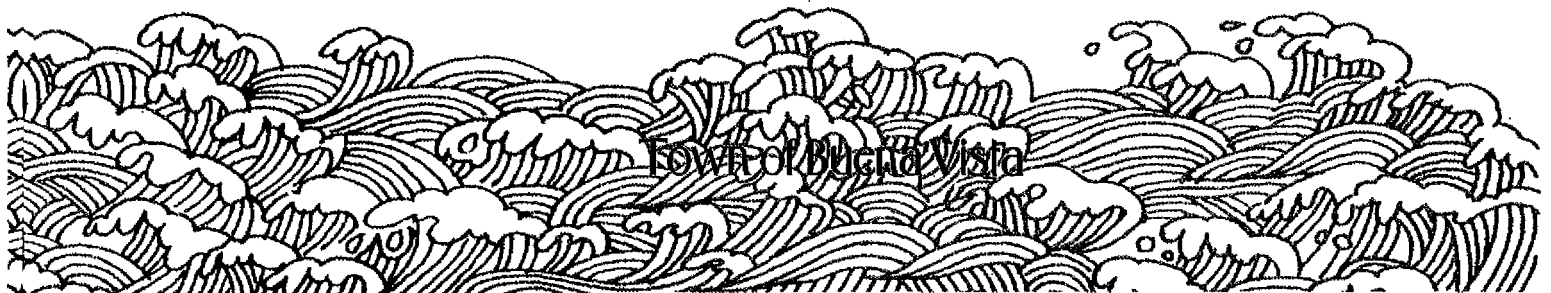
Volunteer Resources including heavy equipment, animal evacuation, volunteer coordinators

Newspapers, television and radio

Home health care patients

Police and fire departments in adjoining communities

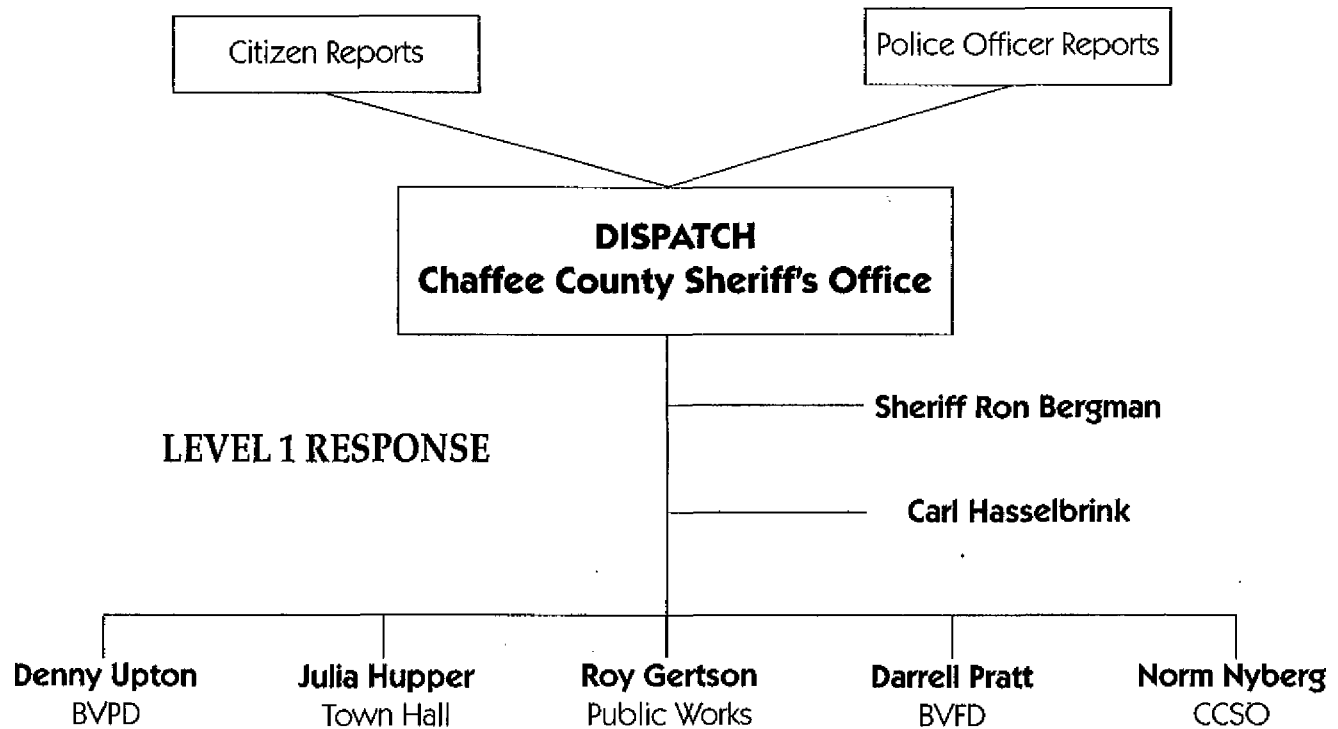
Timely news releases on flood threat potential and how to assemble an emergency evacuation kit.



# FLOOD RESPONSE AND MITIGATION PLAN

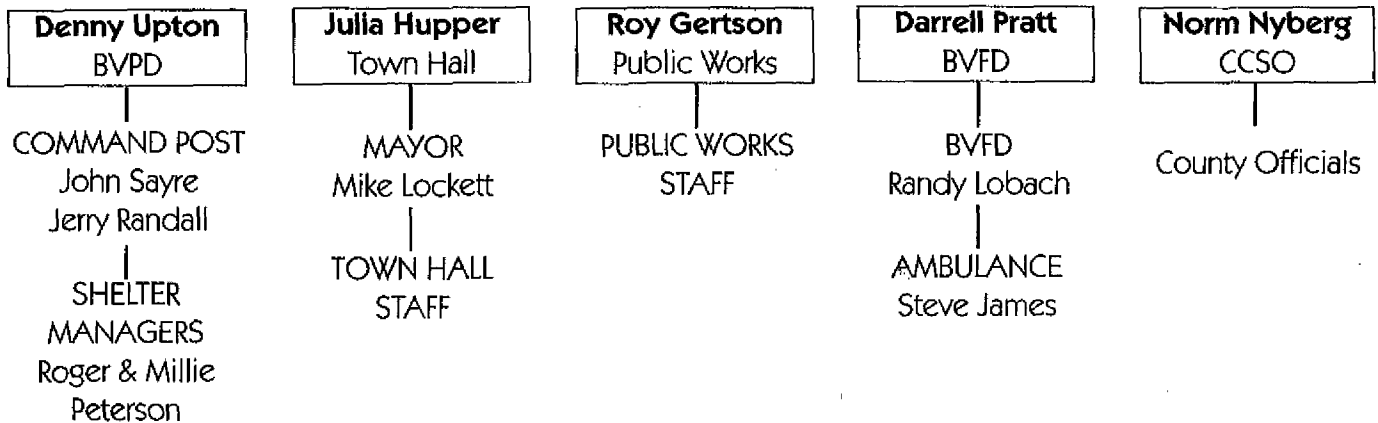
- **Level 1 Response:** In the event of rising waters in the Buena Vista area, Chaffee County Dispatch will notify (1) town manager, (2) police chief, (3) fire chief, and (4) public works director, and (5) Chaffee County Sheriffs Office. They will report to town hall. They will evaluate the situation and then determine the next level of response.

Each individual will be responsible for their particular notification levels. This will basically constitute the command level for any flood response for the Buena Vista area (including pre-determined areas outside the city limits). Buena Vista Police Chief Denny Upton will assume the position of incident commander and will coordinate activities and information for Level 1 Response.



- *Level 2 Response:* This response level will constitute activation of the mobile command post, (2) contacting shelter managers, and (3) making proper notification of Level 2 Response personnel. Level 2 Response will be activated in the event that the incident commander determines the possibility that flooding exists.

## LEVEL 2 RESPONSE



- *Level 3 Response:* The command post and communications center should be in operation and field operation personnel should be in place.

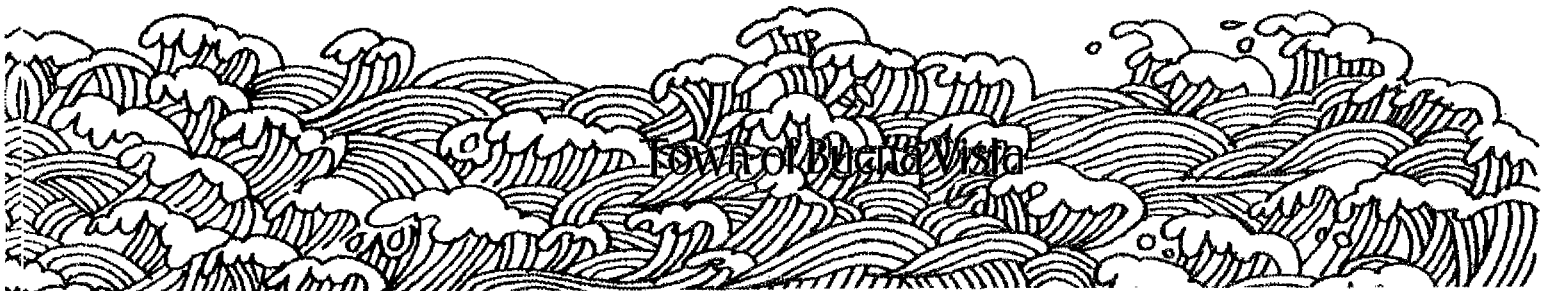
The emergency shelter (community center) should be open and ready to accept any evacuees from potential flooded areas.

The command post will be established at the county shop on Gregg Street, near the airport. This will be the south staging area for the fire department and ambulance.

Field operations will be directed by Sgt. Jimmy Tidwell, BVPD, who will direct police and emergency personnel assigned to notification, street and traffic control and police activities.

In addition, at Level 3 Response, Town Hall staff should be making notifications to pre-determined individuals with special medical or special assistance needs that the potential for flooding is imminent. This information should be passed on to the command post should emergency personnel need to respond.

Town staff will contact volunteer organizations and resources to respond if necessary.



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Mayor will notify Town Trustees and Town attorney and advise them of the situation. He will assign trustees if necessary to the command center or shelter. Mayor will serve as point of contact for media.

Mayor will authorize emergency expenditures if necessary.

Volunteer Coordinator will be located in town hall to log in volunteers and make assignments.

Volunteer Coordinator will work directly with Town Manager to direct resources to needed areas.

Public works staff will report to assigned areas and begin emergency procedures. Staff assigned to water treatment plant will give periodic reports to command center.

Volunteers assigned to monitor bridges and report blockages or condition changes to command post.

Resources and equipment assigned for debris removal will respond to reported locations and potential areas of blockage.

Buena Vista Fire Department and Chaffee County Ambulance Service will stage at pre-determined locations on the north and south sides of Buena Vista.

Fire department personnel will respond to areas for assistance and evacuation as needed. Respond to emergency situations as needed.

Ambulance Service will respond to emergency situations. Assist in evacuations if needed.

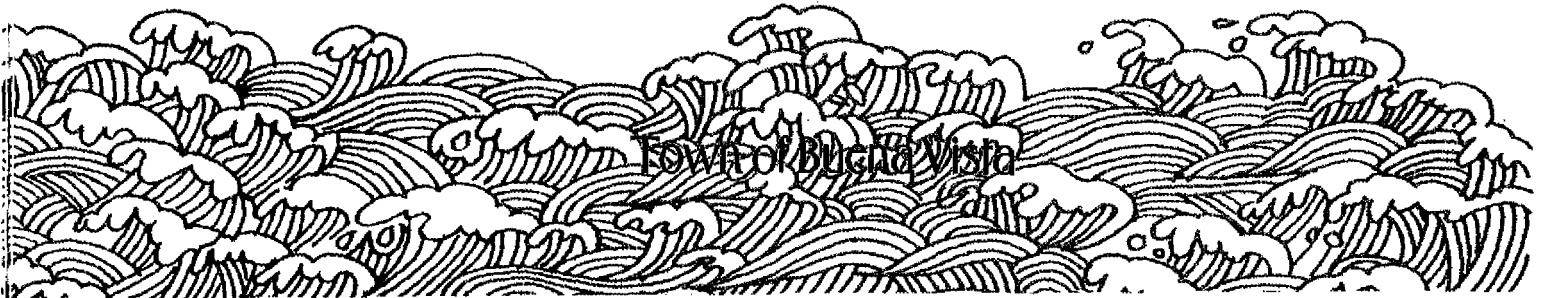
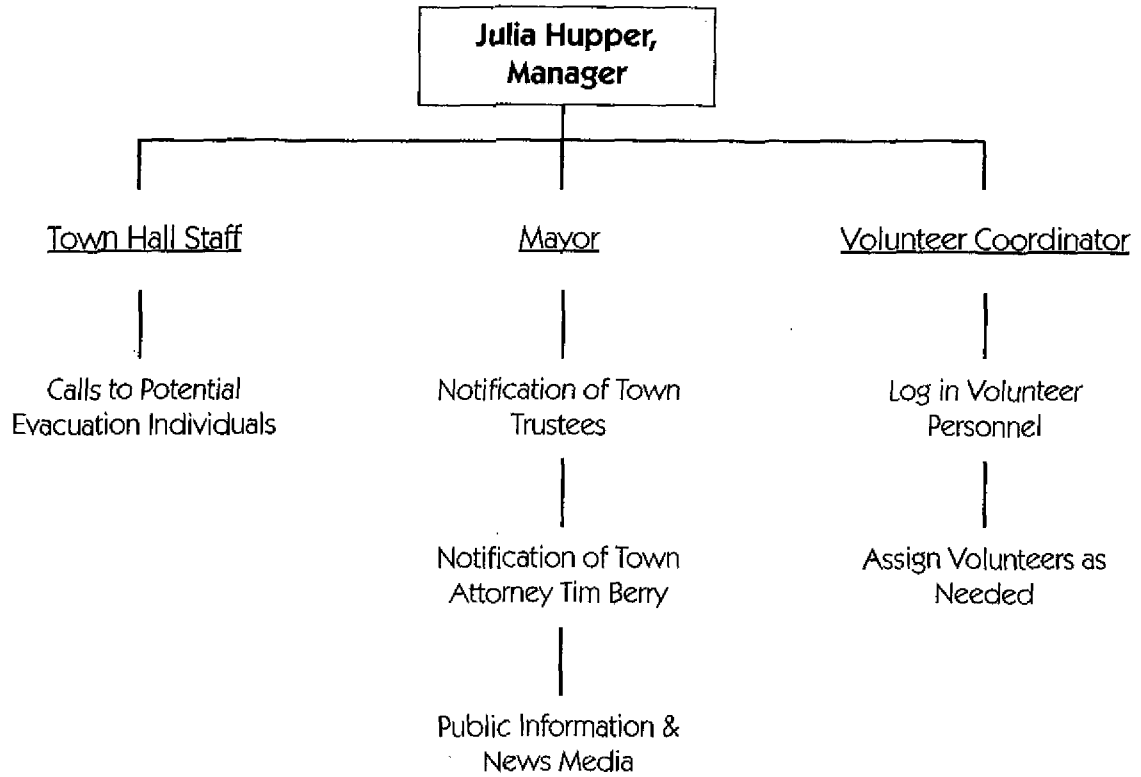
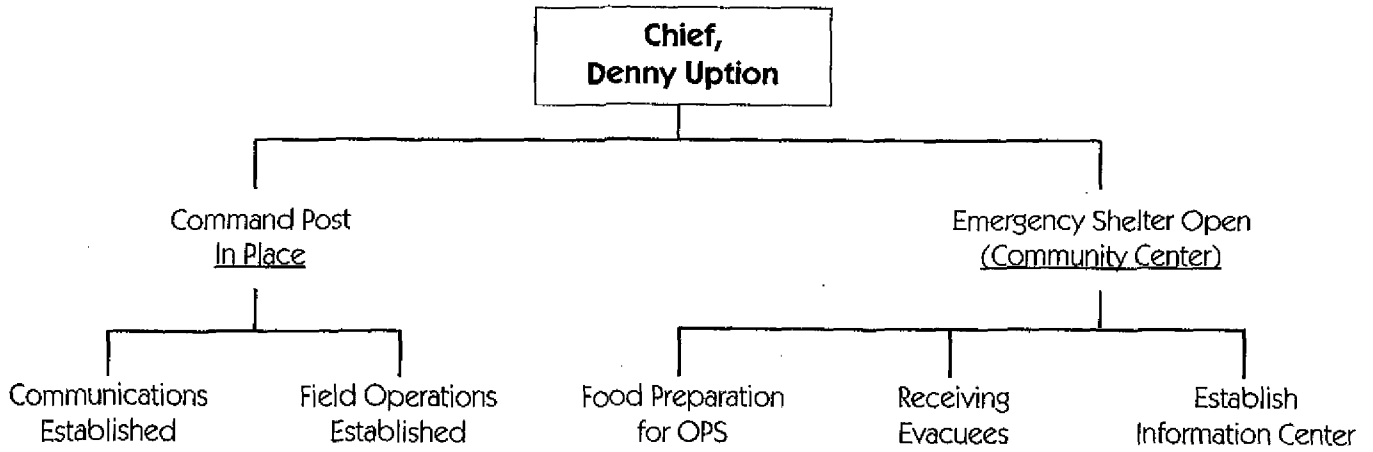
Buena Vista Fire Department will coordinate the assistance of the Chaffee County Fire Department and Search and Rescue Service.

Chaffee County Undersheriff will coordinate operations and resources, the Chaffee County Emergency Services and assign county officers to areas as needed. Will also work with Chaffee County Search and Rescue personnel.



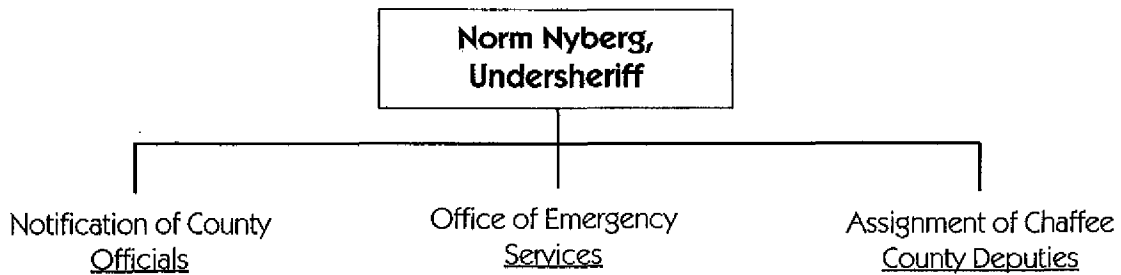
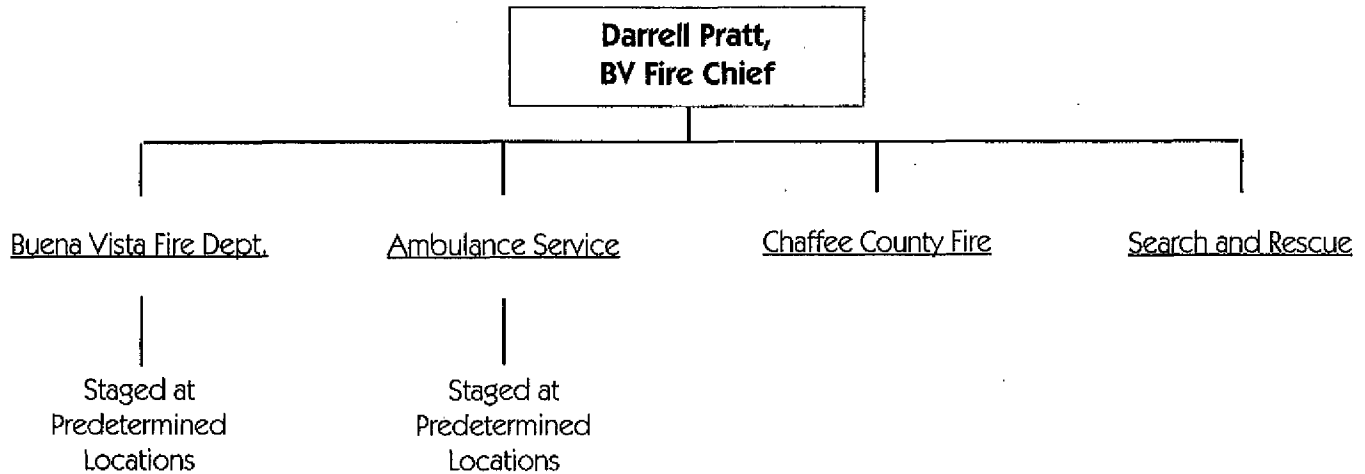
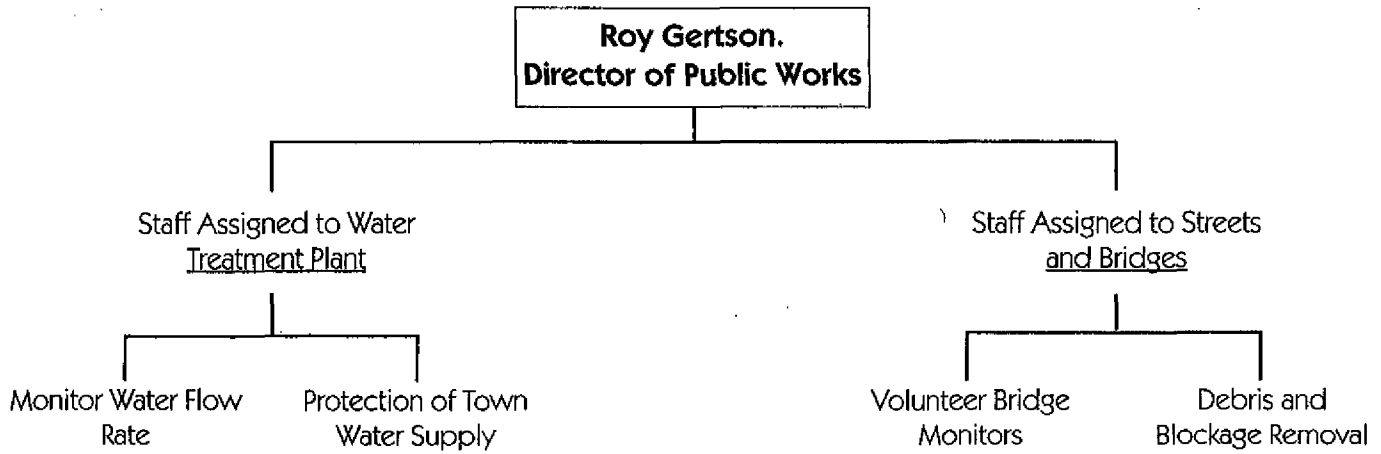


LEVEL 3 RESPONSE



# FLOOD RESPONSE AND MITIGATION PLAN

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- **Level 4 Response:** Continued operations with emphasis on reacting to actual flooding conditions. This will include (1) evacuation of individuals in flooded areas, (2) protection of bridges and debris removal, (3) protection and debris removal in other areas of vital interest including placement of sandbags, and (5) continued field operations of emergency personnel.



Level 4 may also include the following:

- Search and rescue operations,
- Emergency evacuations,
- Emergency water conservation measures,
- Rerouting of vehicle traffic,
- Shelter operations,
- Seeking outside assistance and medical services, and
- Providing emergency power sources.

Level 4 will be considered a full emergency situation. All emergency personnel and volunteer personnel will be in place and in operation.

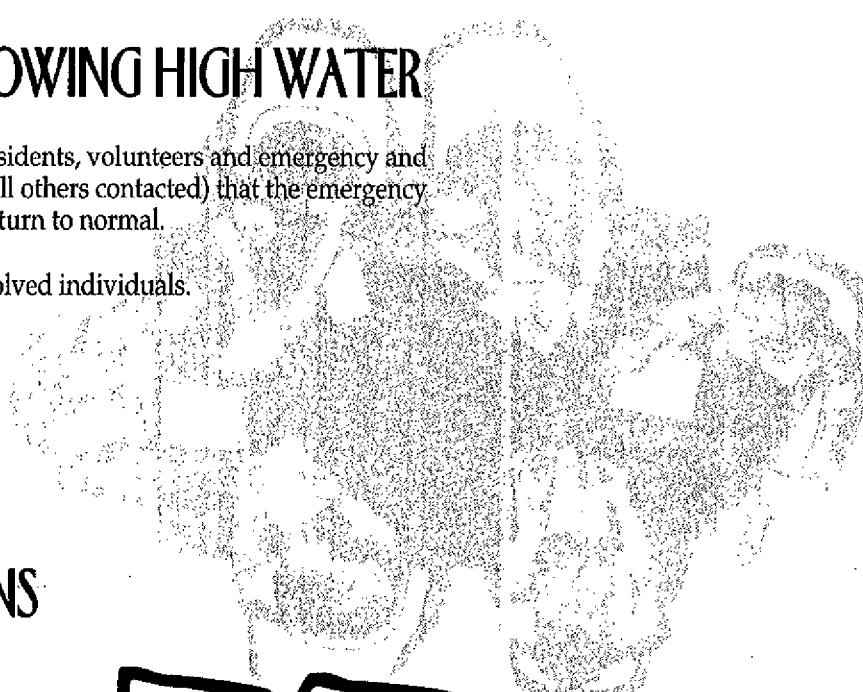
- **Level 5 Response:** A level of prolonged emergency status and possible recovery operations. Command Center will be responsible for shifts for personnel, rest periods and providing services to workers and emergency personnel.



## ACTIONS FOLLOWING HIGH WATER

Notification to community residents, volunteers and emergency and government personnel (and all others contacted) that the emergency situation no longer exists. Return to normal.

Debriefing session for all involved individuals.



## FUTURE ACTIONS AND RESPONSE

Review and refinement of emergency operations and flood response plan.

Adoption of pre-disaster flood hazard mitigation plan.

