

## USING A NON-PROFIT (501c3) TO SUPPORT EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Organizations exist in various regions of the State of Colorado that are engaged in emergency planning, emergency response and emergency preparedness activities. These include the local emergency planning committees, incident management teams, homeland security regions and hazardous materials response groups.

Very few of these groups are incorporated or have non-profit (501c3) status. All of these groups struggle with raising money and performing the basic accounting and accountability functions necessary to obtain grants and demonstrate compliance with the terms of those grants.

The idea of creating a 501c3 entity, that could support all of these groups, is fairly straightforward. It would be incorporated as a Colorado non-profit corporation and would then apply for 501c3 status from the IRS. Obtaining that status should be fairly easy as the mission of the group is to raise money and otherwise support exist organizations engaged in broader emergency preparedness activities.

By not being limited to one aspect of emergency planning, response or preparedness, the organization could solicit donations from the public or local businesses, all of which would be deductible charitable donations; it could apply for grants from foundations or government agencies outside of those that now occasionally support the existing groups and then supply sub-grants to a variety of organizations; and it could contract with the various constituent groups to provide management/accounting services. It would have all of the powers and authorities of a corporate citizen, so it could hold title to property, lease or rent equipment, and otherwise participate in commerce in ways that can be difficult for government agencies.

Maintaining such an entity once created is not difficult. A board of directors, probably composed of individuals engaged with the constituent groups, would need to exist. An executive director or other independent contractor, could be retained to provide management support. Various volunteers or contractors could be engaged to raise funds. An annual tax return is required, and depending upon revenue that may only be a postcard notice to the IRS. An annual report to the Colorado Secretary of State is also required and that is filed online with a small fee.

A broadly based non-profit should be able to marshal the resources of the community to support all of the emergency preparedness functions in the community. It's much easier to convince local governments, businesses and individuals to contribute small amounts to an organization with a broad and easily described mission rather than to the various constituent groups many of which have limited and, to the eye of the public, fairly esoteric missions. This should greatly benefit the constituent groups both in terms of money and management burden.