

Washington State
Emergency Response Commission
(SERC)



Strategic Plan
2015 – 2020

Background

In 1980, the U.S. enacted a federal law called the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) to facilitate the clean-up of sites contaminated by hazardous chemicals. This act created a large trust fund intended to mitigate the environmental and health effects of these large contaminated sites. The fund became known as the Superfund, and was enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

However, on December 2, 1984, an accident at the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India changed the approach by the U.S. to hazardous materials risks in our communities. Late at night, the plant accidentally, "... released at least 30 tons of a highly toxic gas called methyl isocyanate, as well as a number of other poisonous gases. The pesticide plant was surrounded by shanty towns, leading to more than 600,000 people being exposed to the deadly gas cloud that night. The gases stayed low to the ground, causing victims throats and eyes to burn, inducing nausea, and many deaths. Estimates of the death toll vary from as few as 3,800 to as many as 16,000, but government figures now refer to an estimate of 15,000 killed over the years. Toxic material remains, and 30 years later, many of those who were exposed to the gas have given birth to physically and mentally disabled children."¹

The U.S. government passed legislation in 1986 called the Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act (SARA), which, "... created the Emergency Planning & Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), also known as SARA Title III, a statute designed to improve community access to information about chemical hazards and to facilitate the development of chemical emergency response plans by state/tribal and local governments. EPCRA requires the establishment of state/tribal emergency response commissions (SERCs/TERCs), responsible for coordinating certain emergency response activities and for appointing local emergency planning committees (LEPCs)."²

The Washington State Emergency Response Commission (SERC) was formed in compliance with SARA Title III. The Washington SERC has struggled to comply with its legal mandates for various reasons, including a lack of priority placed upon the effort by state government, a lack of funding to achieve its mission, a lack of compliance at the local level, and a general lethargy by local government.

¹ Taylor, Alan. "Bhopal: The World's Worst Industrial Disaster, 30 Years Later." The Atlantic. Atlantic Media Company, 2 Dec. 2014. Web. 12 June 2015.

² "Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act (EPCRA)." EPA. Environmental Protection Agency. Web. 12 June 2015.

Today, the SERC is facing a significant change in the hazard profile throughout the state and potentially greater engagement by local government. Hazardous material transportation systems, corridors and hubs have always been a risk. However, the opening of the Bakken oil fields and resulting growth of rail shipment of sweet crude and other hazardous commodities transiting the state has increased the risk to -- and awareness of -- the public. Many communities have engaged in public processes demanding that these risks be mitigated or shifted to other communities.

The Washington SERC has developed two strategic plans since the turn of the century. This document represents the third strategic plan the SERC has created for itself. The purpose of this strategic plan is to:

- Conduct an environmental scan to provide background and context for factors which influence the SERC's potential for success;
- Establish a clear mission, vision and values for the SERC;
- Develop a prioritized work plan to achieve a specific set of goals and objectives;
- Establish timelines and identify persons responsible for coordinating the effort to achieve an objective;
- Identify desired or intended outcomes for each goal.

Many of the SERC members have individually expressed cautious optimism for the potential that this strategic plan could establish momentum and achieve greater success than has been experienced previously.

Environmental Scan

Prior to the strategic plan workshop, all SERC members and staff from the three state agencies supporting the SERC were sent a "SWOT" analysis questionnaire to fill out and return for compilation in advance of the workshop. SWOT is an acronym for "strengths", "weaknesses", "opportunities", and "threats." The recipients were asked to individually identify the top strengths and weaknesses of the SERC as it is currently performing, as well as the opportunities and threats that are currently facing the SERC or could in the future. The list was presented to the SERC attendees, who voted on the top issues collectively. The results of the tally are reflected in the following table.

SWOT Analysis Compiled Results, Condensed

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Diversity of the group.	Disagreements between the state agencies involved.
SERC members are talented & committed to helping the state be a safer place.	Lack of membership from the large private businesses in the state.
Provides an excellent multi-agency, multi-discipline perspective to statewide hazmat system.	SERC has no real authority or resources.
Potential exists to exceed expectations	
Broad based knowledge of members	
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Bakken may create new funding opportunities.	Disagreements among Military, WSP, and Ecology over monies and responsibilities.
Bakken may create new interest in a regional approach to hazmat team responses/other goals/visibility of SERC.	Inadequate funding
Increase SERC member engagement	
Oil train and pipeline issues increasing influence	
Fill vacancies. Consider adding positions, such as Agriculture	

From the list of top strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, the SERC members identified four themes associated with the list. The four main themes are:

- Issues associated with SERC membership;
- The changing hazard profile in the state;
- Issues associated with resources;
- Issues associated with communication, both internally and externally.

These four themes became the strategic initiatives under which goals and objectives are established.

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Definition of Terms

There are four main components to a strategic plan: Initiatives; Goals; short-/mid-/long-range Objectives; and Critical Tasks. For purposes of this strategic plan, they are defined as follows:

Initiative – The largest overarching element of a strategic plan, an initiative is a broad enterprise where the agency may have multiple areas of focus.

Goal – A smaller component of and subordinate to an initiative, a goal is focused on one particular area, but is still general in nature. If all of the goals under an initiative have been accomplished, the initiative will have been achieved.

Objective – A smaller component of and subordinate to a goal, an objective is usually defined as specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and time-sensitive. If all objectives under a goal are accomplished, the goal will have been accomplished.

Critical task – The smallest component of a strategic plan, critical tasks are the immediate (within 90 days) action steps needed to meet an objective. Not all objectives have critical tasks.

Short-Term Objective – An important component that needs to be accomplished within the first year, this objective addresses a significant issue or provides a foundation for additional objectives.

Mid-Term Objective – A complex objective that will take one to three years to implement, this objective typically requires short-term objectives to be achieved first, or requires additional resources.

Long-Term Objective – A significantly complex task requiring planning, funding and policy development, this objective will take from 3 to 5 years for completion.

Outcome – The desired consequence of a goal once accomplished.

Strategic Plan

This strategic plan represents the work of the sitting members of the Washington State Emergency Response Commission. The following elements make up the strategic plan, including the SERC mission, vision and values; each of the four initiatives and their subordinate goals and objectives; implementation methodology; and status & accountability worksheet.

Mission, Vision, Values

The principle behind establishing mission, vision and values statements for any organization is to clearly anchor the endeavor to its purpose (mission), establish a compelling future state (vision), and identify the culture (values) of the organization. Absent these critical elements, an organization risks mission creep, conducting activity without a clearly desired outcome, and ethical drift.

The SERC members participating in the strategic planning workshop conducted at the Washington State Department of Ecology on June 9, 2015 actively engaged in the development of a revised mission and vision, with a new set of values.

The newly revised mission and vision, and the new values statement are as follows:

New Mission:

Coordinate and support a consistent, effective, integrated, statewide approach to hazardous materials in compliance with WAC 118-40.

New Vision:

Reduced risks from hazardous materials in Washington communities.

New Values:

The SERC is committed to serve the citizens of the state through effective partnerships, strong communication, teamwork, and shared leadership.

These three statements provide the SERC with a clear understanding of its purpose, a compelling future condition to strive for, and an agreed upon value which guides the conduct of its members. They provide focus and context for the SERC to establish the following four initiatives and their associated goals and objectives, which constitutes the strategic plan.

Initiative #1: SERC Membership

Goal 1A: Fill vacant positions on SERC in accordance with WAC 118-40-040.

- Obj. 1: Identify agency vacancies on the SERC.
- Obj. 2: Connect with the agency point of contact to have a representative assigned.
- Obj. 3: Identify appropriate non-represented industries for membership on the SERC
- Obj. 4: Solicit membership to the SERC from these industries.
- Obj. 5: SERC Chair contacts new members with welcome and SERC orientation.

Goal 1B: Expand attendance and active participation to SERC meetings by the following entities in accordance with WAC 118-40-040(3):

- Tribal Emergency Response Commission(s).
- Federal Emergency Management Agency.
- Environmental Protection Agency.
- U.S. Department of Transportation.
- Washington state attorney general.

- Obj. 1: Identify the value of these additional partners.
- Obj.2: Establish contact and invite participation by these agencies.
- Obj. 3: Follow-up and monitor participation.

Goal 1C: Amend bylaws of SERC to support additional members to support the goals of the SERC.

- Obj. 1: Identify additional agencies to be included in membership of SERC.
- Obj. 2: The SERC approves a possible new member list.
- Obj. 3: Establish contact with the appropriate entity(s) and invite a representative to the SERC meetings.
- Obj. 4: Incorporate these new agency(s) into bylaws.

Initiative #2: The Changing Hazard Profile

Goal 2A: Develop regional hazmat response system to adapt to the changing hazmat profile.

- Obj. 1: Define the scope of the study
- Obj. 2: Identify funding source(s) to conduct a study on the formation of a statewide regional hazmat response system.
- Obj. 3: Conduct the study and identify the results.
- Obj. 4: Report the study results to the governor's office.
- Obj. 5: Collaborate with affected entities on operational strategies and legislative language.
- Obj. 6: Propose legislation (drop a bill).

Goal 2B: Support increased information sharing and training to local communities, responders, and policy makers to address the changing hazmat profile.

- Obj. 1: Identify the information needing to be shared and the key stakeholders/target audience.
- Obj. 2: Identify the best platforms, mechanisms and methodologies for providing information and training.
- Obj. 3: Solicit feedback from the key stakeholders and evaluate the results.

Goal 2C: Establish a policy subcommittee to track and influence legislation and policies relating to hazardous materials.

- Obj. 1: Set operational guidelines for SERC involvement.
- Obj. 2: Provide awareness to member agency directors of SERC activities related to influencing legislation.
- Obj. 3: Establish an annual reporting process to all member agencies of the SERCs legislative and policy agenda.
- Obj. 4: Monitor pertinent bill traffic with a nexus to the SERC mission.

Initiative #3: SERC Resources

Goal 3A: Increase hazardous material training for 1st responders.

- Obj. 1: Participate in and promote statewide use of the EMD and WSP Training Calendar.
- Obj. 2: Develop a hazmat training target audience contact list, including an opt-in list for participating agencies.

Goal 3B: Seek additional funding sources for long-term sustainment of SERC supported program(s).

Obj. 1: Identify SERC supported programs to determine costs.

Obj. 2: Obtain EMD/SERC staff report on historical SERC expenditures to establish a baseline budget.

Obj. 3: Develop budget recommendations to support program needs.

Goal 3C: Identify methods to encourage hazmat training participation by local emergency/1st responders.

Obj. 1: Identify roadblocks to first responder participation.

Obj. 2: Develop solutions to each identified roadblock.

Obj. 3: Implement solutions to participation roadblocks.

Obj. 4: Evaluate results of the effort and adjust as necessary.

Goal 3D: Establish SERC participation in the funding allocation process.

Obj. 1: Identify boundaries of SERC participation.

Obj. 2: Identify existing funding and funding sources, including grants.

Obj. 3: Develop funding allocation strategies which advance the SERC's mission.

Obj. 4: Implement strategies to coincide with the grant cycle(s).

Obj. 5: Evaluate results of implemented strategies and adjust as appropriate.

Initiative #4: Communication

Goal 4A: Clarify roles of participating agencies (EMD, WSP, and Ecology).

Obj. 1: Each participating agency reports out on its role in the SERC or in support of the SERC's mission and how they accomplish it.

Obj. 2: Align the roles in the WAC 118-40 rewrite.

Goal 4B: Enhance collaboration and participation of member agencies.

Obj. 1: Conduct a work plan/program plan (Strategic Plan implementation).

- Conduct this during additional or 5th meeting of the year.
- Start planning by each March meeting.
- Present by November of each year

Obj. 2: Create cross-disciplinary subcommittees as needed to expand capacity for implementation of the strategic plan.

Goal 4C: Develop communication strategies for external entities.

Obj. 1: Identify external entities, target audiences, and key stakeholders.

Obj. 2: Assess the existing SERC website; develop & implement enhancements as needed, and promote the website.

Obj. 3: Develop and distribute a biannual report card containing:

- SERC activities & work plan
- EPCRA Compliance
- Issues and gap assessment
- Strategies for dealing with the issues and gaps

Obj. 4: Provide an annual LEPC reminder with follow-up and support of EPCRA requirements.

Implementation Methodology

“The three major keys to successful strategic planning and implementation are commitment, credibility, and communication.”³ These three critical elements are best addressed by appropriate prioritization and completion of objectives, consistently seeking and utilizing input from SERC members, communicating plan status on a consistent basis and measuring compliance for the established timelines.

Prioritization of Objectives

In conjunction with developing an annual work plan to implement the strategic plan, the SERC must assign committees or individuals to coordinate each objective. These coordinators are also charged with prioritizing each of their objectives. By consensus of the SERC, objectives that are listed as critical tasks get the highest priority. Next in priority are those that can be accomplished over the course of the next fiscal year within the limits of existing program budgets. Finally, the SERC must maintain constant awareness of a tendency for energy or focus drop off as higher priority goals and objectives are accomplished. Many implementers consider the later goals and objectives to be of lesser importance than those already accomplished and therefore devote less energy to achieving them. One way to combat this tendency is to annually re-evaluate the strategic plan and update it as necessary to keep it relevant.

Implementation Timeline

The SERC is committed to a regular schedule of status updates and accountability monitoring. The SERC must set a strategic plan implementation schedule for the remainder of 2015 and each year thereafter to ensure regular communication and commitment to the plan. The SERC should make strategic plan status updates a regular part of the meeting agenda to establish and maintain momentum. At the end of each year (calendar or budget), the SERC should assess progress, celebrate accomplishments, and ensure the ongoing viability and validity of the strategic plan. Reports on progress should be disseminated externally as well, which serves to share progress with stakeholders and creates additional accountability.

³ Ahoy, Chris, Associate Vice President of Facilities Planning & Management, Iowa State University, September 1998.

Washington State Emergency Response Commission

Status & Accountability Worksheet

Implementation Timeline Status: **On Target** – Delayed or Deferred – **Not Currently On Target**

Initiatives/Goals/Objectives	Timeline	Coordinator
Initiative #1: SERC Membership Goal 1A: Fill vacant positions on SERC in accordance with WAC 118-40-040. Obj. 1: Identify agency vacancies on the SERC. Obj. 2: Connect with the agency point of contact to have a representative assigned. Obj. 3: Identify appropriate non-represented industries for membership on the SERC. Obj. 4: Solicit membership to the SERC from these industries. Obj. 5: SERC Chair contacts new members with welcome and SERC orientation.	Defined: Keep SERC membership robust, fill vacant positions, recruit new members Outcome: All SERC vacancies are filled Dec., 2015 Dec., 2015 Dec., 2015 Dec., 2015 Dec., 2015	Bill Whealan Bill Whealan Bill Whealan Bill Whealan Bill Whealan
Goal 1B: Expand attendance and active participation to SERC meetings by the following entities in accordance with WAC 118-40-040(3) Obj. 1: Identify the value of these additional partners. Obj.2: Establish contact and invite participation by these agencies. Obj. 3: Follow-up and monitor participation.	Outcome: Representatives from these agencies are participating actively in SERC Nov, 2015 May, 2016 Ongoing	John Ufford Bill Whealan John Ufford
Goal 1C: Amend bylaws of SERC to support additional members to support the goals of the SERC. Obj. 1: Identify additional agencies to be included in membership of SERC. Obj. 2: The SERC approves a possible new member list. Obj. 3: Establish contact with the appropriate entity(s) and invite a representative to the SERC meetings. Obj. 4: Incorporate these new agency(s) into bylaws.	Outcome: SERC bylaws are amended to reflect new key stakeholders Dec., 2015 July, 2016 Dec., 2016 July, 2017	Bill Whealan Bill Whealan Bill Whealan Bill Whealan
Initiative #2: The Changing Hazard Profile	Defined: Washington is seeing significant increases in oil transportation by rail, in addition to growing risks by other hazmat haulers, generators and users. This substantially increases the risk of hazmat incidents in the state.	

Initiatives/Goals/Objectives	Timeline	Coordinator
Goal 2A: Develop regional hazmat response system to adapt to the changing hazmat profile.	Outcome: A regional hazmat response system is created	
Obj. 1: Define the scope of the study.	Dec., 2015	Mike Harris
Obj. 2: Identify funding source(s) to conduct a study on the formation of a statewide regional	Dec., 2015	Mike Harris
Obj. 3: Conduct the study and identify the results.	July, 2016	Mike Harris
Obj. 4: Report the study results to the governor's office.	July, 2016	Mike Harris
Obj. 5: Collaborate with affected entities on operational strategies and legislative language. months	Dec., 2016	Mike Harris
Obj. 6: Propose legislation (drop a bill). <i>AB1223</i>	Dec., 2017	Mike Harris
Goal 2B: Support increased information sharing and training to local communities, responders, and policy makers to address the changing hazmat profile.	Outcome: Key stakeholders are well informed & trained due to SERCs efforts	
Obj. 1: Identify the information needing to be shared and the key stakeholders/target audience.	Dec., 2015	Bill Slosson
Obj. 2: Identify the best platforms, mechanisms and methodologies for providing information and training.	July, 2016	Bill Slosson
Obj. 3: Solicit feedback from the key stakeholders and evaluate the results.	Ongoing	Bill Slosson
Goal 2C: Establish a policy subcommittee to track and influence legislation and policies relating to hazardous materials.	Outcome: A SERC policy subcommittee is monitoring/influencing policies & legislation with nexus to SERC mission	
Obj. 1: Set operational guidelines for SERC involvement.	July, 2017	Bill Whealan/Mike Harris
Obj. 2: Provide awareness to member agency directors of SERC activities related to influencing legislation	July, 2018	Bill Whealan/Mike Harris
Obj. 3: Establish an annual reporting process to all member agencies of the SERCs legislative and policy agenda.	July, 2019	Bill Whealan/Mike Harris
Obj. 4: Monitor pertinent bill traffic with a nexus to the SERC mission.	July, 2020	Bill Whealan/Mike Harris
Initiative #3: SERC Resources	Defined: Adequately fund SERC to accomplish its mission.	
Goal 3A: Increase hazardous material training for 1st responders.	Outcome: Hazmat training meets 1st responder demand	
Obj. 1: Participate in and promote statewide use of the EMD and WSP Training Calendar.	Ongoing	John Ufford
Obj. 2: Develop a hazmat training target audience contact list, including an opt-in list for participating agencies.	Jan., 2016	John Ufford

Initiatives/Goals/Objectives	Timeline	Coordinator
Goal 3B: Seek additional funding sources for long-term sustainment of SERC supported program(s).	Outcome: SERC is adequately funded to achieve its mission	
Obj. 1: Identify SERC supported programs to determine costs.	Annual	John Ufford
Obj. 2: Obtain EMD/SERC staff report on historical SERC expenditures to establish a baseline budget.	Annually before EMD budget development	John Ufford
Obj. 3: Develop budget recommendations to support program needs.	Annually during EMD budget development	John Ufford
Goal 3C: Identify methods to encourage hazmat training participation by local emergency/1st responders.	Outcome: Effective outreach is resulting in increased 1 st responder hazmat training participation	
Obj. 1: Identify roadblocks to first responder participation.	Critical Task	Bill Slosson
Obj. 2: Develop solutions to each identified roadblock.	Dec., 2015	Bill Slosson
Obj. 3: Implement solutions to participation roadblocks.	July, 2016	Bill Slosson
Obj. 4: Evaluate results of the effort and adjust as necessary.	Dec., 2016 & ongoing	Bill Slosson
Goal 3D: Establish SERC participation in the funding allocation process.	Outcome: SERC is actively involved in budget development related to SERC support	
Obj. 1: Identify boundaries of SERC participation.	Sept., 2015	John Ufford
Obj. 2: Identify existing funding and funding sources, including grants.	Oct., 2015	John Ufford
Obj. 3: Develop funding allocation strategies which advance the SERC's mission.	Oct., 2015	John Ufford
Obj. 4: Implement strategies to coincide with the grant cycle(s).	Jan., 2016 or grant cycle	John Ufford
Obj. 5: Evaluate results of implemented strategies and adjust as appropriate.	Nov., 2016	John Ufford
Goal 4A: Clarify roles of participating agencies (EMD, WSP, and Ecology).	Initiative #4: Communication	Defined: Improve communication internally, externally, and with key stakeholders.
		Outcome: EMD, WSP & Ecology understand and complement each role in support of SERC

Initiatives/Goals/Objectives	Timeline	Coordinator
Obj. 1: Each participating agency reports out on its role in the SERC or in support of the SERC's mission and how they accomplish it.	Critical Task	John Butler
Obj. 2: Align the roles in the WAC 118-40 rewrite.	Dec., 2015	John Butler
Goal 4B: Enhance collaboration and participation of member agencies.	Outcome: SERC agency representatives collaborate to support SERC mission	
Obj. 1: Conduct a work plan/program plan (Strategic Plan implementation).	Annual	John Wheeler
Obj. 2: Create cross-disciplinary subcommittees as needed to expand capacity for implementation of the strategic plan.	Ongoing	John Wheeler
Goal 4C: Develop communication strategies for external entities.	Outcome: Key external stakeholders have easy access to LEPC information & SERC activities	
Obj. 1: Identify external entities, target audiences, and key stakeholders.	Critical Task	John Wheeler
Obj. 2: Assess the existing SERC website; develop & implement enhancements as needed, and promote the website.	Dec., 2016	John Wheeler
Obj. 3: Develop and distribute a biannual report card.	Annual	John Wheeler
Obj. 4: Provide an annual LEPC reminder with follow-up and support of EPCRA requirements.	Annual	John Wheeler