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# How Code Enforcement Mitigates Hoarding in the Community

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# How Code Enforcement Mitigates Hoarding in the Community

by Jason Gibilisco

A Thesis Quality Research Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Masters Degree in  
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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The Graduate School San Jose State University May, 2016

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## **Introduction**

Code enforcement officers (CEOs) face a variety of cases on a daily basis. Some of the most challenging cases are when they encounter properties with severe cluttering—a condition known as “hoarding.” This condition can be extremely dangerous to the occupants, who are commonly known as “hoarders.” It is code enforcement’s objective to protect health and safety in the community and return the property to a safe manner as soon as possible (Sacramento County Code Enforcement, 2015; City of San Jose, 2000). This can sometimes be difficult for code enforcement because they do not want to invade the privacy of the hoarder. So the question is, *how can cities’ code enforcement agencies effectively mitigate hoarding in the community while also respecting the privacy of the hoarder?*

The collection of goods helps ensure survival when goods become scarce, and is a natural behavior in humans and animals (Bratitotis & Steketee, 2015). The term “hoarding,” was originally used to describe food collecting in animals, mainly in rodents (Fontenelle & Grant, 2014). It is now used to describe people who are compulsively hoarding items of all sorts. Compulsive hoarding was defined in 2009 by Bratitotis, Otte, Steketee, Muroff, and Frost, and includes the following:

- A person gathers items and does not discard the items. Items appear of no value and useless to a majority of people
- The living spaces are full of clutter and the person is unable to use the rooms for their intended purpose
- Problems and distress are caused by the items in everyday events

Some might confuse hoarding with collecting but hoarding differs substantially from collecting. Collectors usually want to show off their items, and consequently will keep the items well-organized. Their items are considered to be of value and interest (Bratitotis, Schmalisch, & Steketee, 2011). In hoarding cases, however, items are continuously being brought onto the property with no regard for the amount of available space in the dwelling (Bratitotis et al., 2011).

Hoarding first became widely known in the United States in March of 1947. Two brothers, Homer and Langley Collyer, were found dead in their three-story home surrounded by 120 tons of miscellaneous debris, including fourteen grand pianos, parts of an old car, and 3,000 books (Grisham & Barlow, 2005). It was determined by police that one of the brothers died of collapsing debris and the other of starvation. Though hoarding was first made known by cases like these in the 1940s, there are still cases today where people are found deceased in hoarded homes.

In April of 2015 a mummified body was found in a hoarder's home in San Francisco. The extent of the hoarding was so extreme that firemen had to wear oxygen masks to enter the home and could not enter through the front door because the debris was stacked so high (Zinko, April 6, 2015). Three days later, the authorities found a mummified body wrapped in a blanket in the home (Zinko, April 6, 2015). Also found in the home were black widow spiders, rats, mold, and 300 bottles of urine (Zinko, April 6, 2015). Cases like these have grabbed the media's attention and have been informative to the public on some of the dangers of hoarding.

Even more recently, television shows featuring hoarders have risen in popularity. Various shows include the television series on TLC *Hoarders: Buried Alive*, A&E's

*Hoarders*, *The Oprah Winfrey show*, *The Dr. Oz Show*, and Animal Planet's *Animal Hoarders* (Fleury, Gaudette & Moran, 2012; Tolin, Frost, Steketee, 2014). These shows have raised public awareness of the health risks involved in hoarding across the world. The extreme environments of the TLC *Hoarders: Buried Alive* show bring attention to severe hoarding behavior in dwellings around the world. Hoarding interferes with an individual's ability to work, perform daily activities, eat, and interact with others (Grisham & Barlow, 2005).

Hoarding not only affects an individual's physical abilities and conditions, but it can also create severe economic problems, social problems, and a "diminished quality of life," in any community (McGuire, Kaercher, Park, & Storch, 2013, p. 336). People who hoard tend to share similar traits such as obesity, increased rates of adverse medical conditions, and an overall struggle to perform daily activities (Ayers et al., 2013).

It is important to realize that hoarding behavior is not only unhealthy, but can be extremely overwhelming to the hoarder and those around him (Sacramento County Code Enforcement, 2015). Adults of any age can become involved in hoarding, and the condition may be exacerbated by individual circumstances or a mental illness (City of San Jose PBCE, 2000).

To treat hoarding disorder, the person who hoards must acknowledge what the underlying problem is that started the hoarding behavior (Van Pelt, May/June 2011). The root causes of compulsive hoarding need to be addressed in an effective and coordinated way. This can unfortunately result in high-cost interventions, and fail to prevent eviction or loss of housing (San Francisco Task Force on Hoarding, 2009).



There is no single government agency that can provide all the needed support and enforcement for compulsive hoarding (Ligatti, 2013). Often times, it takes multiple agencies working together. Code enforcement is one of many service agencies that have a role in cases of hoarding. Code enforcement seeks compliance with their municipalities' municipal codes to maintain a clean, safe, and healthy environment, preserving the quality of life standards (City of San Jose PBCE, n.d.). Code Enforcement does not have the authority to just go into a person's home and tell them how to live, but rather a clear danger must be observed (Sacramento County Code Enforcement, 2015). Due to privacy issues, CEOs have a challenging job of advising the occupant to decrease clutter, clean up unsanitary conditions, and remove any potential fire hazards (Shenfil & Thurston, 2015). There are laws that restrict government personnel from performing inspections of private property unless granted permission by the property owner.

The Fourth Amendment protects people from unreasonable searches and seizures, and a warrant needs to be issued for a search (Fourth Amendment, US Constitution). For example, a hoarder could visibly have mounds of clutter that can be seen through an open front door. The fact that this could present a danger to the resident might enable an inspector to make a successful request to a judge for a search warrant. Abating the clutter and obtaining compliance from hoarders can be a great challenge.

Code Enforcement agencies do, however, have the authority to cleanup a property without the consent of the property owner if it poses risks to the individual and community, based on certain municipal ordinances (Flaglerlive, June 20, 2013). Removal of items alone may not be the best solution. Attempts to cleanup a severely cluttered home without addressing the underlying problem of the hoarder typically fail (Bratiotis et

al., 2009). Forcible cleanups can cause great distress to the person who hoards, and the attachment to possessions can become even stronger when forced cleanups happen (Bratiotis et al., 2009). The complex underlying causes of hoarding often mean that simply removing items will not result in sustained change (Davis & Edsell, January 2015). Because of this, hoarding cases can be expensive for cities, often taking hours of time and exceeding thousands of dollars in employee time and equipment expenses (Shenfil and Thurston, 2015).

Code Enforcement Inspectors and other service agencies find working with hoarders to be a very difficult task. Hoarders can perceive any attempts to help as negative, so it is important to approach hoarders carefully (Sacramento County Code Enforcement, 2015). Service personnel must manage their initial reactions when entering severely cluttered homes. It is important to focus on safety, not touch any of the hoarder's belongings, and not to use the word "hoarding" (Bratiotis et al., 2011, p. 18). According to the Sacramento County Code Enforcement (2015) website, it is best to gain trust, be respectful, be creative, and offer physical and emotional support of the person who hoards. Sacramento County Code Enforcement (2015) suggests that it is best to avoid belittling hoarders, expecting the clutter to be cleaned up overnight, threatening them, or performing surprise cleanups.

There can be many issues when CEOs inspect hoarded properties. Though code enforcement encourages tenants and property owners of hoarded properties to voluntarily bring their properties into compliance, it is often not a voluntary process (City of San Jose PBCE, 2000). A CEO can also be unaware of the resources available and how to

work with hoarders. The purpose of this research is to help CEOs and their respective departments look at alternative approaches on hoarding to better obtain compliance.

## **Methodology**

This research was based on a program evaluation of nine cities throughout California and a single city in Washington. Though the initial intent was to survey additional cities across the West Coast, multiple cities in Washington and Oregon were unable to participate. The main method for collecting data was through the use of a survey and questionnaire. An individual CEO survey (Appendix A) was used, along with a code enforcement department questionnaire (Appendix B).

The CEO survey asked specific questions about the CEO's individual experiences, caseload, and general questions related to hoarding. CEOs can offer a different perspective and may have different approaches when it comes to cases on hoarders. They are considered experts in the field. CEOs may also be reporting to a property for other reasons than hoarding and not realize until after an inspection that they have encountered a person who hoards. For example, a CEO could get a report for a backyard full of clutter and not realize that it is due to a person who hoards until after the CEO sees it and interacts with the occupant. The CEO survey used Qualtrics Survey Software through San Jose State University and was completed online.

The department questionnaire was emailed to each code enforcement department as an attached Microsoft Word document. It asked specific questions about the department's hoarding cases, policies related to hoarding, and general information on how hoarding cases are performed and if follow-up inspections were performed. It was anticipated that departments might not track cases received on hoarding, so this was also asked on the CEO survey. The goal of the questionnaire was to ascertain how

municipalities' code enforcement departments mitigate hoarding while also respecting the privacy of the hoarder.

Both the survey and questionnaire asked for specific information from the last five years. It was considered that departments may not save data older than five years and CEOs may not remember cases older than five years, but since many cases on hoarders can be open for several years, going back five years helps provide more adequate data for an analysis to be performed.

There were twenty-one cities contacted to participate in this research throughout the western states (California, Oregon, Washington, Arizona). Code enforcement managers and/or supervisors were contacted by phone and email asking for participation in the CEO survey and department questionnaire. If there were no responses, several attempts were made to contact the manager asking for participation. Some agencies stated that their departments could not participate in the research.

A discussion post was made on California Association of Code Enforcement Officers (CACEO) website for respondents. It was viewable to all members and described the research that was being done and how to contact the researcher for further participation. The post included information about why the research was being done and the CEO survey link. The League of California Cities and Association of Bay Area Governments were contacted to assist in distribution and general assistance. The Orange County Hoarding Task Force was also contacted for general assistance and to assist with contacting cities.

When each municipality's code enforcement manager was reached, the manager was asked to distribute the CEO survey link to their department's CEOs, and to complete

and return the department questionnaire. The goal was to receive sufficient information about each department's caseload and enforcement policies to evaluate the department's efforts in achieving compliance in hoarding cases.

Overall, nine cities participated in both the CEO survey and the department questionnaire. These cities included the City of Sunnyvale, City of Santa Clara, City & County of San Francisco, City of Sacramento, City of San Jose, City of Long Beach, City of Irvine, City of Fremont, and City of Seattle. The results from the CEOs who selected "other," as their city of employment will not be used in the research. These participants did not participate in the department questionnaire and no city was listed with their results.

The findings from the CEO survey and department questionnaire led to a program evaluation of each municipality, determining the effectiveness of code enforcement in reaching compliance with hoarders. Information from participating organizations such as population, number of housing units, and the city's square mileage was also used in each city's program evaluation.



## **Literature Review**

Research suggests that compulsive hoarding is a psychiatric problem that disrupts the life of the individual, family, and friends (Grisham & Barlow, 2005). Evidence from the last twenty years suggests that hoarding represents a particular form of psychopathology (Fontenelle & Grant, 2014). Hoarding is listed as one of the criteria for obsessive-compulsive personality disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders-IV (Fleury et al., 2012). It is found in twenty to thirty percent of people with obsessive-compulsive disorder, psychotic disorders, anorexia nervosa, and organic mental disorders (Frost, Steketee, & Williams, 2000). No matter how hard some hoarders try to stop themselves from buying and acquiring things, they often cannot stop themselves (Tolin, Frost, & Steketee, 2014). Compulsive hoarders do not recognize that there is a problem with their behavior and the way that they live (Thompkins, 2015).

Hoarding is considered to be an independent syndrome characterized by an inability to discard possessions. It does not matter if the object is considered valuable or not, because the desire to keep the items is to avoid the stress related to discarding the items (Ayers et al., 2013). Simply picking up or removing an object from the ground could cause a severe amount of stress to the hoarder (Bell, 2012). For individuals who have attempted to justify their hoarding behaviors, emotional attachment and feelings of accountability towards the hoarded items were the most common reasons (McGuire et al., 2013).

There are certain biological factors that can influence hoarding behavior. The behavior can be stemmed from ÷nherited genes or neurobiological structures and metabolism that might predispose a person to hoardingö (Bratiotis et al., 2011, p.



11). Hoarding disorder can also be associated with trauma to the brain or dementia, can be a learned family behavior, or can be learned through culture of the individual (Bratiotis et al., 2011). The classification of hoarding as a mental disorder means that individuals who exhibit hoarding behavior have rights protected by the Fair Housing Act.

The Fair Housing Act exists to promote equal protection for individuals and prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, skin color, religion, sex, disability, and mental disability (Bratiotis et al., 2011). This act prohibits landlords from refusing reasonable accommodation. Part of the Fair Housing Act requires that housing providers make reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act classifies citizens with disabilities as legally protected in the workplace and public places (Weiss & Khan, 2015).

Because hoarding is classified as a mental disorder, an eviction based solely on hoarding may constitute discrimination under the Fair Housing Act (Bratiotis et al., 2011). The American Psychiatric Association announced that compulsive hoarding is now considered a mental disability, and is therefore protected under the nation's various disability related laws (Weiss & Khan, 2015, p. 495).

Research suggests that approximately 5.3% of the general population are hoarders, and the prevalence is higher among older adults (Ayers et al., 2013). Symptoms of hoarding become greater over time. Some findings have suggested that mild symptoms of hoarding begin at age eighteen and then develop to more severe levels shortly after (Grisham & Barlow, 2005). There has been very little research on hoarding behaviors in childhood to early adulthood (McGuire et al., 2013). Some research suggests that hoarding is a lifelong trait (Grisham & Barlow, 2005).

Very few hoarders seek treatment on their own. Those who do, often only seek treatment when it is either requested by family members, or they have a pending house condemnation or threat of eviction (McGuire et al., 2013). Family members may not want to be associated with assisting in cleanup efforts. It was found that in over half of all cases reported to code enforcement agencies, there was no family involvement (Gibson, 2015). Roughly 20% of hoarders live alone and do not associate with other people (Bratiotis et al., 2011). People that hoard often will not invite family or friends over due to the embarrassment of their clutter (Bratiotis et al., 2009). This often leaves hoarding cases unreported.

The effects of hoarding can involve a wide range of service agencies and also involve safety concerns. The behavior of hoarding creates conditions that can violate federal, state, and local regulations (Ligatti, 2013). These regulations ensure that residents live comfortably and safely in their homes and neighborhoods (Thompkins, 2015). The regulations are minimal standards used as benchmarks and targets for service agencies.

Each service agency has a different approach to seeking compliance with hoarders. Perspectives can differ between agencies on the extent and characteristics of hoarding cases. Some service agencies may make certain recommendations and suggestions that might help curb the hoarding disorder. Services that are delivered away from the setting of home have shown little evidence to assist hoarding disorder (Bratiotis et al., 2011).

In some cases, agencies will need to go through the judicial process after voluntary compliance fails. Municipalities issue citations and attempt to recover costs.

Some research suggests that the issuance of fines in rural communities has little impact in preventing the continuance of hoarding (Bell, 2012). Putting a lien on the property is usually the end result for an agency to recover costs. When the City of San Jose, for example, has to take immediate action to abate a nuisance, the costs associated with abating are assessed and a lien may be put onto the property to recover costs (City of San Jose PBCE, 2000). In severe cases where the home has been neglected, making the home unlivable, hoarding abatement actions may result in the home being condemned, forcing the homeowner or tenant to be homeless (Hoffman, 2013).

A particular challenge is whether officials have the right to gain access into the private home of the hoarder. "Landlords and condominium property managers have the right to enter residences," but dwellings that do not share walls have greater rights to privacy (Hoffman, 2013, p. A3). Hoarding in apartments can have a greater impact on economic value because there is a greater potential for mold, infestation, and structural damage, which could cause other tenants to move out (Bell, 2012). A property overrun with clutter can lower neighboring property values by 10% or more, and in some cases can make properties unmarketable (Monitor Staff, May 13, 2012). Neighbors can be disgusted with hoarded properties and consider them an eyesore. This can cause neighbors to take action against the hoarded property and report the behavior.

Neighbors are more likely to complain to service agencies if the clutter reaches the exterior of the home (Frost et al., 2000). Hoarders can often go completely unnoticed if they keep all their belongings within the home. Due to this, it is likely that a large number of hoarded homes are unreported. People who hoard who live in isolated areas with acres of land can easily go unreported because they often do not have neighbors.

Impacts of hoarding put neighbors at risk, and create the potential for explosive house fires, vermin infestations, and disease (Hoffman, 2013). Neighbors and communities expect to live free of conditions that may result in spread of disease and undue safety risks.

When a person who hoards denies access to their home, service agencies do not have many options. In *State v. Heine* (2012), Heine refused to have fire, health, and construction officials conduct an inspection of her home. The court stated it would be an administrative search, which would require a search warrant (Caputo, 2011). Search warrants are not needed when there is consent to enter, an emergency, or if a public health danger exists (Caputo, 2011). In some states, certain agencies such as public health officials must appear before a judge to request a warrant that gives the right to enter a home and conduct an inspection. Others may be granted the right of entry by the court to gather information needed to hear the case (Bratnotis et al., 2011, p.126). Governments cannot punish or penalize an individual for denying access to their property when there is no warrant obtained (Caputo, 2011).

In a study performed by McGuire et al., (2013) in Florida, 197 CEOs and thirty-nine adult social service workers were surveyed on their experiences with hoarders. Respondents on average encountered between two and three cases a year that met the criteria for compulsive hoarding (McGuire et al., 2013). The average cost of clutter removal per case was \$3,733 (McGuire et al., 2013). Responses to these cases included removal of materials, referrals to counseling services, fines, legal action, and eviction (McGuire et al., 2013). Costs of clutter removal are often expensive, but vary from city to city. In 2009, it was reported that San Francisco spent 2,400 hours on cleanups at a cost

of \$64,000 (Bell, 2012). The findings of the McGuire, et al. (2013) study were valuable insights into hoarding cases in Florida. It was estimated that 4,900 cases met the criteria for hoarding by Florida CEOs per year (McGuire et al., 2013). One health department spent \$16,000 on one cleanup, and a year later the clutter had re-accumulated (Martinez, 2013).

Removing the clutter without therapy will often not stop the hoarder from accumulating more clutter than the first time (Martinez, 2013). In McGuire et al., (2013) more than a third of the cases took a year or longer to resolve, and fifty-two percent of officials reported having repeat offenses. When removal of the items is done without the consent of the hoarder, it can leave him feeling violated and with a great feeling of loss (Bell, 2012). Cleanups can greatly affect the hoarder emotionally and can permanently change the lives of some individuals (Thompkins, 2015). Performing a cleanup will rectify the problem of an unsafe home, but it does not address the issue of hoarding itself (Thompkins, 2015). Some cleanups performed by municipalities or families may throw all contents that the hoarder has accumulated into a dumpster, while the individual watches, traumatized (Hoffman, 2013). This is how forced cleanups can break the trust between the hoarder and associated service agencies. There is little evidence that shows this type of forced cleanup by public agencies being effective (Davis & Edsell, January 2015).

CEOs may sometimes feel that there is no room to be flexible because those living in a cluttered home will not bring their property into compliance with the housing code (Davis & Edsell, January 2015). A cleanup is usually not wanted by the hoarder and can lead to criticisms and arguments over belongings, which can cause emotional issues

(Martinez, 2013). People who hoard believe that any item can be put to good use and have an inability to categorize objects appropriately (Cefalu, 2015).

Studies have shown that the most hoarded items are newspapers, magazines, and other paper products (Frost et al., 2000). People who hoard may save a wide variety of objects. An inspector from Orange County reports that he sees between sixty to eighty severe cases of hoarding a year (Hoffman, 2013). Over the years he has called in pest control, social workers, and cleanup crews associated with the county's task force (Hoffman, 2013). The inspector has encountered vicious dogs in some cases and has even been run down by armed hoarders. This is because many hoarders choose not to cooperate with officials. The inspector once spent over two years with one case; he generally leaves his card and returns every few weeks (Hoffman, 2013). This is how many of the cases go as Fairfax County, Virginia receives two hundred official reports of hoarding a year (Congleton, 2012). All of these cases do not involve inanimate objects, however. Some people hoard animals.

Animal hoarding first became prevalent just over thirty years ago (Fontenelle & Grant, 2014). Animal hoarding is found in 2% of cases and can involve dozens to hundreds of animals, dead and alive, living in squalid conditions (Polak, Levy, Crawford, Leutenegger, & Moriello 2014, p. 189). A typical case involves home interiors coated with human and animal urine and feces, sometimes as much as a few inches deep (Health Implications of Animal Hoarding, 2002). Exposure to ammonia found in urine can have serious health risks that include respiratory problems, lung damage, asthma, and irritation to skin and nose (Bell, 2012). It is estimated that 700 to 2,000 new animal hoarding cases are reported each year in the United States alone (Bell, 2012).

In cases where the hoarding of animals is present, they typically hoard inanimate objects as well (McGuire et al., 2013). The hoarding of animals can occur in apartments, single-family homes, rescue groups, and animal shelters (Polak et al., 2012). The most commonly hoarded animals are cats, dogs, and rabbits. Animal hoarding is defined as having more than the typical amount of animals, neglecting them (resulting in illness), failure to provide minimum care, and failure to control animals (Fontenelle & Grant, 2014). Typical animal hoarders are unemployed and socially isolated people, however, reports indicate that some animal hoarders have been identified as physicians, veterinarians, bankers, nurses, teachers, and college professors (Health Implications of Animal Hoarding, 2002, p.125).

There can be similarities and differences between animal and object hoarding. When there is so much clutter filling a living space that it is impossible to use, this is the signature of object hoarding (Frost, Patronek, & Rosenfield, 2011). In both animal and object hoarding, neglect of the home is present, which results in impairment of everyday life. The main difference in animal and object hoarding is the presence of squalor. Nearly 100% of all animal related hoarding cases include feces and urine in living areas (Frost et al., 2011). Squalor is described as unsanitary living conditions and poses health risks to the residents and the community (Department of Health, 2013).

Over time, these unsanitary living conditions can affect the hygiene of the living spaces in both apartment homes and single-family homes. Any available space such as stoves, bathtubs, and sinks, among other spaces, become places for storage, making cooking and bathing almost impossible (Hoffman, 2013). Utility bills can become buried under items and people forget to pay them. This leads to their power being shut off, so

candles are used for light, which increases the chance of a dangerous fire. A 2009 study performed in Melbourne, Australia, found that 24% of residential home fires were due to hoarders (Hoffman, 2013).

Hoarded properties face the threat of infestations. If water is shut off, residents may urinate and defecate in the yard or in bottles. This greatly increases the amount of bacteria, maggots, and vermin on the property (Hoffman, 2013). Vermin include rats, fleas, cockroaches, bed bugs, mice, and flies. Infestations will obviously impact both the residents in the hoarded environment and the surrounding properties (Department of Health, 2013).

Not only can homes become infested, but serious health factors can emerge from cluttered homes for both the hoarder and the people assigned to the case. A woman who once assisted in the cleanup of a hoarder's home was hospitalized and diagnosed with the rodent-borne Hantavirus (Hoffman, 2013). Other types of vector borne illnesses include Lyme disease and the West Nile Virus (Fleury et al., 2012). Common health problems that hoarders face include gastrointestinal problems, insomnia, allergies, respiratory problems, fatigue, headaches, and injuries from falls, avalanches, and death (Martinez, 2013).

Interacting with hoarders can be a challenge for service agencies. Traditional methods are considered to be ineffective and have the potential to create new problems (Hoffman, 2013). It is unlikely that any strategy will have a 100% success rate (Ligatti, 2013). The safety of the resident is a major concern for service agencies. Large amounts of clutter can create dangerous environments by hindering the occupant's ability to



escape in an emergency, and also hindering the abilities of public safety personnel to enter the home (Congleton, 2012).

Various agencies can be involved to help resolve hoarding cases, such as animal welfare, fire department, department of aging, police, and mental health service providers (McGuire et al., 2013). In addition to government agencies, the private sector can also assist with cases on hoarding. Home health nurses, professional organizers, professional cleaning companies, and occupational therapists can all contribute to helping hoarders improve their health and safety (Bratiotis, 2013). Some communities have even created and established hoarding task forces to assist in hoarding intervention efforts.

The role of a hoarding task force is to seek to mitigate catastrophes and assist people who hoard with improving their lives, but they often find their duties daunting because they have to contend with hoarders' rights to privacy (Hoffman, 2013). Task forces can also improve community procedures for responding to hoarding, and assist in addressing various social problems (Bratiotis, 2013). In 2010 there were seventy-five communities across the United States that had formed hoarding task forces, with the first beginning in 1999 (Bratiotis, 2013; Bratiotis et al., 2011). Agencies in a task force can vary from case to case and some agencies can educate other agencies on issues with particular cases (Hoffman, 2013).

A challenge that hoarding task forces face is sustainability. Scarce funding and fluctuating membership are contributing to the dismantlement of hoarding task forces (Davis & Edsell, January 2015). The combination of hoarding task forces working alongside with mental health professionals is likely to make the most impact in the long

run (Weiss & Khan, 2015). Agencies need to be able to work together and be familiar with each other's roles.

Task force agency goals can range from educating other officials and the public, to collaborating on cases across agencies (Hoffman, 2013). Each agency has limits on the services they can provide, levels of expertise, legal authority, and funding. When agencies are cooperative they can fill in each other's gaps (Koenig, Leiste, Spano, & Chapin, 2013). Task forces educate, train, and seek intervention and support for all parties involved (Bratiotis et al., 2011). Task forces can make a range of decisions to address particular problems and coordinate intervention.

Hoarding task forces react on a case-by-case basis. Agencies will extend deadlines for people with hoarding behavior to help ensure compliance (Bratiotis, 2013). For example, an agency may have a policy to issue a citation for compliance within a short amount of time, but with hoarding cases, compliance dates can be extended for months. Agencies want to work with people who hoard as much as possible but will not leave them unnoticed. Hoarding task forces are one of the most effective tools in gaining compliance with hoarding cases (Bratiotis et al., 2011).



## **Findings**

The findings for this research vary greatly. Some departments gave a wealth of information in the department questionnaires while others provided minimal information. Some departments had very little CEO participation on the CEO survey and some of the larger cities had more participation. Some CEOs only responded to certain questions and some responded to all. All of the information asked is from the last five years only.

Table 1: CEO Participation

<b>Participating Municipalities</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Number of CEOs</b>	<b>Participation</b>
City of San Jose	29	49	59%
City of Fremont	2	3	67%
City of Sunnyvale	1	4.5	22%
City of Santa Clara	1	3	33%
City of Sacramento	13	12	108%
City of Long Beach	1	30	3%
City of Irvine	1	4	25%
City & County of San Francisco	1	30	3%
City of Seattle	4	15	27%

## **City of San Jose**

Table 2: San Jose City Data

<b>Size</b>	<b>Housing units</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>CEOs</b>	<b>CEOs who handle hoarding</b>	<b>Part of a hoarding task force</b>
176.53 sq mi	314,038	1,015,785	49	All	No

Source: US Census Bureau, 2014a

City of San Jose requires all CEOs to take classroom training on hoarding. When complaints are generated on properties with hoarding, the CEO is required to confirm that a violation exists. San Jose explained that a CEO could go out to a complaint about garbage in the backyard and may later determine that there is a hoarding component. After confirming that a violation exists, the enforcement process for CEOs is to work

with the individual on a case-by-case basis, and to follow through with the processes of enforcement.

Table 3: San Jose Department Questionnaire

Cleanups performed	Yes
Number of cleanups performed	Not tracked
Most expensive cleanup	2013 at \$14,396
Follow-ups performed after cleanups	No
Hoarding cases received	2015 - 10 2014 - 12 2013 - 8 2012 - 8 2011 - 9 Reported to the department as a "hoarding" case
Partnering Agencies	Mental Health Advocacy Project, National Alliance on Mental Illness, family members, Clutterbug, professional Organizers
Resources given	Mental Health services

Table 4: San Jose CEO Survey Data Part A

CEO Survey	# of Responding CEOs	
Have you had a case on hoarder in the last 5 years?		
Yes	17	
No	12	
Are you interested in working with other agencies that help hoarders?		
Yes	17	
No	2	
Have you received classroom training on hoarding?		
Yes	16	
No	3	
	# of Responding CEOs	Total Cases
How many cases were only on the exterior of property in the last 5 years?	15	61
How many cases were on the interior of the property in the last 5 years?	14	43
How many cases were on both (interior and exterior of the property) in the last 5 years?	8	36
How many cases were unverified and you were able to close the case in the last 5 years? This includes the property owner/ tenant not allowing access.	9	15
How many cases on hoarding have you been able to close in the last 5 years?	16	66
How many cases have you had voluntary compliance in the last 5 years?	12	48
How many cases have you had to issue citations for in the last 5 years?	12	42
How many cases do you have open right now?	9	26
How many cases have been repeat cases on hoarding in the last 5 years?	8	16
Were any more than 2x repeat? How many?	2	5
Out of how many cases have you worked with other service agencies in attempts to close the case?	7	17

Table 5: San Jose CEO Survey Data Part B

	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
How many forced clean ups have you had to perform in the last 5 years?	7	10
How many were reopened after a clean up, due to repeat hoarding?	5	9
In how many hoarding cases have you had to condemn the property in the last 5 years?	6	8
In how many hoarding cases were the occupant(s) evicted in the last 5 years because they were a hoarder?	3	6
On your average hoarding case how often do you typically conduct site visits to the property per 2 months?	15	Average of 4 visits
Who were the complaining parties in the last 5 years? And how many?	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
Neighbors	14	85
Family Members	7	14
Friends	1	1
Fire Department	8	12
Police Department	5	7
Service Agency Not Listed Above	6	13
Other	3	13
What outside agencies have you worked with in hoarding cases? Check all that apply.	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	
Police Department	6	
Fire Department	7	
Department of Aging	3	
Mental Health	6	
Animal Control	5	
Other	3	
I have not worked with an outside agency on a hoarding case	7	

CEO feedback was left on five surveys. CEO feedback included:

- Hoarders are typically extremely reluctant to clean up or let you into their residence. Usually an outside force that allows you to gain access (ie: neighbor or friend).
- These cases involve mental illness with a variety of reasons.

- I found that working in small specific areas (bathroom, hallway, path through living room), small goals and short timelines worked best with a willing participant.
- Past five years limited to apartment inspections. Mostly discovered during routine inspections. Two complaints from property managers.
- Hoarder promising to clean up, with assistance, then changes mind at last minute. Hoarder blames someone else.

### City of Sacramento

Table 6: Sacramento City Data

Size	Housing units	Population	CEOs	CEOs who handle hoarding	Part of a hoarding task force
97.92 sq mi	190,911	485,199	12	All	No

Source: US Census Bureau, 2014b

Table 7: Sacramento Department Questionnaire

Cleanups performed?	Yes
Number of cleanups performed	Not tracked
Most expensive cleanup	Can range from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars
Follow-ups performed after cleanups	No
Hoarding cases received	Not tracked
Partnering Agencies	None
Resources given	Adult Protective Services and/or Child Protective Services
Training offered to CEOs	Yes
Policy on Hoarding	No



Table 8: Sacramento CEO Survey Data Part A

CEO Survey		
Have you had a case on hoarder in the last 5 years?	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	
Yes	7	
No	6	
Are you interested in working with other agencies that help hoarders?		
Yes	5	
No	2	
Have you received classroom training on hoarding?		
Yes	2	
No	7	
	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
How many cases were only on the exterior of property in the last 5 years?	5	118
How many cases were on the interior of the property in the last 5 years?	6	30
How many cases were on both (interior and exterior of the property) in the last 5 years?	8	37
How many cases were unverified and you were able to close the case in the last 5 years? This includes the property owner/ tenant not allowing access.	6	23
How many cases on hoarding have you been able to close in the last 5 years?	5	45
How many cases have you had voluntary compliance in the last 5 years?	8	29
How many cases have you had to issue citations for in the last 5 years?	2	13
How many cases do you have open right now?	4	28
How many cases have been repeat cases on hoarding in the last 5 years?	3	8
Were any more than 2x repeat? How many?	2	6
Out of how many cases have you worked with other service agencies in attempts to close the case?	2	14

Table 9: Sacramento CEO Survey Data Part B

	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
How many forced clean ups have you had to perform in the last 5 years?	5	20
How many were reopened after a clean up, due to repeat hoarding?	2	3
In how many hoarding cases have you had to condemn the property in the last 5 years?	2	3
In how many hoarding cases were the occupant(s) evicted in the last 5 years because they were a hoarder?	3	9
On your average hoarding case how often do you typically conduct site visits to the property per 2 months?	8	Average of 4 visits
Who were the complaining parties in the last 5 years? And how many?	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
Neighbors	8	89
Family Members	3	28
Friends	3	12
Fire Department	4	6
Police Department	5	15
Service Agency Not Listed Above	3	9
Other	3	99
What outside agencies have you worked with in hoarding cases? Check all that apply.	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	
Police Department	6	
Fire Department	3	
Department of Aging	1	
Mental Health	2	
Animal Control	3	
Other	2	
I have not worked with an outside agency on a hoarding case	2	

CEO feedback was left on three of the surveys. The CEO feedback included:

- Each case depends on the hoarder.
- All information provided was an approximate number.
- APS [Adult Protective Services] has been a good resource.

## City of Seattle

Table 10: Seattle City Data

Size	Housing units	Population	CEOs	CEOs who handle hoarding	Part of a hoarding task force
83.94 sq mi	308,516	668,342	15	All	No

Source: US Census Bureau, 2014c

City of Seattle gives no specific training to CEOs on hoarding. Seattle reported that hoarding cases usually come in as junk storage complaints. Seattle has the authority to deal with only the exterior of the home, and in very rare instances deal with the interior when the condition of the interior creates a public health hazard. When cleanups are performed court orders give a five-year time frame to conduct repeat cleanups.

Table 11: Seattle Department Questionnaire

Cleanups performed?	Yes
Number of cleanups performed	Average of 2-3 a year with majority being exterior only
Most expensive cleanup	Two cleanups performed on the same property within one year totaled \$26,000
Follow-ups performed after cleanups	Yes
Hoarding cases received	Not tracked
Partnering Agencies	None
Resources given	Social Services when wanted
Policy on Hoarding	No

Table 12: Seattle CEO Survey Data Part A

CEO Survey	# of Responding CEOs	
Have you had a case on hoarder in the last 5 years?		
Yes	4	
No	0	
Are you interested in working with other agencies that help hoarders?		
Yes	3	
No	1	
Have you received classroom training on hoarding?		
Yes	2	
No	2	
	# of Responding CEOs	Total Cases
How many cases were only on the exterior of property in the last 5 years?	4	42
How many cases were on the interior of the property in the last 5 years?	2	10
How many cases were on both (interior and exterior of the property) in the last 5 years?	1	4
How many cases were unverified and you were able to close the case in the last 5 years? This includes the property owner/ tenant not allowing access.	2	2
How many cases on hoarding have you been able to close in the last 5 years?	3	33
How many cases have you had voluntary compliance in the last 5 years?	3	32
How many cases have you had to issue citations for in the last 5 years?	3	38
How many cases do you have open right now?	3	11
How many cases have been repeat cases on hoarding in the last 5 years?	3	13
Were any more than 2x repeat? How many?	1	4
Out of how many cases have you worked with other service agencies in attempts to close the case?	3	12

Table 13: Seattle CEO Survey Data Part B

	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
How many forced clean ups have you had to perform in the last 5 years?	3	10
How many were reopened after a clean up, due to repeat hoarding?	2	11
In how many hoarding cases have you had to condemn the property in the last 5 years?	1	6
In how many hoarding cases were the occupant(s) evicted in the last 5 years because they were a hoarder?	0	0
On your average hoarding case how often do you typically conduct site visits to the property per 2 months?	3	Average of 3 visits
Who were the complaining parties in the last 5 years? And how many?	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
Neighbors	3	34
Family Members	0	0
Friends	0	0
Fire Department	1	5
Police Department	2	10
Service Agency Not Listed Above	0	0
Other	0	0
What outside agencies have you worked with in hoarding cases? Check all that apply.	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	
Police Department	3	
Fire Department	2	
Department of Aging	1	
Mental Health	1	
Animal Control	2	
Other	1	
I have not worked with an outside agency on a hoarding case	0	

CEO feedback was left on three surveys. CEO feedback included:

- This is a complex subject.
- A very complicated matter due to the mental health of the individuals and in my opinion no simple answer is available. Each case has to be judged on an individual basis.

- Hoarding is not an easy thing to enforce against. Junk storage or outdoor storage of materials is an easy thing to tell people to clean. There are codes to enforce against things happening on the outside of the property. I would say most hoarding cases happen with owners being the cause. There is not really any enforcement power against the way people want to live inside their own home. In Texas we went against one hoarder with animal cruelty, over 100 cats in the home, and odors. But try fighting a case in court by telling the judge there's a smell.

### City of Fremont

Table 14: Fremont City Data

Size	Housing units	Population	CEOs	CEOs who handle hoarding	Part of a hoarding task force
77.46 sq mi	73,989	228,758	3	All	No

Source: US Census Bureau, 2014d

City of Fremont does not offer training to CEOs on hoarders. CEOs are informally trained out in the field and through other agencies. The policy for hoarding cases is to use the harm-reduction approach and use the Clutter Image Rating System to determine how cluttered a room is. Fremont's department manager reported that cleanups are performed on average of one every five years.

Table 15: Fremont Department Questionnaire

Cleanups performed?	Yes
Number of cleanups performed	1
Most expensive cleanup	Unknown
Follow-ups performed after cleanups	No
Hoarding cases received	Not tacked
Partnering Agencies	Fire Department & Human Services Department
Resources given	APS

Table 16: Fremont CEO Survey Data Part A

CEO Survey		
Have you had a case on hoarder in the last 5 years?	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	
Yes	2	
No	0	
Are you interested in working with other agencies that help hoarders?		
Yes	2	
No	0	
Have you received classroom training on hoarding?		
Yes	2	
No	0	
	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
How many cases were only on the exterior of property in the last 5 years?	1	19
How many cases were on the interior of the property in the last 5 years?	2	10
How many cases were on both (interior and exterior of the property) in the last 5 years?	2	6
How many cases were unverified and you were able to close the case in the last 5 years? This includes the property owner/ tenant not allowing access.	1	1
How many cases on hoarding have you been able to close in the last 5 years?	2	8
How many cases have you had voluntary compliance in the last 5 years?	1	5
How many cases have you had to issue citations for in the last 5 years?	0	0
How many cases do you have open right now?	2	9
How many cases have been repeat cases on hoarding in the last 5 years?	1	2
Were any more than 2x repeat? How many?	0	0
Out of how many cases have you worked with other service agencies in attempts to close the case?	2	9



Table 17: Fremont CEO Survey Data Part B

	# of Responding CEOs	Total Cases
How many forced clean ups have you had to perform in the last 5 years?	0	0
How many were reopened after a clean up, due to repeat hoarding?	0	0
In how many hoarding cases have you had to condemn the property in the last 5 years?	2	4
In how many hoarding cases were the occupant(s) evicted in the last 5 years because they were a hoarder?	1	2
On your average hoarding case how often do you typically conduct site visits to the property per 2 months?	1	Average of 4 visits
Who were the complaining parties in the last 5 years? And how many?	# of Responding CEOs	Total Cases
Neighbors	2	15
Family Members	1	1
Friends	0	0
Fire Department	2	9
Police Department	1	3
Service Agency Not Listed Above	1	2
Other	0	0
What outside agencies have you worked with in hoarding cases? Check all that apply.	# of Responding CEOs	
Police Department	1	
Fire Department	2	
Department of Aging	1	
Mental Health	2	
Animal Control	1	
Other	0	
I have not worked with an outside agency on a hoarding case	0	

## City of Santa Clara

Table 18: Santa Clara City Data

Size	Housing units	Population	CEOs	CEOs who handle hoarding	Part of a hoarding task force
18.41 sq mi	45,147	122,192	3	All	No

Source: US Census Bureau, 2014e

Table 19: Santa Clara Department Questionnaire

Cleanups performed?	Yes
Number of cleanups performed	Not tracked
Most expensive cleanup	Unknown
Follow-ups performed after cleanups	No
Hoarding cases received	Not tracked
Partnering Agencies	Yes (no specific agency given)
Resources given	Yes (no specific agency given)
Training Offered	No
Policy on Hoarding	No

Table 20: Santa Clara CEO Survey Data Part A

CEO Survey	# of Responding CEOs	
Have you had a case on hoarder in the last 5 years?		
Yes	1	
No	0	
Are you interested in working with other agencies that help hoarders?		
Yes	0	
No	1	
Have you received classroom training on hoarding?		
Yes	1	
No	0	
	# of Responding CEOs	Total Cases
How many cases were only on the exterior of property in the last 5 years?	1	90
How many cases were on the interior of the property in the last 5 years?	1	100
How many cases were on both (interior and exterior of the property) in the last 5 years?	1	91
How many cases were unverified and you were able to close the case in the last 5 years? This includes the property owner/ tenant not allowing access.	0	0
How many cases on hoarding have you been able to close in the last 5 years?	1	5
How many cases have you had voluntary compliance in the last 5 years?	0	0
How many cases have you had to issue citations for in the last 5 years?	1	30
How many cases do you have open right now?	1	7
How many cases have been repeat cases on hoarding in the last 5 years?	1	4
Were any more than 2x repeat? How many?	1	2
Out of how many cases have you worked with other service agencies in attempts to close the case?	1	7

Table: 21: Santa Clara CEO Survey Data Part B

	# of Responding CEOs	Total Cases
How many forced clean ups have you had to perform in the last 5 years?	0	0
How many were reopened after a clean up, due to repeat hoarding?	1	3
In how many hoarding cases have you had to condemn the property in the last 5 years?	1	1
In how many hoarding cases were the occupant(s) evicted in the last 5 years because they were a hoarder?	0	0
On your average hoarding case how often do you typically conduct site visits to the property per 2 months?	1	Average of 70 visits
Who were the complaining parties in the last 5 years? And how many?	# of Responding CEOs	Total Cases
Neighbors	1	50
Family Members	1	1
Friends	0	0
Fire Department	1	25
Police Department	1	10
Service Agency Not Listed Above	1	2
Other	0	0
What outside agencies have you worked with in hoarding cases? Check all that apply.	# of Responding CEOs	
Police Department	1	
Fire Department	0	
Department of Aging	1	
Mental Health	0	
Animal Control	1	
Other	0	
I have not worked with an outside agency on a hoarding case	0	

## City of Sunnyvale

Table 22: Sunnyvale City Data

Size	Housing units	Population	CEOs	CEOs who handle hoarding	Part of a hoarding task force
21.99 sq mi	55,791	149,980	4.5	All	No

Source: US Census Bureau, 2014f

City of Sunnyvale does not have a set policy on hoarding cases but strongly encourages people to cleanup or Sunnyvale would perform a forced abatement (cleanup).

Sunnyvale does train its CEOs on hoarding. It is infrequent and is usually through CACEO's annual conference.

Table 23: Sunnyvale Department Questionnaire

Cleanups performed?	Yes
Number of cleanups performed	1 in 2014
Most expensive cleanup	\$75,000
Follow-ups performed after cleanups	Yes
Hoarding cases received	Not tracked
Partnering Agencies	Santa Clara County Mental Health
Resources given	Senior Centers

Table 24: Sunnyvale CEO Survey Data Part A

CEO Survey		
Have you had a case on hoarder in the last 5 years?	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	
Yes	1	
No	0	
Are you interested in working with other agencies that help hoarders?		
Yes	1	
No	0	
Have you received classroom training on hoarding?		
Yes	1	
No	0	
	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
How many cases were only on the exterior of property in the last 5 years?	1	6
How many cases were on the interior of the property in the last 5 years?	1	5
How many cases were on both (interior and exterior of the property) in the last 5 years?	1	4
How many cases were unverified and you were able to close the case in the last 5 years? This includes the property owner/ tenant not allowing access.	1	3
How many cases on hoarding have you been able to close in the last 5 years?	1	5
How many cases have you had voluntary compliance in the last 5 years?	1	5
How many cases have you had to issue citations for in the last 5 years?	1	1
How many cases do you have open right now?	1	1
How many cases have been repeat cases on hoarding in the last 5 years?	1	2
Were any more than 2x repeat? How many?	1	2
Out of how many cases have you worked with other service agencies in attempts to close the case?	1	2

Table 25: Sunnyvale CEO Survey Data Part B

	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
How many forced clean ups have you had to perform in the last 5 years?	0	0
How many were reopened after a clean up, due to repeat hoarding?	0	0
In how many hoarding cases have you had to condemn the property in the last 5 years?	1	2
In how many hoarding cases were the occupant(s) evicted in the last 5 years because they were a hoarder?	0	0
On your average hoarding case how often do you typically conduct site visits to the property per 2 months?	1	Average of 2 visits
Who were the complaining parties in the last 5 years? And how many?	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
Neighbors	1	5
Family Members	0	0
Friends	0	0
Fire Department	1	3
Police Department	1	2
Service Agency Not Listed Above	0	0
Other	0	0
What outside agencies have you worked with in hoarding cases? Check all that apply.	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	
Police Department	1	
Fire Department	1	
Department of Aging	1	
Mental Health	1	
Animal Control	1	
Other	0	
I have not worked with an outside agency on a hoarding case	0	

CEO feedback was left on the survey. The feedback included:

- Sunnyvale has handled only a few interior-hoarding cases but all have been resolved through working cooperatively with the property owner.

## City of Irvine

Table 26: Irvine City Data

Size	Housing units	Population	CEOs	CEOs who handle hoarding	Part of a hoarding task force
66.11 sq mi	83,899	248,531	4	All	Yes

Source: US Census Bureau, 2014g

Table 27: Irvine Department Questionnaire

Cleanups performed?	No
Number of cleanups performed	0
Most expensive cleanup	Not applicable
Follow-ups performed after cleanups	Not applicable
Hoarding cases received	2015 - 17 2014 - 10 2013 - 3 2012 - 9 2011 - 12
Partnering Agencies	The Mental Health Association of Orange County
Resources given	Orange County Task Force
Training offered to CEOs	Yes both internal and through CACEO
Policy on hoarding cases received	No



Table 28: Irvine CEO Survey Data Part A

CEO Survey	# of Responding CEOs	
Have you had a case on hoarder in the last 5 years?		
Yes	1	
No	0	
Are you interested in working with other agencies that help hoarders?		
Yes	1	
No	0	
Have you received classroom training on hoarding?		
Yes	1	
No	0	
	# of Responding CEOs	Total Cases
How many cases were only on the exterior of property in the last 5 years?	0	0
How many cases were on the interior of the property in the last 5 years?	1	1
How many cases were on both (interior and exterior of the property) in the last 5 years?	0	0
How many cases were unverified and you were able to close the case in the last 5 years? This includes the property owner/ tenant not allowing access.	0	0
How many cases on hoarding have you been able to close in the last 5 years?	0	0
How many cases have you had voluntary compliance in the last 5 years?	0	0
How many cases have you had to issue citations for in the last 5 years?	0	0
How many cases do you have open right now?	1	1
How many cases have been repeat cases on hoarding in the last 5 years?	0	0
Were any more than 2x repeat? How many?	0	0
Out of how many cases have you worked with other service agencies in attempts to close the case?	1	1

Table 29: Irvine CEO Survey Data Part B

	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
How many forced clean ups have you had to perform in the last 5 years?	0	0
How many were reopened after a clean up, due to repeat hoarding?	0	0
In how many hoarding cases have you had to condemn the property in the last 5 years?	0	0
In how many hoarding cases were the occupant(s) evicted in the last 5 years because they were a hoarder?	0	0
On your average hoarding case how often do you typically conduct site visits to the property per 2 months?	1	Average of 5 visits
Who were the complaining parties in the last 5 years? And how many?	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
Neighbors	1	1
Family Members	0	0
Friends	0	0
Fire Department	1	1
Police Department	0	0
Service Agency Not Listed Above	0	0
Other	0	0
What outside agencies have you worked with in hoarding cases? Check all that apply.	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	
Police Department	1	
Fire Department	1	
Department of Aging	0	
Mental Health	1	
Animal Control	0	
Other	0	
I have not worked with an outside agency on a hoarding case	0	

CEO feedback was left on the survey. The feedback included:

- I have only been with Irvine Code Enforcement for a short time, which is why these numbers are strange. I have extensive experience with hoarders from my prior city, but did not list it, as it was not one of the survey cities.

## City of Long Beach

Table 30: Long Beach City Data

Size	Housing units	Population	CEOs	CEOs who handle hoarding	Part of a hoarding task force
50.29 sq mi	314,038	473,577	30	1	Yes

Source: US Census Bureau, 2014h

City of Long Beach does have a policy on hoarding cases received. CEOs are to verify that there is a hoarding problem, start the case if it is exterior only. Interior hoarding action is a case-by-case basis. When Long Beach receives an interior hoarding complaint, it is assigned to a single CEO. The single CEO is trained on hoarding and directs the efforts for interior cases. CEOs in the department do not receive training. Potential exterior hoarding cases are evaluated on a case-by-case basis and most often a general CEO treats it as any other case.

Table 31: Long Beach Department Questionnaire

Cleanups performed?	Yes
Number of cleanups performed	Average of 5 per year, usually only exterior
Most expensive cleanup	\$7,000 in 2015
Follow-ups performed after cleanups	No
Hoarding cases received	Not tracked
Partnering Agencies	The SCAN Foundation, Independence at Home, and Heritage House International
Resources given	Nonprofit social worker counseling

Table 32: Long Beach CEO Survey Data Part A

CEO Survey	# of Responding CEOs	
Have you had a case on hoarder in the last 5 years?		
Yes	1	
No	0	
Are you interested in working with other agencies that help hoarders?		
Yes	1	
No	0	
Have you received classroom training on hoarding?		
Yes	1	
No	0	
	# of Responding CEOs	Total Cases
How many cases were only on the exterior of property in the last 5 years?	1	100
How many cases were on the interior of the property in the last 5 years?	1	30
How many cases were on both (interior and exterior of the property) in the last 5 years?	1	70
How many cases were unverified and you were able to close the case in the last 5 years? This includes the property owner/ tenant not allowing access.	1	100
How many cases on hoarding have you been able to close in the last 5 years?	1	65
How many cases have you had voluntary compliance in the last 5 years?	1	19
How many cases have you had to issue citations for in the last 5 years?	1	51
How many cases do you have open right now?	1	4
How many cases have been repeat cases on hoarding in the last 5 years?	1	20
Were any more than 2x repeat? How many?	1	20
Out of how many cases have you worked with other service agencies in attempts to close the case?	1	150

Table 33: Long Beach CEO Survey Data Part B

	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
How many forced clean ups have you had to perform in the last 5 years?	1	82
How many were reopened after a clean up, due to repeat hoarding?	1	51
In how many hoarding cases have you had to condemn the property in the last 5 years?	1	1
In how many hoarding cases were the occupant(s) evicted in the last 5 years because they were a hoarder?	1	4
On your average hoarding case how often do you typically conduct site visits to the property per 2 months?	1	Average of 1 visit
Who were the complaining parties in the last 5 years? And how many?	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
Neighbors	1	50
Family Members	1	25
Friends	1	50
Fire Department	1	20
Police Department	1	30
Service Agency Not Listed Above	0	0
Other	0	0
What outside agencies have you worked with in hoarding cases? Check all that apply.	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	
Police Department	0	
Fire Department	0	
Department of Aging	1	
Mental Health	1	
Animal Control	0	
Other	1	
I have not worked with an outside agency on a hoarding case	0	

CEO feedback was left on the survey. The feedback included:

- Nonprofit organizations work with me frequently.

## City & County of San Francisco

Table 34: City & County of San Francisco Data

Size	Housing units	Population	CEOs	CEOs who handle hoarding	Part of a hoarding task force
46.87 sq mi	376,942	852,469	30	One	Yes

Source: US Census Bureau, 2014i

San Francisco does have a policy on hoarding cases. All hoarding complaints received are forwarded to a single CEO who is trained on the legal and mental health aspects of the diagnosis. Each complaint is considered on a case-by-case basis to achieve code compliance.

San Francisco does offer training to CEOs on hoarders. San Francisco was involved in a pilot program for addressing hoarding issues, which required a daylong training. The one CEO who receives all hoarding cases has attended numerous trainings offered through Mental Health Association of San Francisco and attends their yearly conference. The CEO receives additional training at bi-monthly hoarding task force meetings.

Table 35: San Francisco Department Questionnaire

Cleanups performed?	Unknown
Number of cleanups performed	Not tracked
Most expensive cleanup	Unknown
Follow-ups performed after cleanups	No
Hoarding cases received	2015 ó 36 2014 ó 20
Partnering Agencies	APS, environmental health and mental health agencies.
Resources given	APS

Table 36: San Francisco CEO Survey Data Part A

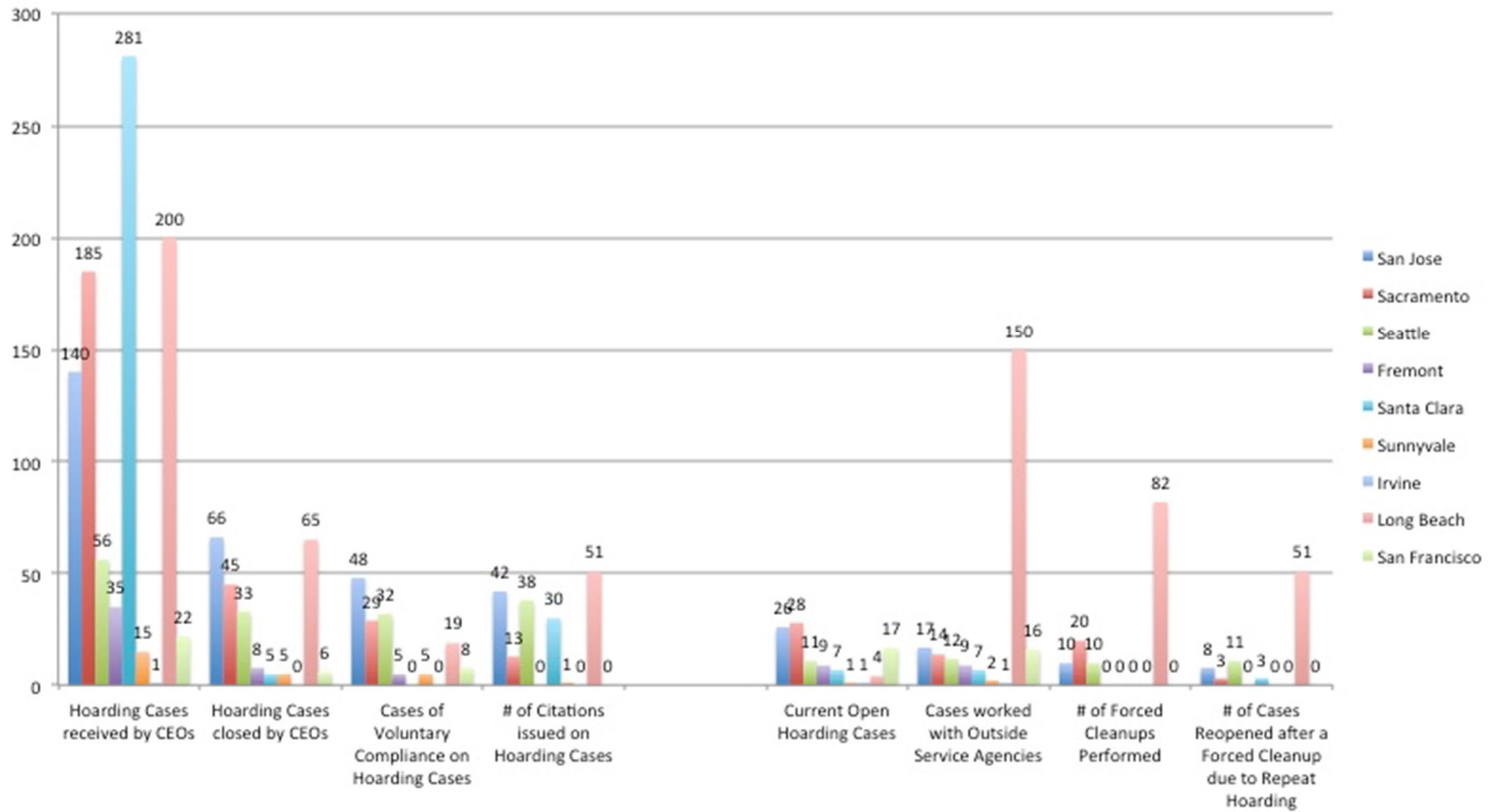
CEO Survey		
Have you had a case on hoarder in the last 5 years?	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	
Yes	1	
No	0	
Are you interested in working with other agencies that help hoarders?		
Yes	1	
No	0	
Have you received classroom training on hoarding?		
Yes	1	
No	0	
	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
How many cases were only on the exterior of property in the last 5 years?	1	3
How many cases were on the interior of the property in the last 5 years?	1	18
How many cases were on both (interior and exterior of the property) in the last 5 years?	1	1
How many cases were unverified and you were able to close the case in the last 5 years? This includes the property owner/ tenant not allowing access.	1	4
How many cases on hoarding have you been able to close in the last 5 years?	1	6
How many cases have you had voluntary compliance in the last 5 years?	1	8
How many cases have you had to issue citations for in the last 5 years?	0	0
How many cases do you have open right now?	1	17
How many cases have been repeat cases on hoarding in the last 5 years?	0	0
Were any more than 2x repeat? How many?	0	0
Out of how many cases have you worked with other service agencies in attempts to close the case?	1	16

Table 37: San Francisco CEO Survey Data Part B

	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
How many forced clean ups have you had to perform in the last 5 years?	0	0
How many were reopened after a clean up, due to repeat hoarding?	0	0
In how many hoarding cases have you had to condemn the property in the last 5 years?	0	0
In how many hoarding cases were the occupant(s) evicted in the last 5 years because they were a hoarder?	1	3
On your average hoarding case how often do you typically conduct site visits to the property per 2 months?	1	Average of 4 visits
Who were the complaining parties in the last 5 years? And how many?	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	<b>Total Cases</b>
Neighbors	1	8
Family Members	0	0
Friends	0	0
Fire Department	0	0
Police Department	0	0
Service Agency Not Listed Above	1	2
Other	1	8
What outside agencies have you worked with in hoarding cases? Check all that apply.	<b># of Responding CEOs</b>	
Police Department	0	
Fire Department	0	
Department of Aging	1	
Mental Health	1	
Animal Control	0	
Other	0	
I have not worked with an outside agency on a hoarding case	0	



Figure 1: CEO Cases by Department



## **Analysis**

A variety of data was received from surveying nine code enforcement municipalities in relation to cases received on hoarding. Different municipalities use different strategies and have different policies on how hoarding cases are handled. CEO participation had ranged from one CEO to twenty-nine CEOs per municipality. Some municipalities responded with more information, which allowed for a better interpretation of how the municipalities operate when hoarding cases are received and carried out.

Some municipalities may give all hoarding cases to one CEO while others may give it to any CEO. In the analysis the researcher will evaluate how certain municipalities operate that have the potential to help other municipalities mitigate hoarding in the community. Privacy will be discussed in the end of the analysis.

City of Fremont, City of Long Beach, and City and County of San Francisco have unique approaches when hoarding cases are received. Fremont uses the harm reduction approach towards hoarding cases and consistently works with their Fire Department and Human Services Department. City of Long Beach and City and County of San Francisco operate differently than all other organizations surveyed and assign all hoarding cases to one CEO.

### **City of Fremont**

The harm reduction approach that the City of Fremont uses emphasizes performing the least amount of harm to the person who hoards (Dover, 2014). When the CEO confirms a hoarding case, the CEO notifies the Fire Department, and the CEO visits the property with a social worker from Fremont's Human Services Department. City of Fremont immediately involves two outside agencies, providing more assistance to the

person who hoards. This also shows that the department knows there is a mental disability involved in hoarding and that is why the Human Services Department is involved.

Fremont uses the Clutter Image Rating Scale to determine if a property meets the conditions of hoarding and if violations exist. The CEOs received an average of 17.5 hoarding cases per CEO. The CEOs reported being able to close eight hoarding cases in the last five years, which was low for the number of hoarding cases received. It is confirmed that CEOs follow the policy on the harm reduction approach, and do not engage in enforcement that could harm the person who hoards, by not issuing a citation or performing a forced cleanup.

Fremont's policy immediately involves other parties and backgrounds in the case. It can be compared to a miniature hoarding task force although the City of Fremont is not formally part of one. The CEOs have worked with other service agencies, which shows awareness of using other resources.

### **City of Long Beach**

City of Long Beach reported taking other measures when cases are received on hoarding. The policy is that a single CEO receives all interior-hoarding cases, while exterior hoarding cases are taken on a case-by-case basis.

The one CEO who receives all interior hoarding cases is the only one trained on hoarding. The CEO works collaboratively with the Long Beach Hoarding Task Force and social workers. Cases are referred to numerous agencies, which shows that Long Beach is actively seeking help for the person who hoards.

The CEO has closed 32% of hoarding cases received and has worked with outside agencies in 75% of them. This large clearance rate suggests that the CEO has had better reception and faster compliance from the hoarder when involving other agencies. Being the single CEO who receives all hoarding cases allows the CEO to build contacts and relationships with other agencies and can be more effective on cases.

### **City & County of San Francisco**

City & County of San Francisco Code Enforcement shares a similar policy to the City of Long Beach. All hoarding complaints are forwarded to a single CEO who is trained on the legal and mental health aspects of the condition.

The CEO appears to be well trained on how to fully manage all aspects of hoarding, even the mental health aspect. San Francisco immediately involves APS in all cases, which addresses the mental health aspect of each case. This shows San Francisco is aware of the mental health aspect and can assist the CEO in gaining compliance at a faster rate.

The CEO has not issued a citation or performed a forced cleanup. This CEO works collaboratively with the person who hoards and involves APS to ensure cooperation and compliance. The CEO also has San Francisco Hoarding Task Force to assist in hoarding cases. Like the CEO from Long Beach, relationships are built in the community, which allows for better cooperation from the person who hoards and all associated service agencies. The CEO must work effectively with other service agencies and with the person who hoards in all cases.

## **City of Seattle**

City of Seattle, Washington, was the only city surveyed outside of California. Seattle's staff consists of fifteen CEOs, four of whom responded to the CEO Survey. Because there was a large number of CEOs who did not participate in the CEO survey, departmental results are probably larger.

CEOs have received an average of fourteen hoarding cases, and have closed 58% of Seattle's hoarding cases. This shows that the CEOs' approach to their cases is working to reach compliance and close the case. Voluntary compliance was also high, which shows cooperation between the CEOs and person who hoards.

Working with outside service agencies can be improved by CEOs. CEOs have worked with outside service agencies in only 17% of cases. It could be that CEOs do not think that outside agencies are needed. Involving outside service agencies such as mental health, on a regular basis, could reduce the amount of hoarding cases reopened after a cleanup. Seattle is aware of other service agencies that assist with mental and physical disabilities and do put people who hoard in touch with them if it is wanted. This could be why service agency assistance is low for CEOs; people who hoard might not seek assistance from outside agencies.

Something unique to Seattle that no other municipality mentioned was that when a forced cleanup has been performed, the court order gives them a five-year time frame to conduct repeat cleanups. This allows the CEO to monitor properties and if conditions worsen it allows them to perform a forced cleanup. It can also discourage people who

hoard from repeating their behavior because of the threat that the property can be cleaned up again.

### **City of Irvine**

The City of Irvine was the southernmost city surveyed in California. Irvine is part of Orange County Hoarding Task Force, which involves more assistance and resources to the person who hoards. Irvine is getting other agencies involved, which is extremely beneficial to the person who hoards and to Irvine. It is especially important to involve a mental health professional, which Irvine is aware of. This could have a lasting affect on people who hoard to reduce chances of recidivism.

Since only one CEO participated, cases cannot be analyzed from the CEO Survey. Being part of the Orange County Hoarding Task Force allows each CEO to work with a mental health professional in each hoarding case and address the mental health aspect of the hoarding behavior.

### **City of San Jose, Sacramento, Santa Clara, & Sunnyvale**

The following four cities have different policies and refer hoarding cases to different organizations. None of the four cities are part of a hoarding task force, which may hurt their capabilities in effectively working with people who hoard the most.

### **City of San Jose**

On average CEOs close thirteen hoarding cases a year. At 140 hoarding cases in the last five years, an average CEO receives an average of twenty-eight hoarding cases a year. Receiving voluntary compliance in forty-eight cases shows that CEOs have tolerance and are willing to work with the person who hoards. CEOs were able work with

the people who hoard in achieving voluntary compliance without having to issue a citation or performing a forced cleanup.

CEOs worked with outside service agencies in 12% of hoarding cases, while ten CEOs did not work with an outside service agency. This number could be improved. CEOs might not be fully aware of what other service agencies offer, or the person who hoards might deny the assistance of other service agencies. Involving other service agencies, especially mental health professionals, could greatly benefit San Jose.

Receiving 140 cases and performing ten forced cleanups (14%) means that there was an average of two forced cleanups a year. This was low relative to the number of CEOs and cases involved. San Jose has a high rate of recidivism among hoarding cases, with eight cases having been reopened after a forced cleanup. This could be due to the person who hoards not getting the amount of mental health assistance needed and further suggests that the CEO should attempt to involve a mental health agency.

### **City of Sacramento**

Sacramento contributed the second highest CEO participation to this survey. On average the six CEOs receive thirty-seven hoarding cases each, and reported closing forty-five hoarding cases altogether. That is an average of closing 7.5 hoarding cases a year and shows that the majority of hoarding cases are open for more than a year at a time.

The majority of responding CEOs were interested in working with other agencies that help hoarders. Service agency involvement was low for the number of cases received. Including mental health services could affect recidivism in Sacramento and

assist CEOs and the person who hoards. Absence of these services could be due to lack of funding in the area and specialists in other agencies.

### **City of Santa Clara**

Receiving 281 hoarding cases and closing five cases may suggest that the CEO has an extreme caseload or misinterpreted the question. The CEO may have a broad definition of hoarding since it was not defined on the CEO survey. These factors make it difficult to evaluate the results.

The CEO reported working with other service agencies in a very low number of cases. Working with other service agencies might lead to a more effective management of the caseload, possibly leading to a higher closure rate. The CEO has had to issue more citations than receiving voluntary compliance, which suggests that the CEO may not attempt to work with people who hoard. Involving other agencies and consistently working with the person who hoards, by not necessarily issuing a citation, may benefit the CEO in reaching compliance faster.

### **City of Sunnyvale**

The CEO from the City of Sunnyvale has closed all hoarding cases by receiving voluntary compliance from the person who hoards. The CEO closed 33% of the hoarding cases he received with only issuing one citation and zero forced cleanups. This shows that the CEO works with the person who hoards and does not need to exercise his power of issuing citations or performing forced cleanups.

Sunnyvale strongly recommends that persons who hoard cleanup their property or the City would perform a forced cleanup on the property. Sunnyvale monitors hoarding cases following a forced cleanup, which shows that the department does not want to have



to reopen cases on hoarding. This could save costs to Sunnyvale and keeps recidivism low.

Sunnyvale refers hoarders to their senior center for mental health services and counseling. Using this form of referral addresses the mental health aspect of hoarding, which is very beneficial. This could be very helpful to people who hoard as they can work with the counselor and possibly receive help from other people who hoard.

### **Privacy**

Respecting privacy depends on several factors and may be different for each case. It can be extremely difficult to measure. Site inspections on average were performed at a rate of 10.6 every two months. Removing Santa Clara's response the average drops to 3.2 site inspections performed every two months. When people who hoard are uncooperative it could increase the number of site visits and CEOs may feel more compelled to continually check on the property. When people who hoard are more cooperative with CEOs it may result in fewer site visits, which leads to compliance and could be considered as less of an intrusion of privacy.

Performing forced cleanups could be a severe intrusion of privacy to the person who hoards. Considering all cases received by CEOs, 12% of cases involved a forced cleanup. Of all forced cleanups, there were ninety-two cases reopened following a forced cleanup for hoarding behavior. This is over 50%, which suggests that forced cleanups are ineffective. This also suggests that there was a lack of mental health resources in forced cleanup cases, which caused recidivism.

Finding other ways to work with the person who hoards to gain compliance, and addressing the mental health aspect of the condition, may be more beneficial in the long

term than performing a forced cleanup. Forced cleanups can bring a lot of unwanted neighborhood attention to the person who hoards and infringe on the privacy of the hoarder. Depending on what the majority of hoarded items are and their location, the forced cleanup could result in an invasion of the hoarder's privacy. CEOs must be able to cleanup any potential health hazards if the person who hoards does not cooperate and comply with municipal codes.

Each hoarding case can be immensely different and the conditions of the property could be so severe that immediate compliance may be necessary, perhaps even leading to condemnation and forced cleanup, which invades the privacy of the occupants. If municipalities allow conditions to worsen, it could become a public health issue.

Cooperation from the person who hoards is vital. Cooperation can be received at different levels and can make the case a lot more challenging. Involving a mental health professional might have a positive impact on the case and may be seen as less of an invasion of privacy. It is code enforcement's objective to protect health and safety in the community and return the property to a safe condition as soon as possible (Sacramento County Code Enforcement, 2015; City of San Jose, 2000).

### **Conclusion**

Becoming part of a hoarding task force could greatly improve resources for case management and result in cooperation from people who hoard in San Jose, Sacramento, Santa Clara, Sunnyvale, and Seattle. Hoarding task forces that include mental health professionals can make a lasting impact on people who hoard (Weiss & Khan, 2015). Any municipality could benefit by using outside service agencies and being part of a hoarding task force. As stated, no government agency has all the resources available to

enforce and support hoarding abatement (Ligatti, 2013). Bratiotis et al. reported that hoarding task forces are the most successful tools in gaining compliance from a person who hoards.

The City of Fremont routinely works with the Fire Department and Human Services Department in all reported hoarding cases. Contacting other departments in Fremont allow for more involvement and knowledge about the conditions of hoarding. Fremont addresses the mental health aspect of it, which may be the most necessary part of any hoarding case.

The City and County of San Francisco and City of Long Beach use a different approach by assigning all hoarding cases to a single CEO. A single CEO receiving all hoarding cases and being part of a hoarding task is an effective way municipalities can gain compliance. The CEOs are trained and fully aware of the mental health aspects of hoarding.

*It is recommended that municipalities assign all hoarding cases to a single CEO and become involved in a hoarding task force. A single CEO receiving all hoarding cases will allow for the development of expertise in managing these difficult cases. Joining a hoarding task force will allow municipalities to access social services and mental health experts, using contacts throughout various service agencies. Hoarding cases will continue to be the most challenging to CEOs; effectively using resources, which include mental health professionals, will be the most beneficial to any municipality.*

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## Appendix A

### CEO Survey

1. What city are you a code enforcement inspector for?
2. Have you ever had a case on a hoarded property in the last 5 years? If yes, please continue. If no, please submit this survey and thank you.

Please answer the following questions on hoarding using the slide bar. If any do not apply to you, please click not applicable.

3. How many were only on the exterior of property in the last 5 years?
4. How many were on the interior of the property in the last 5 years?
5. How many were on both (interior and exterior) in the last 5 years?
6. How many were unverified and you were able to close the case in the last 5 years?  
This includes the property owner/ tenant not allowing access.
7. How many cases on hoarding have you been able to close in the last 5 years?
  
8. Who were the complaining parties in the last 5 years? And how many?  
If any do not apply to you, please click not applicable.
  - i. Neighbors
  - ii. Family members
  - iii. Friends
  - iv. Fire Department
  - v. Police Department
  - vi. Service Agency Not Listed Above
  - vii. Other

Please answer the following questions on hoarding using the slide bar. If any do not apply to you, please click not applicable.

9. How many cases on hoarding have you been able to close in the last 5 years?
10. How many cases have you had to issue citations for in the last 5 years?
11. How many cases do you have open right now?
12. How many cases have been repeat cases on hoarding in the last 5 years?
13. Were any more than 2x repeat? How many?
14. Out of how many cases have you worked with other service agencies in attempts to close the case?
  
15. What outside agencies have you worked with in hoarding cases?
  - a. Fire Department
  - b. Police Department
  - c. Department of Aging
  - d. Mental Health
  - e. Animal Control
  - f. Other
  - g. I have not worked with an outside agency on a hoarding case
16. Are you interested in working with other agencies that help hoarders?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

Please answer the following questions on hoarding using the slide bar. If any do not apply to you, please click not applicable.

17. How many forced cleanups have you had to perform in the last 5 years?
18. How many were reopened after a cleanup, due to repeat hoarding?
19. In how many hoarding cases have you had to condemn the property in the last 5 years?
20. In how many hoarding cases were the occupant(s) evicted in the last 5 years because they were a hoarder?
21. On your average hoarding case how often do you typically conduct site visits to the property per 2 months?
  
22. Have you received classroom training on hoarding?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
23. Anything else you would like to add?

## **Appendix B**

### Department Questionnaire

All answers can be typed on the form following the question.

After completion, please send back to [Jasongibilisco@gmail.com](mailto:Jasongibilisco@gmail.com)

408-674-0932

1. Please state how many new cases were received on hoarding in single-family and multi-family homes in each of the following years?
  - a. 2015?
  - b. 2014?
  - c. 2013?
  - d. 2012?
  - e. 2011?
2. How many hoarding cases involved forced cleanups in the following years?
  - i. 2015?
  - ii. 2014?
  - iii. 2013?
  - iv. 2012?
  - v. 2011?
3. How much did the most expensive cleanup cost in the last five years? And in what year? (please state the cost and year)
4. Is there a current policy for inspectors to follow on hoarding cases? Yes/ No
  - i. If so, what is the policy?
5. How many code enforcement inspectors are in the department?
6. Is training offered to inspectors on hoarders? Yes / No
  - a. If yes, please describe.
7. Is your agency part of a hoarding task force?
8. Are any types of follow-ups conducted in an effort to reduce the chance of recidivism after a physical/forced cleanup is completed?
9. What resources, if any, does your city offer/refer hoarders to for mental health/counseling?
10. What outside agencies, such as mental health or counseling, does your agency partner with to deal with the ongoing emotional/psychological issues associated with hoarding?

