

Rhode Island Emergency Management Advisory Council

MINUTES

March 21, 2006

2:00 PM

The Rhode Island Emergency Management Headquarters

645 New London Ave. – Cranston, RI

Agenda

I. Call to Order/Attendance

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 2:06 PM. In attendance were:

Janice McClanaghan, RISEO

Scott D. Caron, Smithfield Fire Dept.

Thomas Walsh, TSA

Marie Strauss, RIDEA

Tom McMillan, Exeter EMA

John Blessing, RISP/RIDSFM

Robert Thorne, TSA

Ray LaBelle, E-911

Mike McDonough, TSA

Lt. David Hayden, RISP

Douglas Brown, RIPTA

Meredith Arnold, HARI

Robert Thorne, TSA

Al Araujo, Pawtucket EMA

Leo Kennedy, Cranston Fire

Binyamin I. Efreom, Gov. Comm. on Dis.

Paul Stasiuk, National Grid

MG Robert Bray, RI National Guard

Thomas Kilday, HEALTH

Amanda Milkovits, ProJo

David Gifford, HEALTH

Robert Warren, RIEMA

BG John L. Enright, RIEMA

Representative Joseph Trillo

II. Approval of Minutes from February 21, 2006

The chairman requested the approval of the previous meeting minutes from February 21, 2006 pending any corrections. The minutes were approved.

III. Introduction

A. Comments from the Chairman

Chairman Fogarty began by introducing Rhode Island's new Adjutant General, MG Robert Bray. The Lt. Governor welcomed him to both the RI National Guard and the Rhode Island EMA. He then opened up the meeting to an introduction from MG Bray.

B. Comments from the Vice-Chairman

Vice-Chairman noted that he is happy to be here in Rhode Island and

has a great deal of confidence in the capabilities of the people of RI. He has a number of priorities for the future. The Vice-Chairman believes that the EMA is a premiere organization for Rhode Island, its level of responsibility is second to none. It is his desire to everything possible to support RIEMA. The planning and preparation process is critical and resources like our civil support team will be extremely helpful. The Coast Guard also has many assets available to RIEMA and Rhode Island. Vice-Chairman Bray's desire is to develop the kinds of plans that link those capabilities under a "network-centric umbrella" to ensure that whatever resources are needed are available to any incident commander in the field. RIEMA is a necessary tool to help make sure that occurs.

As evidenced by Hurricane Katrina, it is enough to just say that a plan is in place. It is essential to also make sure plans are operational. There is always work to be done to make sure all plans are 100%. Two pieces critically important to keep plans operational are the table-top exercises and the field exercises. Also key is funding. Rhode Island has been very fortunate in the past with federal dollars; it is MG Bray's desire to continue to draw on the federal dollars as much as possible, but under the realization that it may not always be there. The state and local governments also need to "ante-up" and hopefully we can take an advantage of all the dollars out there. It is key that we have network-centric capabilities for emergency management in the State of Rhode Island. MG Bray concluded his comments.

Chairman Fogarty thanked Vice-Chairman Bray for his introduction. Lt. Governor Fogarty thanked MG Bray, Captain Nash, the Coast

Guard, RI DEM, RIEMA and all the local people in Narragansett and all the folks who helped with the tragedy last week involving three URI students. He noted that he was able to go to the command center and knew two of the families that were unfortunately involved in the tragedy and he saw first hand that everyone was doing all that they could and is continuing to do so.

Lt. Governor Fogarty introduced Director Warren. The Director Warren noted that the Hurricane Plan is coming along. RIEMA is working a number of contractors to assist in the planning. Director Warren noted that the citizen's core has been activated again. Especially important to this planning with the citizen's core is donation management. Pandemic Flu planning is also coming along well. We are also about nine weeks away from the start of hurricane season. Lt. Governor Fogarty introduced Dr. Cirillo.

IV. Center for Emergency Preparedness and Response /Avian flu update – Dr. Anthony Cirillo, Rhode Island Department of Health

Dr. Cirillo began by noting the difference between "avian flu" and the planning of the nation for "pandemic flu". While the avian flu could be the flu that becomes a pandemic, it may not necessarily be the exact flu that becomes a pandemic. There is a potential at all times for a pandemic and all people need to be prepared. Also, important to note is that there will soon be a bird with avian flu in Rhode Island and that when this happens there is no reason to panic. There is a difference between the bird flu and human flu. Dr. Cirillo again emphasized the

next three points:

- 1. The difference between the bird flu and the human flu.**
- 2. The definition of a true outbreak.**
- 3. Personal preparedness.**

There are some specific issues that HEALTH is looking at with our local hospitals, in order to work out the operational aspect of providing resources throughout the pandemic flu. The process will continue to be tightened up. Part of the challenge in planning is a regionalization of resources and understanding a consistency of message and communication between agencies, such as what protective equipment to use. What is demonstrated by state agencies will be looked at very closely by the public and is crucial to maintaining a sense of confidence and order under tight circumstances. Resources must be used effectively in order to take care of as many people as possible.

Lt. Governor Fogarty noted that it is important not to live in isolation and to understand what is happening in our neighboring states of Massachusetts and Connecticut. Chairman Fogarty asked if there is a policy for outreach and message. Dr. Cirillo noted that there are plans and emphasized the need for a continuity of government plan. There will be many exercises, including table-top exercises between hospitals and RIEMA. Education and outreach is also very important. It is HEALTH's wish that the public is well aware of the differences between avian flu and pandemic flu, and to be personally prepared.

Representative Trillo asked about whether or not there was a plan available for the public. Dr. Cirillo noted that the plan is currently on the Dept. of Health's website. Rep. Trillo asked if there is a mask or a suit to be worn and what is the best strategy to prevent the spread of the flu. Dr. Cirillo noted that the most effective strategy is to limit large crowds of people from gathering in one place and washing hands. Key to all of this is public understanding

V. Domestic Preparedness Subcommittee Report - Robert Warren, Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency

Director Warren noted that there was a meeting of the Elderly and Disabled Working Group has changed their name to Special Populations Working Group. The East Providence decontamination team will be a Hazmat team as of May 1. Director Warren noted that the next meeting will be Tuesday. Rep. Trillo asked about the status of communication between cities, town and local officials. Director Warren noted that the State is online and is close to 100% coverage. Right now RIEMA is working to make sure that all of the State has the proper amount of equipment. As of right now the State is about 45% covered with equipment for 800mhz communication. Washington County is finished Newport County, Providence and North Providence should be online shortly. The Communications Group is working on implementing the plan. He noted that all dispatches from all cities and towns can currently communicate with one another. The issue is making sure that each individual firefighter and policeman has a radio

for use on the bandwidth. Helpful for this also is the mobile communications center.

VI. Energy Update – Janice McClanaghan, Rhode Island Energy Office

Ms. McClanaghan noted that the LIHEAP energy program was now coming to a close with no major issues to report. The warmer weather is now on its way.

VII. Harbormaster Issues – Jeff Kelly, Cranston Harbormasters Association

Mr. Kelly was introduced. He is the Cranston Harbormaster and the Vice-President of the Rhode Island Harbormasters Association. The association has a long history of assisting Captain Nash and the Coast Guard. Mr. Kelly had two issues he wanted to bring up to the Council. First was a training seminar that would be happening Thursday and Friday beginning at 8:00am at the Roger Williams Annex and invited all to attend. Training is the Harbormasters primary concern. A law passed last year stating that all Harbormasters must be trained. The Academy has put together a 50 hour curriculum for this training of Harbormasters (25 hours renewable), ensuring that everyone is on the same page. If assistance is needed for the State, the hope now is that the Harbormasters will know the proper protocol to follow.

The second issue Mr. Kelly wanted to mention was an experience he

had two weeks after Katrina in New Orleans. He discovered that their number one issue is communications. As a Harbormaster, Mr. Kelly is enthusiastic about the 800mhz radio. He has seen it work, and it works tremendously. Mr. Kelly offered the Harbormasters assistance to any agency that needed it and is looking forward to full implementation of the new statewide radio system.

VIII. New Business/Comments

DEM is continuing to monitor local birds and patterns for Avian Flu. Lt. Hayden noted that the Amber Alert EAS system is now installed at RISP headquarters, to serve as a backup to the system at RIEMA. It has been tested and works. April 27th is the date that has been set for an Amber Alert practical exercise. State and local departments will assist and the Red Cross will be informed.

IX. Adjournment

The Lt. Governor once again welcomed MG Bray and motioned to adjourn and the motion was seconded. The meeting adjourned at 3:07 P.M.