



## **Rhode Island Emergency Management Advisory Council**

Meeting Minutes

THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL WAS HELD:

**July 26, 2007**

**2:30 PM**

The Rhode Island Emergency Management Headquarters  
645 New London Ave. – Cranston, RI  
Planning Room

### **AGENDA**

#### **I. Call to Order/ Attendance**

Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts	Joe Salter (TSA)
MG Robert Bray	Brian Pires (ATAC)
Director Robert Warren (RI EMA)	Leo Messier (PVD EMA)
L. Anthony Cirillo, MD (DOH)	Leo Kennedy (Cranston EMA)
James Lanni (PUC)	Jack Lane (N.P. EMA)
Al Gettman (DEM)	Thomas Walsh (TSA)
Douglas Brown (RIPTA)	Capt. Pete Popko (USCG)
Rev. John Holt (Red Cross)	Bob Thorne (TSA)
Diana Arcand (RI EMA)	John Wheeler (N.P.F.D)
Rep. Joseph Trillo	John Blessing (RISFMO)
Richard Blott (Rep. Langevin)	Kate McCarthy-Barnett (DOH)
Paul Stasiuk (National Grid)	Geof Milner (SATERN)
Chris Laccinole (VA)	Capt. James Swanberg (RISP)
Steve Florio (Deaf and Hard of Hearing)	Steven Kennedy (NUWC)
Lt. Scott Caron (Smithfield EMA)	Deputy Chief Michael Dillion (PFD)

#### **II. Approval of the minutes from May 24, 2007**

Dr. Cirillo made a motion to pass the minutes.  
Rep. Trillo seconded the motion.  
The motion was passed by a voice vote unanimously.

#### **III. Introduction**

*A. Comments from the Chairman, Lt. Governor Elizabeth H. Roberts*

Lt. Governor Roberts welcomed all to the meeting and acknowledged the brave young men she and General Bray would memorialize at the Garden of Heroes on the State House lawn. Sgt. Jazmin and Sgt. Weidemann both perished in Iraq and, the lieutenant governor noted, like our first responders in emergency management, they put the lives of others, ahead of their own. Saturday's ceremony will begin at 12 pm if anyone wishes to attend.

Lt. Governor Roberts recognized the efforts of the Guard for their presentation of the Air Show in June, as well as their use of the 800 Mhz at the show. She also acknowledged all of the efforts that went into the Tall Ships, including RI EMA, the Coast Guard, the National Guard, the Urban Search and Rescue Team and the first responders on Aquidneck Island.

Lt. Governor Roberts congratulated the newest member of the council. Steve Florio, the executive director of the RI Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has been named by the General Assembly to this council. She also thanked Kate McCarthy-Barnett from the Department of Health for co-chairing with Steve the Special Populations workgroup.

Lt. Governor Roberts also recognized Vladimir Ibarra from her office for his dedication to the EMAC. Mr. Ibarra will be leaving the office and attending law school in the fall.

*B. Comments from MG Robert Bray, Adjutant General RING*

General Bray also complimented all of the Air Show staff for their work and presentation. The General said the Guard and RI EMA made plans around the state's capabilities and focused especially on interoperability.

Though an incident could have happened at the Air Show, one didn't occur. It is not because Rhode Island isn't vulnerable, but because of the planning put into the event. The General also complimented Dave Leonard from RI EMA for his organization of the event.

The General asked the council if they knew everyone in the room to highlight the need for vigilance in emergency management. He reminded the council of Secretary Chertoff's recent message that Al Qaeda is in the United States and visible.

The General said preparations for hurricane season continue, including the training of top cabinet level personnel in NIMS training. The General wants to make sure policy makers understand their role in the event that the Emergency Operations Center is activated.

The General submitted a briefing sheet on interoperable communication systems. He said that our state has made strides on the technology side and now needs to shift to the utilization of the technology, including a plan for common language.

**IV. West Nile/EEE Report – Alan Gettman, RI DEM**

According to Alan Gettman, West Nile arrived in Rhode Island in 1999 and has now been found in every state except Hawaii and Alaska. This year there has been 19 new cases, mostly in the American West and Virginia. Connecticut has had one case of West Nile and Massachusetts has only discovered one as well. The Massachusetts strain only affects birds. There have been no positive tests in Rhode Island. All protocols are in place should cases be detected.

Lt. Governor Roberts asked if there was an ongoing public awareness campaign.

Mr. Gettman said DEM and DOH are coordinating message and DEM sends out a weekly press alert. Mr. Gettman also said recently, the city of Warwick has increased regulation of residential homes to pursue homeowners creating “backyard” problems such as dirty swimming pools.

**V. Tall Ships Review – Robert Warren, RIEMA**

Director Warren presented a power point presentation on the Tall Ships activity.

Capt. Pete Popko reported that an after action would be forthcoming, most likely within the month. From the event, Capt. Popko found many best practices that would be very useful in the future. The exercise also made good practical use of the new communication systems Rhode Island has in place, including the 800 MHz and the bay cameras. Capt. Popko said the next step is to continue using these tools in our daily lives.

Lt. Governor Roberts said the good news is the drill went so well. The only bad part of this exercise is the public didn’t see all of the hard work of the participants and how many people are working to keep us all safe.

**VI. Port of Providence Evacuation Drill Review — Leo Messier, Providence EMA**

Director Leo Messier of Providence EMA introduced Deputy Fire Chief Michael Dillion to give the review of the port evacuation. Chief Dillion said this drill was based on a table top drill completed with the EPA previously. There was also a committee set up to understand when a port evacuation would be necessary.

Chief Dillion said the criteria would involve a slow release of product such as chlorine gas or the ignition of flammable liquid. The evacuation notice would be made by the incident commander who would notify Providence Fire and trigger the reverse 9-1-1 system.

Since there are only two roads out of the port and one is blocked, it is imperative to have plans for each area in the port. Some businesses may need to shelter in place or be removed from the water (i.e. Save the Bay), to avoid a bottle neck at the intersection of the port entrance/exit.

This year's evacuation scenario was a plane crash at the Univar plant. Because of the sinking of the Russian submarine, Collier Park could not be used as a staging area. Conley's Wharf was used instead.

The port was evacuated in 35 minutes this year, a change of 19 minutes from last year. The shortened evacuation time may have been effected by fewer participants, but also the effectiveness of the reverse 9-1-1. The drill also showed a weakness. There needs to be a redundant system for notifying workers not inside buildings but in the plant itself. Such a tool could be a siren stationed at locations throughout the port.

Since the part of the evacuation plan using police officers to evacuate residents door by door was deemed to be ineffective, this alarm may be expanded into the surrounding residential neighborhoods as well.

During an evacuation, port zones C and D are immediately evacuated to allow firefighters a safety zone from which to work in. Johnson and Wales has a system installed called Connect Ed which will notify all faculty, staff and students on their campus.

Chief Dillion concluded by saying that there must be a plan. The plan must be effective. And the plan must be exercised.

Lt. Governor Roberts asked about the 3000 Johnson and Wales students in the dorms.

Chief Dillion said the city has a contract with First Ed to move the students out of the area quickly in buses.

Steve Florio asked if the reverse 9-1-1 system is deaf and hard of hearing compatible.

Director Messier said the system is equipped but has not been tested in an exercise yet. He also added that Providence EMA is starting a voluntary program to sign up Providence residents for alerts on their cell phones.

## **VII. Federal Emergency Management Grant Process Update – *Robert Warren, RIEMA***

Director Warren reported that the federal grant program has become much more restrictive, but Rhode Island's application effectiveness has increased from 12 percent to 55 percent. Rhode Island is 3<sup>rd</sup> of all states per capita for funding.

All of the past grants were considered above the national average for effectiveness as well. Director Warren wished to thank all who were involved in the grant process for their hard work.

The grant plan is due in Washington by August 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Tom Kilday said that RISP and RI EMA have already had talks with CT and Mass. about a regional approach to the 800 MHz system.

Rep. Trillo asked how far we have progressed on the 800 MHz.

Director Warren said Rhode Island has increased capacity with a tower in Central Falls and two in the southern part of the state as well as increasing channels in Coventry and Exeter. RI EMA was forced to move a tower from the Pastore Complex further north. The Pastore Complex power failure dropped the tower at the CCRI Knight campus off line because they are connected. The state are at a point to start the phase over into more portable units.

Rep. Trillo asked if legislation was necessary to get more to municipalities to switch over to the system.

Director Warren said each incident commander will have an 800 MHz and that the updated grant plan should describe the continuing expansion of the technology.

Dr. Cirrillo added that each hospital is equipped with the 800 MHz or the RI TURN. They will also soon be on the RISCO system with 4 talk groups.

### **VIII. New Business/ Member Comments and/or Suggestions**

Director Warren said a National Advisory Committee was created for FEMA. No one from RI was named to the council but Director Leo Messier, Dr. Cirillo and Director Warren will sit on the regional committee.

Joe Salter from TSA said he doesn't believe the GETS card works without the wireless priority service for cell phones and that the Communications working group needs to look at the issue. He added that VIPER searches continue. The public need to get out of the 9/10 mode and continue to be prepared in the post-9/11 world because we face a vicious enemy.

The Rev. Holt said VOAD is up and running with a call down system for volunteers. This system coordinates other non-profits that can help during an emergency and is run by Purvis system.

Holt said he wanted to thank RIEMA for the grants that the Red Cross is using to train dozens of shelter volunteers.

Director Messier said Sept 30 there will be a WMD exercise at the Providence Convention Center. There will also be an exercise in March for the Family Assistance Center plan.

Lt. Governor also announced that there are plans underway to change the format of the council meetings to include an educational component. She asked for input from council members and asked them to contact Paul Tencher, her chief of staff, for more information.

## IX. Adjournment