

# **Rhode Island Emergency Management Advisory Council**

## **Meeting Notice**

**THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL WILL BE HELD:**

**August 10, 2010**

**10:00 AM**

**Community College of Rhode Island**

**Knight Campus, Room 4090**

**400 East Avenue**

**Warwick, RI 02886**

## **AGENDA**

### **Attendance**

**Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth H. Roberts**

**MG Robert T. Bray**

**J. David Smith**

**Ed Johnson**

**Dennis Nixon**

**Christopher Reddy**

**Sam DeBow**

**Jack Chartier**

**Peter Gaynor**

**Lori Needham**

**Kate McCarthy Barnett**

**James Lanni**

**Jim Ball**

**Steve Florio**  
**Susan Earley**  
**Kim Harris**  
**Paul Stasiuk**  
**Gregory Scungio**  
**Peter Ginaitt**  
**Randall Ricketts**  
**Robert Seltzer**  
**Claudia Staniszewski**  
**Joseph McCooey**  
**Vincent Marzullo**  
**Ronald Pigeon**  
**Capt. Verne Gifford**  
**Paul Lattanzi**  
**Steven Preston**  
**Robert Church**  
**Jamie Tracy**  
**Vladimir Ibarra**

**I. Approval of Minutes from May 11, 2010 and June 08, 2010**

**The minutes from May 11 and June 8 were unanimously approved.**

**II. Call to Order /- Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts**

**Lieutenant Governor discussed her recent trip to the Gulf Coast area where she met with local business leaders and state emergency**

officials. The tour included site visits to examine the oil spill response at Deer Island and the Northrop Grumman navy warship shipbuilding facility to discuss how jobs in Rhode Island can be protected and expanded. She was pleased that many experts from our area played a crucial role in the Gulf response and recovery efforts and was looking forward to the presentation.

The Lt. Governor congratulated the Town of Bristol for being the first jurisdiction to implement a hazard mitigation plan. This approval follows an extensive technical assistance and outreach process coordinated by the FEMA and the Rhode Island EMA in response to the spring 2010 floods. Lastly, Chairwoman Roberts congratulated subcommittee member Susan Earley for obtaining \$ 2.1 million in funding for flood related crisis counseling called Helping Other People in Emergencies (HOPE).

### **III. RIEMA Update**

**Robert T. Bray, Adjutant General of Rhode Island**

The General recently returned from the Jackson Barracks in New Orleans, Louisiana which has been the training ground for all disaster preparedness, support and participation of FEMA. They have been leading in the strategic sense of preparedness recovery and after action reviews. Following along those lines, Rhode Island established a committee to address the bridge dam repairs and the closing of I-95 among others.

General Bray attended a briefing at the Pentagon on intelligence in the United States as there has been an upsurge on activity.

**In regards to the budget, a limited 13% of general revenues have been placed on hold and aviation assets are scheduled to disappear by 2016. Similarly, Defense Secretary Robert Gates announced earlier that the Pentagon will cut thousands of jobs, including a substantial part of private contractors and major military commands as part of an ongoing effort to streamline their operations.**

**J. David Smith, Executive Director RI Emergency Management Agency**

**Director Smith thanked CCRI President Ray Di Pasquale and acknowledged that their partnership has been instrumental in developing a curriculum for a two-year program. He thanked the president for the use of the facilities and mentioned that this site had been designated as a Mega Shelter with capacity for about 500 individuals.**

**Director Smith apprised members that the Joint Field Office (30 Plan Way) in Warwick, closed last Friday and only critical staff remains.**

**Regarding Hurricane season, he said we have been lucky thus far but the ocean temperature continues to rise. Tomorrow there will be a meeting with HEALTH, DEM and the RI National Guard in regard to a nuclear event preparation and those findings will be reported at the Subcommittee report meeting in October.**

#### **IV. Update on Gulf Oil Spill – Implications for Rhode Island**

**Dennis Nixon, Associate Dean of Oceanography University of Rhode Island**

**Associate Dean Dennis Nixon provided an in-depth look at the legal repercussions of the Deepwater Horizon and the British Petroleum (BP) oil spill. The Dean stated that the U.S. has become complacent towards the oil industry after the Exxon-Valdez spill in Alaska (1989) because there has not been another major environmental disaster since that time. In fact, starting in 1985, offshore oil activity accounted for only 2% of oil seepage into the ocean while the marine transport industry accounted for 45%. In the decades following the Oil Pollution Act of 1990, oil companies became fearful of the risks involved with offshore oil and their associated liability in a potential spill. This industry fear of risk resulted in a large reduction in the amount of oil extracted offshore, which led to a decrease in the amount of oil being handled by the marine transport industry. As a result, in 2002, the marine transport industry was responsible for only 3% of ocean oil seepage and offshore oil still had the smallest impact. The offshore oil sector had the greatest safety record so it received less attention from Congress. The public trusted oil companies to maintain this safety record as they moved operations further offshore, due to the longstanding safety record of the industry.**

**The Dean also noted that the second biggest revenue source after income tax to the U.S. Treasury is offshore oil. It is beneficial to the public that oil companies such as BP make money because they eventually share in the profits. The public needs to recognize that the U.S. needs oil companies to continue pumping oil. Our need for oil will continue until renewable energy technology is at a point where it can compete in the energy market and meet the U.S. energy demand.**

## **Captain Verne Gifford, Commander USCG Sector Southeastern New England**

**Before his assignment to the Southeastern New England Sector, Captain Verne Gifford served as the Prevention Division Chief of the Eighth Coast Guard District, where he provided operational oversight to a region of 26 states and the Gulf of Mexico on commercial and recreational vessel safety, waterways and bridge management, and the Coast Guard Auxiliary.**

**Captain Gifford explained how the USCG uses site-specific response plans for oil spills called Geographic Response Plans. These include response strategies tailored to a specific beach, shore, or waterway and meant to minimize impact on sensitive areas threatened by the spill. Moreover, he illustrated how teams such as the National Strike Force (NSF) provides highly trained, experienced personnel and specialized equipment to Coast Guard and other federal agencies to facilitate preparedness for and response to oil and hazardous substance pollution incidents in order to protect public health and the environment. Lastly, Captain Gifford provided a brief overview of the Oil Liability Trust Fund (OLTF) created by Congress in 1986. This fund is used to pay for clean-up and removal costs following a qualified oil spill as well as certain claims for damages.**

**For further information visit NOAA Office of Response & Restoration at: [http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/dwh.php?entry\\_id=812](http://response.restoration.noaa.gov/dwh.php?entry_id=812)**

**Christopher Reddy Ph.D., Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution**

**Dr. Christopher Reddy is a chemist who studies pollution and biofuels especially oil spills, in the marine environment. He has a BS in chemistry from Rhode Island College and a PhD in chemical oceanography from the Graduate School of Oceanography at the University of Rhode Island.**

**Dr. Reddy stated that the Endeavor is the best research vessel with a crew that has over 35 years experience and was sure it would be recognized in the near future. The team deployed a submersible called Sentry southwest of the damaged wellhead. Equipped with a mass spectrometer, it was designed to instantly detect oil components and to adjust its course based on its findings. The submersible also collected actual samples of oil-tainted water but those samples did not look like chocolate syrup but looked like Perrier and had no smell of oil. Further analyses of the water samples will indicate how toxic the plume was and whether it affected any wildlife it encountered. The testing and analyses also demonstrated that the oil could not have come from any natural source of oil seepage in the ocean bottom, confirming that the wellhead was the source of the plume.**

**Dr. Reddy was also critical of scientists making quick unsupported claims about the effects of the oil spill just to keep the news cycle going. He stated that it was irresponsible as they were messing with people's livelihoods and mental health.**

**The University of Rhode Island will provide an in-depth analysis of the catastrophic oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico at a panel discussion on Sept. 29 at 6 p.m. at Corless Auditorium on the University's**

**Narragansett Bay campus. The event, “Seeing Clear: Perspectives on the Gulf Oil Spill,” is free and open to the public.  
<http://www.uri.edu/news/releases/?id=5481>**

#### **V. New Business, Member Comments, Suggestions**

**The next meeting will take place on October 12, at the RI Department of Transportation Division of Highway and Safety and will be a Subcommittee Reports.**