



Rhode Island Emergency Management Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

October 11, 2011

10:00 AM

RI Emergency Management Agency

645 New London Avenue

Cranston, Rhode Island

I. Attendance—Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts

Lt. Governor Elizabeth H. Roberts

Ed Johnson

Alysia Mihalakos

Peter Ginaitt

Vin Marzullo

Paul Stasiuk

John Isberg

Dana Trytten

Jack Chartier

Jim Ball

Fred Wagner

Marian Juskuv

Joe McCooey

Joan Moran

Norm Menard

John McGough

Janice Pothier Pac

Joe Cournoyer

Steven Florio

Jeff Stevens

James Lanni

Susan Earley

Lori Needham

Erin Lambie

Kevin Blount

Amanda Kozar

Liz McDonald
Stephen Kavanagh
Vladimir Ibarra

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

The Chair informed the members of the upcoming RI Association of Emergency Managers “Tropical Storm Irene After Action Review” on Thursday, October 13th from 9a.m.-1 p.m. at the Community College of Rhode Island, Warwick Campus. Also announced was that Thursday, starting at 5:30 p.m., the Senate Committee on Housing and Municipal Government will hold the last hearing on “Lessons Learned Regarding Emergency Response to Tropical Storm Irene”. The hearing will focus on coordination of sheltering and transportation efforts with the municipalities and private entities including the RI Department of Transportation, the RI Red Cross and local emergency managers associations.

The Chair met with the RI Association of Superintendents in regards to communications glitches during Tropical Storm Irene via email and sheltering locations. The organization was very complementary of the RI Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) and partners efforts during the storm. Also, the organization agreed to provide the mobile numbers of its members to the RIEMA for future robocalls and/or text messages.

Lastly, the Chair asked Janice Pothier Pac to elaborate on Serve Rhode Island’s completed clean up coordination efforts for Tropical Storm Irene. They were able to document 6,587 hours of service valued at \$140,698.32.

III. Approval of Minutes from September 13, 2011

The minutes were unanimously approved.

IV. Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency Update

Interim Director Edward Johnson attended the annual National Emergency Managers Association (NEMA) in which FEMA’s Administrator, Craig Fugate, spelled out the National Preparedness Goals (NPG).

The NPG lays out the vision for nationwide preparedness, identifies the core capabilities and targets necessary to achieve preparedness across five mission areas: prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery.

V. A Look Back at Hurricane Irene

John Isberg, Director of Community and Customer Management, National Grid.

John Isberg presented National Grid's Incident Command System for emergency preparedness and response, highlighting pre-planning and ICS structure.

The specific timeline for Irene preparedness established steps taken prior to and during the storm, including activation of ICS at least three days in advance of landfall. Prior to the storm, National Grid communicated with the state RI Emergency Management Agency and local agencies including the Red Cross, and critical customers (life support customers). Chair Roberts asked how people returning from the hospital with a life support device that requires electricity learn about this registration. John Isberg answered that information is disseminated through yearly updates and periodical mailings. Also, Mr. Isberg was pleased to announce that all eighty-seven life support customers were checked in during the incident.

The severity along the entire East Coast was compared to that of Rhode Island, estimating six million customers were without power along the seaboard, including seventy-six percent of customers within National Grid's territory in Rhode Island. Safety was National Grid's priority having no electrical contact deaths or injuries in Rhode Island.

The damage assessment process found over 1140 sections of wires down, as well as eight damaged transmission lines, and two hundred and twenty two broken poles. Prioritized restoration mobilized two thousand four hundred National Grid personnel while maintaining close contact with state and local agencies. On the day following Irene (August 29) sixty one percent of power had been restored. By September 4, only twenty outages remained, having 99.9 percent of customers restored.

After action reviews highlighted National Grid's cycle for continuous improvement. Lessons learned and actions from improvement included a need to continue to collaborate with state and local agencies, build pre-storm communications with municipalities, schedule annual meetings to discuss awareness, improve storm training for non-operations personnel, and providing resources locally while balancing restoration practices, among others.

Elizabeth McDonald, Senior Director of Emergency Services, American Red Cross of Rhode Island

Elizabeth McDonald, Senior Director for Emergency Services for the American Red Cross (ARC) gave an overview of the role of the ARC in the wake of Hurricane Irene, starting with the preparedness phase. Starting in April 2011, the ARC met with ESF 6 (Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing and Human Services) and 8 (Public Health and Medical Services), and emergency managers to discuss the current status of trained volunteers, regional sheltering, etc. McDonald met with a number of Rhode Island communities, including Providence, Pawtucket, Warwick, and Cranston, and she highlighted challenges throughout the response phase. A lack of internal and external communications led to difficulties as communities changed shelter plans and also lead to some misunderstandings as to the resources needed by communities and partners as well as the role of ARC.

McDonald cited lessons learned and next steps in preparedness and response including: a need to move forward with regional shelter planning and leadership training; a need to establish an understanding of responsibilities of special needs facilities, need to include a feeding plan, the ARC role, as well as evacuation population and procedures; and establish a communications plan in advance including Hams as communicators and make the 800 MHz the priority.

John McGough, Public Assistance Branch Chief, DHS/FEMA

Mr. McGough presented steps and requirements to be taken to apply for the Public Assistance Grant Program to obtain supplemental financial assistance from the federal government in the wake of a declared disaster.

The presentation covered eligibility factors, including tribal, local, and state agencies. Types of eligible work included emergency work (debris removal, etc) and permanent work. Cost eligibility was also covered, highlighting small and large projects, with limits on project completion deadlines. Special considerations include factors outside program eligibility affecting scope of funding and work (hazard mitigation, environmental requirements, historic preservation, etc).

The procedures for contract procurement and appeals were covered. Additionally, the importance of applicant required documentation and record keeping was covered, showing accurate documentation lead to a higher likelihood of full recovery of eligible costs. Requests for assistance through the program are due thirty days following disaster designation and project worksheets are due sixty days following the kickoff meeting. Emergency work needs to be started within six months of declared disaster, with permanent work beginning within eighteen months. Additional resources and a guide to the process can be found through FEMA's website (www.fema.gov).

Jeff Stevens, Center for Emergency Preparedness & Response, Special Needs Registry

Mr. Stevens informed members that there were 10,000 individuals enrolled in the Registry as of the meeting. The purpose of the registry is to have a reliable system for identification of Rhode Islanders that require special assistance during emergencies. The information provided is shared with local and state emergency management responders and personnel.

Mr. Stevens endeavored to dispel some of the myths in regards to the registry such as one which suggested that it guaranteed assistance and/or products (medicine, oxygen and/or respirators).

Mr. Stevens spoke about the registry's outreach efforts, including the recent hiring of a community specialist who will reach out to the minority community and vulnerable populations, attend community events and meet with local EMA Directors to increase capacity. Also, the registry is working on an awareness campaign by providing brochures and outreach tear-offs to EMS groups. Lastly, the registry is updating their memorandum of understanding with 911 and working to refine items such as ventilator,

use of wheelchair, cannot walk without assistance to provide better responder awareness.

VI. New Business, Member Comments, Suggestions

Next Meeting will take place on **December 13th** at the RI Emergency Management Agency.