

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council
Date: Wednesday, June 8, 2011
Time: 2:30pm – 4:30pm
Place: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
Training Center, Lobby Level
777 North Capitol Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Draft Meeting Outcomes

1 Welcome, Introductions and Approval of Minutes

1.1 The meeting began with Chair Andrews welcoming the committee, introducing new members, and providing other members an opportunity for self-introductions. The February 9, 2011 minutes were approved.

2. Special Briefing: Discovery Channel Hostage Event

2.1 Chief Tom Manger, Police Chief, Montgomery County briefed the EPC on the Discovery Channel Hostage Event. During the briefing he emphasized the need for close coordination in emergencies. He used a video and slides to describe the event in detail. Chief Bowers, Fire Chief, Montgomery County was on the scene the day of the event and joined Chief Manger to provide additional detail during the briefing. They noted that the event occurred around 1:00 p.m. on September 1, 2010 at which time the 911 call center started receiving multiple calls. Subsequent to Mr. Lee, the suspect, shooting his gun into the ceiling, he asked employees to hit the floor. Most of them ran out of the building leaving the suspect with only one hostage, the security guard who remained in the building. After viewing a picture of the lobby the responders determined that their snipers would not be able to “take the suspect down” from outside of the building because the glass was too thick and there were huge pillars and displays throughout the lobby.

2.2 Chief Manger provided an audio clip of the police negotiations with Mr. Lee. The negotiations were unsuccessful and Mr. Lee was shot and killed. First responders were able to confiscate several items of evidence from the suspect’s residence after a local resident informed police that Mr. Lee lived in his basement. Police confiscated Mr. Lee’s computer where he had noted in his outlook file that the date of the event was the end.

2.3 Chief Manger reported that they had great regional cooperation from the region law enforcement community throughout the incident. He noted that law enforcement coordination has improved significantly since Chief Chuck Ramsey, Former Police Chief, Washington, D.C. requested assistance with a downtown incident about 10 years ago and other police agencies from across the region responded. Chief Manger noted that EMS, Police and Fire Departments cooperate and train together regionally and that contributed to the success of this operation.

2.4 Chief Manger noted that the ratings and notoriety of the Mayor of New York City went up after 9/11 because of the leadership he displayed during the tragedy. Several local elected officials noticed this and began asking questions about the role they would play in a crisis. Chief Manger stated that the most important role for Elected Officials in a crisis is to keep the public informed regarding the situation and to let the public know that they are supporting public safety officials.

The question arose as to when and where this would be appropriate. It was noted that this conversation should occur before the crisis to establish when and where it is appropriate for elected officials to provide situation updates to their residents and support for public safety. He also noted that the media needs to be updated on a regular basis.

2.5 Chief Manger reported that, according to the FBI, this was their first suicide bomber with hostages in this country. The Israeli Police have learned that once suicide bombers put the bomb on they will not take it off because they have made their final decision. Regardless, if law enforcement has the opportunity to neutralize the threat they will do so. Further, Chief Manger noted that managing the large number of first responders who appear without being asked to help has become a major concern in such incidents.

Action: None

3. Presentation on New DHS National Threat Advisory System

3.1 Stewart Beckham, Director, NCRC, FEMA, DHS stated that the National Threat Advisory System (NTAS) replaces the color-coded Security Advisory System (HSAS). He provided a copy of the NTAS Guide and a website for the guide. Mr. Beckham noted that the new system will more effectively communicate information about terrorist threats by providing timely, detailed information to the public, government agencies, first responders, etc.

3.2 The Secretary of Homeland Security in coordination with other Federal agencies formed a committee that developed the new NTAS system. Mr. Beckham noted that there are only two levels of alerts and that they would only be issued if there was a credible threat. The first level is the Elevated Threat Alert Level and the second level is the Imminent Threat Alert Level. NTAS may or may not apply to the entire country. A threat level may only be for a specific area of the country and/or specific group such as law enforcement or infrastructure areas. The NTAS has a sunset provision. The threat alert is issued for a specific period of time and it automatically expires but it may be extended if necessary.

3.3 DHS is also coming up with a commercial Mobile Advisory System that is being worked out with mobile telephone providers around the country. This is a text based messaging system that will provide messaging based on the location of your cell phone. The first area to be rolled out will be the New York City Region and the second will be the National Capital Region. No specific date has been set as of now but New York is expecting it to be in the September time frame. The system will have three options, two of which you can opt out of. The first is the Imminent Threat Alert, second is the Amber Alert and third is an alert from the President, this alert you cannot opt out of.

Action: Mr. Beckham invited the committee to give him a call or send an e-mail should they desire additional information on NTAS.

4. Update on AD HOC Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response

4.1 Chairman Andrews, also Chair of the ADHOC Steering Committee, provided an update on the Committee's work plan and schedule. The COG Board of Directors established the AD HOC Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response on March 11, 2011. The first meeting of the Steering Committee was held on April 28, 2011. It is an 18 member committee with representatives from government, the business sector, including electric utilities and other appropriate officials responsible for implementing policies. The scope of work for the Steering Committee has four focus areas to include: (1) improving real time information or situation awareness among local, state and federal government agencies with operational authority or responsibilities; (2) improve real-time information to the media and the public; (3) improve regional coordination; and (4) strengthen and focus decision-making. Focus area four is the most difficult and controversial area out of the four focus areas and it has been debated before the COG Board.

4.2 The Steering Committee will be considering the possible need for different authority for decision making in the event of an emergency. Chair Andrews noted that the committee is well- served by additional staff that has been working hard between meetings. The next meeting will be held at the end of June, the third meeting is scheduled for August and the fourth meeting is scheduled for October. The goal is to present the Steering Committee recommendations to the COG Board in November so the recommendations can be adopted before the next snow season begins.

4.3 The tentative follow-up items for the June or August meeting include a draft outline of a report and a briefing on the MATOC and TRANSCOM systems describing how these two regional organizations coordinate the same management and response with respect to their jurisdictions. It was noted that there is a need to focus on the relationship between transportation and the personnel departments in emergency situations involving the release of employees. One issue that exists is the lack of coordination between the two in terms of the personnel decisions to release employees. The release of employees needs to be guided or determined by the transportation capacity available at the time. OPM decisions need to be made with the full knowledge of by transportation departments based on conditions or whether grid lock may occur.

4.4 Chair Andrews noted that COG has a transportation model. He requested Ron Kirby of the COG Transportation Department make available the information regarding the transportation model to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will have recommendations regarding this matter.

4.5 It was noted that decision making issues are always more complicated in a multi-state or multi jurisdiction area. The Steering Committee is going to look at different models for decision making and would appreciate receiving any recommendations from the EPC. It was stated that media engagement is vitally important and the NCR wants to make sure that the region takes full advantage of all available media sources to get messages out to multiple audiences. Further, the Steering Committee will have a briefing on OPM decision making at its next meeting. Chair Andrews emphasized the need for COG and the federal government to work together to insure that policies are coordinated. Further, he stated that he plans to update the COG Board on Steering Committee activities at its July meeting. The agenda for the June 29, 2011 meeting will be provided a week prior to the meeting.

Action: None

5. UASI Funding Updates: Active Grants (FY08, FY09, FY10) and Application (FY11)

5.1 The EPC has requested that it receive updates at each meeting on all current and prior year USAI grants. Mr. Tim Fitzsimmons provided a handout with current and projected expenditures associated with FY08, FY09, and FY10 awards and an update on the regional FY11 grant application process. FY08 UASI award is for \$59.8M and the period of performance expires August 31, 2011. Currently the FY08 grant is 67.5% expended with 58.4% fully reimbursed to sub-grantees. Most FY08 grants expired on May 31, 2011 based on a SAA deadline and recipients of the grants have 30 days to submit final reimbursements to the SAA.

5.2 FY09 grant period of performance is August 01, 2009 through July 31, 2012 and the award is \$58,006,500. Currently the FY09 grant is 23.9% expended with 19.3% fully reimbursed to sub-grantees. Sub-grant extensions have been issued according to the SPG/CAO policy. The latest date for extensions is June 30, 2012. FY10 grant allocation is \$59,392,477 and the sub-grants were issued with a period of performance from August 01, 2010 through September 30, 2012. The SAA has only 2% of the grant submitted for reimbursement. Mr. Fitzsimmons will contact sub-grantees that have not set up expenditure plans in NCRGMS and request that they are set up.

5.3 FY2011 Grant allocations \$59,393,477. All Tier-1 urban areas to include the NCR received level funding or the same funding that they received in FY10. Over half of Tier-2 urban areas were cut from the program and the remainder received reduced funding. The grant application for FY11 is due on June 20, 2011 and the SPG and CAOs have recommended 47 projects for FY2011 UASI funding. These projects make up 11 investment justifications in the application that correspond to the NCR Strategic Plan and the investment plans developed over the last year. Further, FEMA has new planning and reporting requirements for FY2011 that will increase focus on measuring capabilities.

6. Updates on EPC Work Focus for 2011

6.1 Dave Robertson, Executive Director, COG and Kelley Coyner, SPG Chief of Staff briefed the committee on the Work Focus and Program for Calendar Year 2011 for the EPC. Dave Robertson began the discussion by giving the history of the EPC. The EPC is a public and private advisory panel created in 2002 before the UASI process was established to provide high level guidance to local, state and federal organizations involved in improving NCR readiness in the early days after 9/11. COG received an earmark from Congress to begin to improve readiness after 9/11. The Regional Emergency Coordination Plan and RICCS are the two chief products.

6.2 Since the UASI grant program began in 2003, it has required that there be an Urban Working Group. It was determined at that time that the EPC would serve as the Urban Area Working Group for the NCR since it was already established and it was broad based, met the requirement and the need. The EPC has served in that role since that time. In addition to serving as the Urban Area Working Group to provide high level oversight on the work on UASI grants, the EPC has several other responsibilities. The EPC serves as the custodian of the NCR Homeland Security Strategic Plan. With a lot of input during the two Strategic Plan cycles, the EPC and the NCR received high marks and national recognition for the Strategic Plan that was developed for the region.

6.3 Another responsibility is for the conduct of the Emergency Preparedness Council Senior Leaders Seminar. It has occurred annually for the past several years. It is an effort to engage Senior Leaders to include elected and appointed Public Officials, members of the Emergency Preparedness Council, RESFs, and members of the private sector and others to insure they understand their roles and responsibilities in a disaster situation and to highlight and inform senior leaders of the improvements made in NCR readiness since 9/11. Further, the Police and Fire Chiefs, Emergency Managers, Health Directors and other RESFs are at COG more than they ever thought they would be to insure maintenance and continued enhancement of readiness in the NCR.

6.4 The EPC Senior Leaders Seminar (SLS) varies in scope from year to year and includes a table top exercise/scenario supported with visual tools. Lessons learned from seminars in previous years are incorporated going forward. The Senior Leaders Program is a way to address lessons learned. Seminars have gotten better at getting the operational people together such as the emergency managers, police and fire department but the EPC SLS is not for them. Operational players are not the target of the EPC SLS. For the past two years, there has been a workshop held in the morning (before the EPC SLS in the afternoon) for RESFs to provide them with training on the updated Regional Emergency Coordination Plan (RECP) at the request of the Emergency Managers Committee. The RESFs did not have many business partners and senior public officials participating in their scenario based exercises that were more operational. Therefore, it is recommended that the workshop for RESFs and the EPC SLS be separated by several days and that they focus on specific audiences. i.e. a part A and B approach. Part A would be a drill, scenario-based exercise that would not be in a single room but would use modern technology and communication (exercising Emergency Operations Centers). Part B would be a seminar. It would bring together in a more focused way top elected officials, city and county managers, top business leaders and others to engage them in operational discussions to gain a better understanding of the roles of elected and senior appointed officials and the private sector highlighting improvements in NCR readiness since 9/11.

7. **New Business**

Chairman Andrews invited members to share information in their area of responsibility that may be of interest to others and recommend topics for the next meeting.

8. **Adjournment**

Next meeting date is September 14, 2011

Meeting recording June 8, 2011 is provided below.

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