

National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council

Work Focus and Program for Calendar Year 2011

I. BACKGROUND

The National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council (EPC) is an advisory body established by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Board of Directors. It derives its authority from action by the COG Board on November 13, 2002. The Emergency Preparedness Council (EPC) makes policy recommendations to the COG Board and makes procedural or other recommendations directly or through the COG Board to various regional agencies with emergency preparedness responsibilities or operational response authority.

After the creation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security-sponsored Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), the EPC later voted to act as the region's UASI-required Urban Area Work Group (UAWG). In this capacity, EPC added federally sponsored coordinating actions to its already existing regional efforts, and continues to function as the region's central coordinating body on emergency preparedness.

The EPC will continue to work in conjunction with the Senior Policy Group, the Chief Administrative Officers, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of National Capital Region Coordination (ONCRC), and others in the enhancement of regional preparedness activities and acquisitions. It serves as the custodian of the National Capital Region Homeland Security Strategic Plan, oversees the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan (RECP), and helps to coordinate activities of various support function working groups, and assists in the development and conduct of preparedness training and exercises. The EPC also provides a forum for engagement by business, education and community stakeholders in regional emergency planning, coordination and response.

II. MEMBERSHIP

The EPC is made up of elected officials, COG committee chairs, and representatives of homeland security, emergency management services and transportation, along with the nonprofit and business communities. The EPC is the most broadly defined advisory body in the National Capital Region focused on emergency planning, preparedness, response and recovery and is an excellent forum for information exchange, advocacy and policy guidance to public and private sector stakeholders and first-responder agencies.

The EPC is currently comprised of:

- Nine elected officials representing COG member jurisdictions, at least two each from the District of Columbia, the State of Maryland, and the Commonwealth of Virginia;
- The Chairs of the COG professional and technical committees of Chief Administrative Officers Committee, Regional Emergency Support Functions and Regional Program

Working Groups to include police chiefs, fire chiefs, public health officers, emergency management administrators, Chief Information Officers, attorneys, and other internal COG committees determined to have subject matter jurisdiction over significant aspects of disaster preparation and response;

- The directors of emergency management of the District of Columbia, the State of Maryland, and the Commonwealth of Virginia;
- Representatives of the Departments of Transportation of the District of Columbia, the State of Maryland, and the Commonwealth of Virginia;
- The chairs or other designees of the Homeland Security Councils of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia;
- The COG Executive Director; and Representatives of such institutions and agencies of the Federal government and organizations representing the private, quasi-public, and non-profit sectors as may be jointly designated by the Council Chair and the COG Board Chair, and invited to participate, such designations to include the Office of National Capital Region Coordination, the Joint Force Headquarters-National Capital Region, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the Greater Washington Board of Trade, the Washington Area School Study Council, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, the American Red Cross of the National Capital Region, the Non-Profit Roundtable of Greater Washington, and others.

III. PRIORITIES FOR 2011

The priorities delineated below represent the EPC's focus for 2011, and provide a strategic framework for the EPC's activities. Priorities build on past work, but are intended to create opportunities for ongoing feedback and engagement by public and other sector stakeholders.

PRIORITY 1: National Capital Region Strategic Plan for Preparedness

Background:

The EPC approved the updated National Capital Region Homeland Security Strategic Plan on September 8, 2010. The update was supported by the SPG, CAO HSEC and many others. The SPG and CAO HSEC are now requested to work with R-ESFs, RPWGs and others to achieve the goals in the Strategic Plan over the next three to five years. The DC Grants Management Office, HSEMA is requested to develop a tool to assess progress in achieving goals in the Strategic Plan and work with the SPG and CAO HSEC to assess region progress. The EPC continues to serve as the "custodian" of the Strategic Plan and to support the SPG and CAO-HSEC in informing key stakeholders on the status of implementing initiatives in the Strategic Plan.

Activities:

1. The EPC, as the custodian of the region's Strategic Plan for preparedness, will continue to guide, review, and oversee the process for completing the initiatives in the Strategic Plan.
2. The EPC requests the SPG and CAO-HSEC provide leadership and support to R-ESFs, RPWGs and others that will lead to the region achieving the goals in the National Capital Region Homeland Security Strategic Plan over the next three to five years.

3. The EPC requests the SPG and CAO HSEC provide leadership and support to the DC Grants Management Office in developing and annually updating a Performance Plan that includes metrics and indicators for monitoring and evaluating progress in achieving the NCR Homeland Security Strategic Plan and implementing projects.
4. The EPC requests the SPG and CAO HSEC provide leadership and support to the DC Grants Management Office, R-ESFs, RPWGs and others in using the metrics and indicators in assessing region progress in achieving goals, objectives and initiatives in the NCR Homeland Security Strategic Plan and provide results of the assessment to the EPC at its November 9, 2011 meeting.

PRIORITY 2: Update of Local Emergency Operations Plans and the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan (RECP) Annexes

Background:

During the FY06 UASI process the Emergency Managers Committee identified the need for funding to update local emergency operations plans to include the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan (RECP). In FY07 the CAO HSEC and the SPG made approximately \$7M UASI funding available to the Emergency Managers Committee to develop and update emergency plans. In FY09 they made approximately \$5.6M in additional UASI funding available to continue those planning activities. The Emergency Managers Committee continues to make major progress in updating local emergency operation plans. The 2009 EPC SLS validated the principles and concepts in the RECP. At the same time, it noted that the RECP is outdated and does not adequately address communications and coordination challenges regionally. The Emergency Managers Committee updated the RECP basic plan in 2010 and is being requested to update the annexes in 2011.

Activities:

1. The EPC will request the SPG and the CAOs (may be delegated to the Emergency Managers Committee) to provide quarterly in progress reviews of the Planning Project a review of what has been completed to date against the timeline, what is planned for the next quarter, and the timeline for completing the remaining tasks.
2. The EPC, in coordination with the SPG and CAO's, will request the Emergency Managers Committee to utilize the Emergency Manager's Planning Subcommittee with support from COG to update and revise the annexes to the RECP.
3. The EPC will also provide guidance and advocacy for additional training and preparedness exercises – and related resources - in order to test existing and soon-to-be-updated and augmented local emergency operation plans. ETOP will be requested to provide the EPC with a briefing on regional training and exercise activities at least every six months.
4. As a real time companion to the RECP, the Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System (RICCS) was developed as a means to bring key stakeholders and critical decision makers together at a moment's notice to address emergency situations in the NCR. The EPC requests COG continue to work with partners in the NCR to insure RICCS is available 24/7. Further, COG is requested to periodically test RICCS, review RICCS activations, and address any reported concerns. The EPC will continue to provide guidance as appropriate for the management RICCS.

PRIORITY 3: Senior Leader Seminar 2011

Background:

The EPC, in coordination with the SPG and CAOs, will request that the Exercise and Training Operations Panel (ETOP) develop Senior Leader Seminar 2011 to demonstrate the role of local jurisdictions, states, and the federal government in coordination with the private sector and nonprofit organizations in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from a worst case disaster scenario impacting the NCR. The actual scenario will be determined based on the NCR Training and Exercise Plan 2009-2012 completed in June 2009. The disaster scenario should have a significant impact on jurisdictions in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The purpose of the Senior Leader Seminar is to continue to educate members of the EPC and other senior leaders in the NCR on situational awareness; the status of preparedness in the region; and the ability to respond to and recover from a major disaster. Special emphasis should be placed on exploring opportunities as to how the Private Sector can assist or enhance the region's ability to develop and promote a common message and communicate with the public and media in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from a disaster using a consistent message.

Activities:

1. The EPC will provide guidance to ETOP to plan and conduct the Senior Leaders Seminar 2011 that will result in better prepared Senior Leaders. The Seminar is tentatively scheduled for October 2011. The specific date and location are to be determined by the ETOP planning subcommittee in coordination with the EPC.
2. Senior Leader Seminar 2011 Planning Team will work with the Board of Trade and others to develop and clarify the Private Sector role and be interactive and emphasize high level, major decisions that regional elected and appointed officials may need to make subsequent to a major disaster and the communication of those decisions to the private sector. This should include necessary coordination with the State of Maryland, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the District of Columbia as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency.
3. Senior Leader Seminar 2011 should highlight the role of the private sector and demonstrate how the region develops a common message and communicates with the public and media in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from a disaster using a consistent message. The focus will be on the coordination in place to insure one message many voices.
4. The NCR has been provided more than \$400M in UASI funds in recent years and it would be beneficial for Senior Leader Seminar 2011 to demonstrate how the resources procured with these funds have improved the ability of the region to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a major disaster.
5. An After Action Report/Corrective Action Plan will be prepared subsequent to the Senior Leader Seminar 2011 that will highlight lessons learned and recommendations to correct any shortcomings. The EPC will be briefed all strengths, shortcomings and proposed corrective actions.

PRIORITY 4: Community Awareness, Alert and Public Information

Background:

Every community in the National Capital Region should have the ability to alert and provide accurate and timely information about any emergency to all residents and visitors through multiple channels, including social media outlets. Every person should be exposed to multiple campaigns to raise awareness, preparedness and prevention in relation to all hazards. Many NCR jurisdictions are using social media as a regular communications tool, including during emergencies. As social media use continues to grow, the public are using social sites to get information during emergencies, and first responders must provide information on these sites. Today Facebook dominates the social media landscape, and in the NCR, there are approximately 2.4 million Facebook users (age 25 or older)—which amounts to approximately 53 percent of the region’s population.

People are now turning to Facebook for emergency information. For instance, 16 percent of people say they have used Facebook to get information about an emergency, according to a nationwide survey by the American Red Cross in August 2010. More than 50 percent said they would post information on social media sites about emergencies, such as updates about flooded roads, downed power lines or people who need help. (Facebook was named as the top social site for sharing this kind of information, according to the recent American Red Cross Survey.) Even more astounding, 69 percent say they expect emergency responders to monitor social media sites in order to send help quickly—and 74 percent would expect help to come less than one hour after a Facebook posting.

It’s not just where people go to get information that’s changing. How they get it is changing too. Cell phones, especially smart phones, are quickly becoming the preferred way to get information. A reported 85 percent of all adults own a cell phone—including almost 60 percent of seniors age 65 or older—according to a Pew study.

Activities:

A community that is aware of its responsibilities and knows where to get information will be able to make informed decisions about protective actions resulting in safer communities and more efficient allocation of resources. Public officials are no longer the primary source of information in a disaster. Smart phones and social media make everyone a reporter—and the public will broadcast what they know, see, and experience. In emergencies, the flow of information is no longer one way from the authorities to the public. If the NCR’s responders don’t join the online conversation, our voices will never be heard. To become part of the conversation, the NCR partners need to share information and communicate with the public using the same tools and resources the public is using.

1. During disasters, the joint information systems should include monitoring social media channels, updating communication tools to utilize online social channels, and encouraging all partners to develop additional disaster preparedness communications techniques, to include use of Facebook applications, Web widgets, and smart phone applications to improve communications.
2. The EPC request R-ESF 15 continues to work on strategies and tactics for employing social media and improving communications during emergencies such as the January 26, 2011

Ice/Snow Storm when thousands of people were stranded on roads in the NCR in a major transportation emergency.

3. The EPC request R-ESFs 15 and 5 continue to work closely together to condense pertinent information into readable and friendly language, using risk communication methods, to send over the NCR text alert systems and provide via the other information dissemination venues to improve communications among the various groups to include the private sector.
4. The EPC request R-ESF 15 provide quarterly in progress reviews of the NCR's ability to alert and warn residents, businesses, and visitors using a system of systems including social media and experience during actual events and exercises and recommendations for improvement.

PRIORITY 5: Urban Area Work Group and Regional Coordination to Include Issues Associated with January 26, 2011 Ice/Snow Storm

Background:

The National Capital Region has been identified as one of the regions across the nation slated to receive funding for planning, training, exercises, and equipment under the Urban Area Security Initiative, as established under Homeland Security Presidential Directives 5 and 8. Working in conjunction with the Senior Policy Group, the Chief Administrative Officers, and the Office of National Capital Region Coordination (NCRC), the EPC functions as the federally required Urban Area Working Group (UAWG) with oversight responsibility for the UASI process and regional preparedness as it relates to interaction with federal efforts. On January 26, 2011, the NCR experienced a major Ice/Snow Storm that severely impacted the NCR that will be addressed as part of regional coordination in an effort to identify lessons learned.

Activities:

1. The EPC will continue to work closely with the Senior Policy Group, the Chief Administrative Officers, and the Office of National Capital Region Coordination to oversee preparedness activities, while strengthening the process to enhance regional coordination by advocating for additional UASI and other federal, state and local resources for the National Capital Region.
2. The EPC will also work with NCRC, the JFHQ-NCR, the National Capital Region's congressional delegation and senior representatives of other federal agencies to improve federal-regional coordination during emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.
3. The EPC will discuss issues associated with the January 26, 2011 Ice/Snow Storm to include release of employees, traffic management, loss of electrical power, and associated communications during the event in an effort to identify lessons learned to avoid similar situations in the future.

IV. SCHEDULE

The EPC will plan to hold four full meetings and an EPC Senior Leader Seminar in 2011 with ad hoc work sessions being scheduled as necessary. For example, meetings to finalize plans for the 2011 Senior Leader Seminar and the update of emergency operations plans may be conducted as work sessions, to be scheduled by the EPC Chair and Executive Committee. To promote stronger

participation by public officials, EPC quarterly meetings will follow the COG Board of Directors meeting on the second Wednesday from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.:

- February 9
- May 11
- September 14
- TBD Senior Leader Seminar 2011 (Possibly October)
- November 9

V. LEADERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP FOR 2011

Consistent with the EPC bylaws, The Honorable Phil Andrews, Montgomery County Council was appointed to chair the EPC in 2011 by action of the COG Board of Directors on January 12, 2011. The COG Board is anticipated to make additional appointments of local elected officials to the EPC at its February 9, 2011 meeting to fill several vacancies, as well as to appoint two additional vice chairs, one from the District of Columbia and one from a local jurisdiction in Northern Virginia. The EPC continues to review and modify its membership and leadership governance structure as necessary to enable it to fulfill its expanded mission and goals. EPC leadership by local elected officials remains a priority for the EPC. The EPC and Executive Committee governance structure provides for continuity of leadership and expanded opportunities for Executive Committee participation.

The EPC Executive Committee will meet by conference call approximately one week prior to EPC meetings to review the agenda and provide any recommended enhancements. Also, the EPC Executive Committee will provide guidance to ETOP in the development and conduct of the EPC Senior Leader Seminar 2011 and to the SPG and CAOs Committee (may be delegated to the Emergency Managers Committee) on the update of local emergency operations plans.