

National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council

Adopted 2006 Work Program and Accomplishments

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 a Charter adopted by the COG Board on November 13, 2002. The 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 US 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 works in conjunction with the Senior Policy Group, the Chief Administrative Officers, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of National Capital Region Coordination (ONCRC) in the enhancement of regional preparedness activities and acquisitions. It manages the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan (RECP), helps to coordinate activities of various support function working groups, and assists in the development and conduct of preparedness training and exercises.

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, police chiefs, fire chiefs, public health officers, emergency management administrators, 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 2006

The priorities delineated below represent the EPC's focus for 2006, and provide a strategic framework for the EPC's activities.

PRIORITY 1: Regional Emergency Coordination Plan

Background:

In the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, COG convened the National Capital Region Task Force on Homeland Security, the predecessor to the EPC, to develop a region-wide plan to coordinate emergency response and preparation efforts. The resulting publication, the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan (RECP), provided a framework for these activities, and the EPC serves as the "custodian" of this plan. At its September meeting the COG Board directed staff and the CAO Committee to develop a work scope, milestones and timetable to re-examine the RECP and other relevant area plans to incorporate initial lessons learned from the experiences of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Activities:

1. The EPC will provide input and guidance to update the RECP and for the re-examination of area emergency plans, focusing on areas of potential vulnerabilities, clarification on state and federal resources, and more aggressive, fully coordinated, outreach to residents, visitors and citizens, as well as transportation and evacuation planning and coordination.
2. 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 augmented emergency plans.
3. 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. The EPC will continue to provide guidance for the management and expanded use of RICCS.

Accomplishments/Status:

1. The update of the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan (RECP) was deferred because of limited UASI funding in FY06. Funding for the update of the RECP will be requested again in FY07 from the UASI funding allocation to the National Capital Region.
2. The Exercise and Training Operations Panel (ETOP) was given the responsibility for supporting regional training and exercise activities with the use of UASI funds. ETOP has supported a number of training and exercise opportunities in the past year and it is currently planning a major hurricane exercise for April 26, 2007 and proposed Senior Leaders Seminar for the EPC in 2007.
3. The Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System (RICCS) continued to be used to bring key stakeholders and critical decision makers together at a moment's notice to address emergency situations. It was used extensively throughout the year to inform key stakeholders of multiple emergency situations and weather situations. During 2006, 745 RICCS messages were transmitted to first responders and key decision makers on incidents of regional impact.

PRIORITY 2: National Capital Region Strategic Plan for Preparedness

Background:

The Office of National Capital Region Coordination (ONCRC) is responsible for coordinating federal emergency preparedness efforts in the Washington metropolitan region. ONCRC recently supported, with broad stakeholder input, the development of the first comprehensive National Capital Region Homeland Security Strategic Plan. The EPC will support ONCRC and the Senior Policy Group by continuing to serve as the "custodian" of the Strategic Plan going forward, advising key stakeholders concerning implementation progress and any recommended future updates.

Activity:

The EPC, as the custodian of the region's strategic plan for preparedness, will guide and oversee the process for completing and subsequently updating the plan. The EPC will also review and update its bylaws and membership, consistent with the National Capital Region Strategic Plan for Preparedness, to enable it to better fulfill its expanded mission and goals.

Accomplishments/Status:

1. The EPC facilitated and provided guidance for the completion of the Homeland Security Strategic Plan in partnership with the Office of National Capital Region Coordination and others. The plan was adopted by the EPC on September 13, 2006 and subsequently briefed to a Congressional Subcommittee where it received favorable review.
2. The Homeland Security Strategic Plan has four goals, 12 objectives, and 30 initiatives. It is a three to five year evolving plan that is significantly dependent on local, state, or federal funding. The EPC will be reviewing the accomplishments of the National Capital Region in achieving the goals, objectives, and initiatives on a quarterly basis.

PRIORITY 3: Communication, Education & Public Outreach

Background:

Generating and disseminating clear region-wide emergency preparedness messages to the public has been identified as a priority by the EPC. The theme *Common Message --- Many Voices*, developed by the region's public information officers, is the under-girding principle for this campaign. Also key to the EPC's mission is its role as an advocate for the region's accomplishments in coordinating preparedness efforts. Further, the private sector, from the business community to non-profits, is a key stakeholder in regional preparedness. Crucial assets and services owned and managed by private sector organizations form part of the core capacity that first responders rely on in emergency situations.

Activities:

1. The EPC will, in part, function as a central voice for regional preparedness activities and related legislative outreach, advocacy, and public information.
2. The EPC will also work with the region's public information officers and public relations contractors to provide input for the continuing citizens' education campaign, aimed at providing the region's residents and visitors with information necessary to prepare for terrorist-related or other major disruptive or emergency events.

The EPC's efforts will include further direction and support concerning the analysis of outdoor warning systems, or sirens.

Accomplishments/Status:

1. The EPC received regular updates from R-ESF 15 External Affairs on regional preparedness activities. A subcommittee of the group also acted as senior communications advisors to members of the EPC and the Senior Policy Group when they testified to Congressional committees or were interviewed by the media.
2. The region's public information officers who work through R-ESF 15 presented a communications plan to the EPC to extend the Citizens Education Campaign that was begun in 2005, and executed that plan. The group distributed the still relevant, evergreen materials from the 2005 "Be Ready. Make a Plan." campaign at community events and planned other communications outreach efforts.
3. The EPC discussed and evaluated the analysis of outdoor warning systems, or sirens.

PRIORITY 4: Advocacy & Urban Area Work Group Roles

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, the EPC, in part, functions as the federally required Urban Area Working Group, with oversight responsibility for the UASI process and regional preparedness as it relates to interaction with federal efforts.

Activity:

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 provide guidance on regional preparedness activities, while strengthening the process to enhance regional coordination by advocating for additional UASI and other federal, state and local resources for the region and for the ONCRC.

Accomplishments/Status:

1. The single most significant achievement for the EPC in 2006 was its ability to oversee and complete the Homeland Security Strategic Plan. The plan provides a road map for continuous improvement in emergency preparedness for the National Capital Region over the next three to five years.
2. The EPC continued its role in monitoring the expenditure UASI funds on a quarterly basis. All FY03 and FY04 UASI funds were expended to complete initiatives approved by the CAO's and SPG and FY05 UASI funds are being expended to complete initiatives approved by the SPG and CAO's by March 31, 2006, the current deadline. FY06 UASI funds have been distributed to complete initiatives approved by the SPG and CAO's to improve emergency preparedness. The region expects to receive Grant Guidance from DHS in early 2007 and will prepare its application for FY07 UASI funds. It will be reviewed by the EPC prior to it being submitted to DHS.

IV. SCHEDULE

The EPC will modify its schedule for 2006, holding four full meetings in 2006, approximately quarterly, with ad hoc work sessions, as necessary. For example, meetings to update the region's strategic plan for preparedness and the RECP may be conducted as work sessions, to be scheduled by the 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, 2:30 to 4:00 p.m.:

- February 8
- May 10
- July 12
- October 11

V. LEADERSHIP AND MEMBERSHIP ADDITIONS FOR 2006

Consistent with the EPC bylaws, Gerry Connolly, Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors was appointed to chair the EPC in 2006 by action of the COG Board of Directors on January 11, 2006. The EPC will consider, consistent with the National Capital Region Strategic Plan for Preparedness, amending its membership and leadership governance structure to enable it to better fulfill its expanded mission and goals. EPC leadership by local elected officials remains a priority for the EPC, however, the EPC will consider amending its vice chair and executive

committee governance structure to provide for continuity of leadership and expanded opportunities for executive committee participation.

In addition to the EPC Chair and Vice Chair(s), the proposed 2006 EPC Executive Committee will include:

- Tony Griffin, Fairfax County, Chief Administrative Officers Committee
- Tom Lockwood, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of National Capital Region Coordination
- Dennis Schrader, Director, Office of Homeland Security, State of Maryland
- Ed Reiskin, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety & Justice, District of Columbia
- A senior leadership representative from a non-profit, service-based organization or association
- A senior leadership representative from a for-profit corporation, association or organization

Consistent with the EPC bylaws, representatives from the following COG Committees, Regional Emergency Support Functions and non-government stakeholders will be added to the EPC membership to better enable the EPC to fulfill its mission and address 2006 priorities:

- R-ESF 2 – Community Infrastructure
- R-ESF 3 – Public Works and Engineering
- R-ESF 12 – Energy
- R-ESF 6 – Mass Care
- Military District of Washington, Joint Force Command
- Citizen Corps

Last revised: 12/29/2006 3:04 PM