

## **DRAFT**

### **METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

#### **National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council**

#### **Meeting Minutes**

**Date: Thursday, September 15, 2005**

**Time 2:00pm – 4:00pm**

**Place: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments**

**COG Board Room, Third Floor**

**777 North Capitol Street, NE**

**Washington, DC 20002**

### **1. Call to Order and Announcements**

#### **Description from Agenda:**

- Hurricane Katrina – National Capital Region Impact and Response
- NCR Strategic Plan Update and Next Steps
- Preparedness for Special Needs Populations
- Report on Outdoor Warning Systems Study
- Private Sector Updates

#### **Summary of Discussion:**

Chair Bruce Williams, Councilmember and Mayor Pro Team, City of Takoma Park, Maryland called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM. The July minutes were approved. Chair Williams mentioned housekeeping details regarding the “information spots” from TV and Radio of the Preparedness Campaign “Be Ready Make a Plan” will be run at the end of the meeting for those who have not seen them. The agenda was changed to move item (5) Report on Outdoor Warning System Study to item (3) NCR Strategic Plan Update and Next Steps. It was noted that after Hurricane Katrina there is renewed interest among people about the kind of work the committee has been doing with emergency plans and improving coordination at all levels of government and the private sector. Today’s discussion will be focused on how we go forward from here and take advantage of some of the lessons learned. Chair Williams indicated a desire to have a clear sense as to whether the group needed to meet more regularly than they have been doing at the end of the meeting. The next meeting is currently scheduled for November 3. Given some of the actions locally, some of the actions at the COG Board and the impact of these discussions on the COG, Chair Williams believes that meetings should occur more frequently or conference calls should be added. His suggestion was to have that decided at the end of the meeting. Chair Williams introduced Dave Robertson to brief the committee on Hurricane Katrina and the impact on the region.

## **2. Hurricane Katrina – National Capital Region Impact and Response**

### Description from Agenda:

Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath have had a devastating impact on the New Orleans region and a large portion of the Gulf Coast. On September 8 regional leaders held a conference call to discuss how local officials might collectively reexamine individual jurisdiction and region wide preparedness plans to make sure the region can cover for any delays in federal support. The Council will be briefed on three issues relevant to the National Capital Region: 1) National Capital Region aid to stricken areas and support for evacuees; 2) regional coordination concerning energy supply and conversation; and 3) guidance to reassess emergency plans at all levels.

### Summary of Discussion:

Dave Robertson led the discussion on Hurricane Katrina and the impact on the region. Mr. Robertson highlighted some of the discussions that have taken place among many of the organizations meeting at the Council of Governments, recommendations of Chief Elected Officials who met off line through a conference call, and the discussion through the COG Board of Directors meeting yesterday. The Board was clear in its direction but Mr. Robertson thought there was a need to frame the best route to take to accomplish the identified goals and objectives.

The successful launch of the media campaign was noted. The Chair talked about the visuals associated with that campaign. Prior to the kick off of the press conference there was a conference call of Chief Elected Officials representing all of the jurisdictions in the National Capital Region that was convened at the request of Montgomery County Executive Doug Duncan to look at some of the preparedness challenges the National Capital Region might face in case of a catastrophic event. It was noted that Lessons Learned from Hurricane Katrina led to that conference call. The first was the question of the level/timelessness of federal government support that might come to the NCR or any other region in the event of a significant emergency? The second question was do current plans anticipate the level of coordination that might be required in a regional catastrophic event? Related to that is, do we have the capacity and the processes in place to aid one another (to meet the needs of the Incident Commanders) through the normal course of events?

Mr. Griffin indicated that if something bad happens in Fairfax he's in charge. If he needs more help he has mutual aide, if he needs additional help from the state there's the declaration that can bring in state/EMAC resources, and if he needs more help than the state can supply, he can request the Governor request a federal declaration so federal assistance can be made available. The local government and the state provide triage until federal support and assistance arrives.

Subsequent to Hurricane Katrina some parts of that system were called into question. That doesn't mean that the regional, local, state and federal planning efforts that we have completed are deficient. There may be things that we need to do to strengthen the plans/system. We do not need to set aside the good work that has been done by this

committee and others. Elected Officials and more broadly the public want to see the plans reviewed to see how they relate to the heightened expectations and diminished capacity of one or more of our partners. Much of this same discussion took place earlier at the COG Board of Directors meeting when the Board asked staff of the various R-ESF's to work with the CAO Leadership and Senior Policy Group Leadership to commence a review of the plans,. It was stated that this should not be a work in isolation. The National Capital Region Strategic Plan should compliment emergency operations plans. It was noted that Mr. Ed Reiskin has been heavily involved in the development of the NCR Strategic Plan on behalf of the Senior Policy Group. Tom Lockwood who has been leading the development of the NCR Strategic Plan and he was on the conference call with the CAOs last week when they were talking about lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina. Further, Tony Griffin and other CAO's are playing a leadership role on the development of the NCR Strategic Plan. Mr. Robertson asked for the committee's perspective and where we should see going with the COG Work Plan.

The presentation made to the COG Board yesterday is the direction in which our elected officials and Board members want us to go. Mr. Robertson laid out in very board terms some of the goals in terms of re-examining the plans, examining mutual aid, looking at the timeliness of federal and state resources, and real time clear information to the public.

Merni Fitzgerald stressed the need to share the emergency information with the public in language they can understand. One point was made that the public is unaware of the tremendous amount of work that has been done in the NCR and it has been considerable. Unfortunately, we have not done a good enough job of sharing with the public how the planning, drills and exercises are strengthening our region's capacity to support our citizens in need in an emergency situation.

It was reported that the private sector task force has already addressed many of the issues discussed above and that Chuck Bean and the non-profit folks as well as the Red Cross and a number of other organizations are now in the process of doing a plan review of their own. The goal of the EPC is to bring all the organizations and groups together so they are overlapping and supporting one another. Work programs need to be redirected to respond to the direction of the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors provides leadership to the Chief Administrative Officers Committee and is involved in many of the activities of the EPC. The Board asks that we return to their meeting next month with a Work Program and a time line for completing the work.

Mr. Griffin welcomed the charge from the COG Board of Directors. His County Board has given him the same direction. We need to articulate how local and state plans depend on Federal support. In Fairfax County the plan does not try to articulate what kind of support we are going to receive from the state or federal government. We need to be mindful of the direction from the federal government which states that we should not expect support for the first 48 to 72 hours after a disaster. The local plan is articulated based on what resources the county brings to bear depending upon what the event is. This charge reinforces the work that many of the local jurisdictions have been doing for the last couple of years.

Action Item:

Based on the above discussion, guidance from Elected Officials and the COG Board of Directors, COG will develop a Proposed Work Plan to address the topics of discussion.

### **3. Report on Outdoor Warning Systems Study**

Description from Agenda:

The issue of outdoor warning systems, sometimes referred to as sirens, has been of ongoing interest to the Council and the general public. While emergency management officials have generally been moving in the direction of new technologies to alert the public to emergencies and incidents, many have suggested the sirens be revised as an outdoor warning option. COG's Emergency Managers Committee previously prepared a brief assessment of outdoor warning systems for the Council's review. COG later obtained approval to undertake a best practices study of outdoor warning systems, which is now complete. The Council will be briefed on the outcomes of the study.

Summary of Discussion:

Laura Olson, Institute for Crisis Disaster and Risk Management, The George Washington University was contracted by COG to conduct a study of best practices of talking sirens technology across the United States. Hurricane Katrina has driven home the need for local government to have adequate vehicles to communicate emergency warnings to at risk populations. This study looks at how local jurisdictions are going to warn and alert the public and the possible use of talking siren technology in achieving that goal. Ms Olson presented her Outdoor Voice Warning Pilot Proposal that discussed and highlighted Public Safety Best Practices and the Talking Siren Technology. The report highlighted the value of outdoor voice warning systems as part of any integrated public alerting system. The best practices included integrated public outdoor warning systems with indoor warning devices such as the NOAA Weather Radio. Ms Olson noted that the National Capital Region made significant progress in creating an indoor public alerting system when it purchased the Reverse 911 and ROAM Secure Systems.

The pilot Ms Olson proposed included the installation of interconnected outdoor voice and audible signal devices in corridors with different environments and with different daytime and nighttime populations. Several interconnected devices would be placed in business districts and metro corridors with a large transient population and areas where outdoor events are held. Included areas are Rosslyn, Crystal City, Arlington, the waterfront and Old Town Alexandria, and the National Mall area in the District.

To implement the proposed pilot program, a suitable bid specification would need to be developed to address the control system requirements, to study optimal locations of the outdoor voice devices, to install and test the system for audibility and intelligibility, to develop test suitable voice messaging strategies for system effectiveness, to develop and perform training for system operators and to issue progress reports and summary reports to document lessons learned and the final results.

Laura Olson presented an Evaluation of US Implementation of Early Warning Systems of Public Safety Best Practices: Talking Siren Technology. The evaluation included an Executive Summary giving the Background, Goal of the Study, Best Practice Case Studies, Best Practice Examples, and Pine Bluff Arsenal in Jefferson County, Arkansas. The background given in the Executive Summary discussed the tsunami in Asia, the threat of terrorism and the September 11 events all which sparked the interest of outdoor public warnings. The detection of these dangerous situations and/or warning of the public of unexpected or extreme events occurring are the responsibility of the local government. The government is aware that people expect to receive warnings of events that might put them in danger. Warnings are only effective when they allow people to secure their lives and property by taking protective actions. Sirens systems that provide this type of alert can be used to alert the public of natural hazards, human caused accidents, and terrorist acts. The limitation to talking sirens is that it is intended to reach people outdoors not people inside schools or homes or offices.

The goal of the study was to investigate local government best practices in public safety related to warnings and alerts with a focus on implementing the talking siren system technology. The systems must have a vehicle for warnings to reach special needs group such as non English speaking people, visual or hearing impaired, physically and mentally disabled and tourists. The report took a look at the way the local government can best communicate emergency and public safety information to people directly affected by disaster.

The findings of this Best Practices Study show that siren systems in the U.S. are mainly used to communication during three types of extreme events: Natural Hazards and Human-Caused Accidents. For purposes of the study several counties and municipalities nearby were the focus of interviews regarding their early warning systems. In the future, the NCR should consider the need for early warning systems in all jurisdictions in the NCR. A regional threat assessment would be a helpful tool to evaluate the need for siren systems in selected areas in the NCR. It could look at which regions are particularly susceptible to terrorist attacks and how large catastrophic events would affect people regionally. Siren could be an effective part of warning systems but not the solution.

Action Item:

The EPC endorsed the Outdoor Warning Pilot Proposal. It was recommended that UASI funding be provided for this initiative.

It was also determined that Arlington County Emergency Management would be the lead agency for the pilot. Arlington will be looking for interested partners to assist with the pilot. The cost is not expected to exceed \$637,000.00.

#### **4. NCR Strategic Plan Update and Next Steps**

##### Description from agenda:

On September 9 a regional forum was held, involving key stakeholders from various local, state and federal agencies and organizations, to finalize the National Capital Region Strategic Plan. The forum produced a number of proposed follow up actions, through which the region's leaders will look to develop and define specific, measurable initiatives for implementation over the coming weeks. Mr. Lockwood will brief the Council regarding proposed next steps to achieve and implement the strategic goals and objectives of the plan and to integrate the NCR plan with individual jurisdiction plans.

##### Summary of Discussion:

Tom Lockwood, Director, Office of National Capital Region Coordination, U.S. Department of Homeland Security noted that the Council of Governments will be responding to the COG Board of Directors guidance and that the Chief Administrative Officers will be initiating actions back in their jurisdictions and that coordination of the initiatives at the next CAO meeting would be extremely important..

Mr. Lockwood indicated that a number of the CAO's and others around the table have been working on the NCR Strategic Plan. He provided a brief update on the development of the Plan. In relation to the communications strategy regarding "how to communicate to the public", he thinks that we recognize the very point that Ms. Garvey is making and that Bob Peck made earlier. Mr. Lockwood said that we can talk a lot and there is some value in talking about strategic plans and the elements in them but that is not what the public understands, wants to know about or wants to hear, they just need to know what to do. He said that most of what they are supposed to do is known to the NCR and that we need to create a communications plan that explains what the public should do in very simple terms. He would advise instead of talking to them about sheltering in place talk to them about things that will have more meaning to them.

One of the biggest problems they face is human instinct and the other problem is most of the population is not paying attention to what we are doing or saying which is the reason we launched the campaign last week. The survey indicated that despite everything that has gone on in this NCR in the last four years, only 39% of our population has a portable radio, flashlight, and a three day water supply. Others are still waiting to be told what to do when something happens. In Fairfax County there are four thousand first responders by definition of the public, police officers, firemen, and health. One third of them are on duty at any given time to protect a population of more than a million people. There is no way you will be able to respond instantaneously. The message is that residents have to be able to help themselves and not wait for government.

The Washington Post has been aggressive in asking us to come out with plans and discuss what residents should be doing. A recent article that was supposedly factual (but did not provide references) talked about region leaders launching a campaign on preparedness and in the same breath saying it is duct taped. How do we get the publisher

of the Washington Post to take things seriously and not have fun with what we are trying to do?

Dr. Brown indicated that if we cannot connect with the public there is no need for us to sit around here. One of the problems is that we do not go deep enough in our discussions of topics and we haven't been practical. One of her colleagues stated that the public has to help themselves. Dr. Brown responded that the victims of Katrina could not help themselves. It was stated that we need to get practical and innovative and look at building codes, zoning or what the requirements are for adequate public facilities. Also, it was stated that we need to look at developers of new housing developments and require them to provide disaster kits. Dr. Brown felt that talking to people when they are poor does not mean anything to them. It would mean something if you put a kit in their hands. Disaster kits should be provided when a person purchases a new home. The fire department should check for these disaster kits several times a year. When you have accumulative and generational poverty that is always the population that is hit the worst by disaster because they are the most fragile. Dr. Brown stated that something should be placed in the resident's hand that is tangible. What's missing with this regional campaign and what are we doing locally are a more intense campaign where we put the actual material in the public's hand, get them started, and encourage them to have them to meet with each other. The meeting with each other should not be a plan or idea but how to keep myself materially ready. Dr. Brown does not feel the Committee understands adult learning. It was suggested that Mr. Griffin, the CAO's, and the COG Staff get together and come up with a Draft Work Plan relating to what was discussed in this meeting and elsewhere at the COG Board. This draft should be available to the EPC in 2 weeks.

Action Item:

Mr. Griffin, the CAO's and COG Staff develop a Draft Work Plan in two weeks to get people educated on emergency preparedness.

## **5. Preparedness for Special Needs Populations**

Description from agenda:

The terrorist attacks on the nation in the fall of 2001 and the devastation brought forth by Hurricane Katrina have reinforced the need for all residents to prepare in advance for emergencies, both man-made and natural. Preparedness planning that is inclusive of the concerns and requirements of individuals with special needs and disabilities must be integral pieces in every individual, jurisdictional, regional, and national emergency plan. Ms. Styron will brief the Council on programs initiated by the National Organization on Disability to address the concerns and contributions of the special needs community.

Summary of Discussion:

Hilary Styron, Director from the National Organization on Disability's Emergency Preparedness Initiative talked about what the National Organization of Disabilities being the first and only disability related organization of its kind to be requested in the region impacted by Hurricane Katrina. She deployed four needs assessment teams to Louisiana, Alabama, Texas and Mississippi. In the last 48 hours they have gathered information

about the special needs population, people with disabilities and displaced citizens, which went from refugees to evacuees and now displaced citizens because they had to come up with a correct term for people that had nothing left. Ms Styron would submit to the organization that if you are looking at an airplane crash and a split on a rail car carrying chemicals that you look beyond that and think catastrophic - no infrastructure, no utilities, no power, no ground transportation, etc. These disasters would kill a lot of people and would cause massive casualties. However, you have to look beyond that and see no social services, no infrastructure, nothing. Your Red Cross shelters cannot stand up because residents and staff can not get to the locations. Aside from that there is an issue of pre-planning for medication, practice plans and education. Her program goes out all the time nationally and recommends that people with disabilities prepare for disasters. They need assistance from emergency managers. The Red Cross has to immediately create, without medical supplies, special needs shelters. Because of the massive number of evacuees out of New Orleans and other areas there are 7 special needs committees in Louisiana. They don't have medical supplies. The facility in Baton Rouge is very clean and well ran. Shelters in Louisiana have no supplies; generator or staff. With meat and bread they had to feed a multitude of people that were there and steady coming in.

Ms Styron suggests that, when you are looking at regional and integrated plans, the committee needs to practice and drill and fine tune the plans. The committee needs to look beyond the practical ownership of plans and look into getting the resources. She recommended that the NCR reevaluate the hazard vulnerability assessment for the region and look at prioritizing some things a little differently especially as it pertains to human services and special needs.

What has happened to this population after Hurricane Katrina was devastating. We knew about the threat and we knew this had the potential to happen and here we are today. While sitting here I have been re-deployed at the request of the Disaster Field Office to reconstitute the EOC in New Orleans to deal with ESF-8 and the local ESF-18 which is their special needs.

In the last 48 hours I was there shaking trees wanting answers as to what they have done, how are you filling in the gaps, and what are you going to do for these people. They are all over the region now and have been evacuated out; they are here in this town and all over the country. We cannot track them and we have no accountability system. They are not consistent in moving them out. There is no discharge planning. The medical core teams that are going down there are doing the best they can. We did not have deployments readily available for the first few days. Certain operations had to be stood up. Your special needs populations are fragile. In addition to the disabled you have low economic communities with different needs. They were not ready to handle this because there was no integrated preparedness plan. The state EOC could not provide an answer as to who in Louisiana has the authority for disability and special needs issues. Regionally the committee should look at what is available to take care of these special populations if you have nothing left.



Action Item:

Ms Styron volunteered to return and provide a report on lessons learned from the Hurricane Katrina deployment.

**6. Private Sector Updates**

Description from agenda:

The Greater Washington Board of Trade, the Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington, the American Red Cross of the National Capital Region, and the Consortium of Universities of the Greater Washington Area have been integral private sector partners on preparedness initiatives undertaken in the National Capital region. Representatives of each organization will provide updates on accomplishments to date as well as planned activities with regard to further initiatives.

Summary of Discussion:

The background of NCR Emergency Preparedness Council and its relationship with the Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington was discussed. The FY03 UASI funded initiative related to Urban Area Homeland Security Strategy engaged the public nonprofit community to identify and coordinate their roles in support of regional response and recovery efforts. The Initiative was completed in June 2004 and they developed 360 pages of plans and agreements and a 32 page summary for distribution titled Working Together When the Worst Happens. The framework for local and regional nonprofit planning was based on a small scale emergency occurring in a jurisdiction. It was based on each jurisdiction's EMA coordinating response and recovery and regional surge capacity will be initiated to respond to any major disaster. The four priorities of the initiative are: case management; fundraising; volunteer center coordination, and in-kind donations.

The goal of the case management is to create multi-agency long-term case management recovery coordination across the region. The partners will be the American Red Cross, Northern Virginia Family Service, Jewish Social Service Agency, Catholic Charities, and Child and Family Services. The result will be to have MOUs signed by five organizations. The goal of the Volunteer Center Coordination is to strengthen region wide Volunteer Center Coordination. The partners will be Seven Volunteer Centers serving NCR, Alexandria Volunteer Bureau, Arlington Volunteer Office, Greater DC Cares, Montgomery County Volunteer Center, Prince Georges's Volunteer Center and Voluntary Action Center of the Prince William Area and Volunteer Fairfax. The results will be established in a mutual aid agreement to include principles for coordination with government partners and need assessment procedures. In-kind donation goal is to create transparency and build public trust. The results will be the establishment of transparency guidelines for major disaster fundraising efforts.

The next steps are facilitating improved integration of nonprofit plans within local, regional, state and FEMA frameworks; integrating nonprofits into current UASI funded training and exercise initiatives; improving information and referral systems to connect residents to resources; conducting additional planning, training and exercises; building

nonprofits' logistical capacity for response and recovery for mass care; and continuity of operations for nonprofit organizations.

Action Item:

Continue to receive updates from the Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington, Board of Trade on their activities that impact emergency preparedness.

**7. Wrap Up and Adjournment**

The Chair did a quick wrap up and adjourned the meeting at 4:15 PM. The council is scheduled to meet next on November 3, 2005 from 2:00 - 4:00 PM