

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council

Date: Thursday, October 2, 2003
Location: COG Board Room-Third Floor
777 North Capitol Street NE
Washington, DC 20002

MINUTES

1. **Welcome:** Vice-Chair **Bruce Williams** convened the October meeting of the National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council at 12:08 p.m. After a round of self-introductions, Chair **Mary K. Hill** welcomed the members and presented the agenda for the day.
2. **Program Administration Update:** **David Robertson**, COG Executive Director, provided an update on current issues concerning the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan, the Regional Incident Coordination and Communication System, and COG's efforts to support the RECP and the efforts of the NCR-EPC.
 - **Regional Council Legislation:** Once again, Cong. Jack Kingston (R-Ga) is introducing legislation that will formalize regional councils as entities potentially responsible for regional homeland security planning and coordination, and eligible for pass through federal funding to assist in this effort. The bill was introduced last session with a number of Washington area representatives as co-sponsors, and was supported by COG at that time. It is expected to be filed before October 15.
 - **Calendar:** The Regional Homeland Security/Emergency Preparedness Calendar, listing all COG and EPC-related activities will be placed on the COG website for real-time review and easy download. All regional stakeholders are invited to place their meetings, events and activities on the calendar, by linking to the COG Webmaster or contacting the COG Homeland Security staff.
3. **Mutual Aid Legislation:** **Lee Ruck**, COG General Counsel, reported on the current status of the region's proposed Mutual Aid Authorization Act. The draft bill has been presented to Rep. Davis, who has indicated that it will receive strong delegation support and will generate hearings before his Government Reform Committee. DHS has approved the language and forwarded it to DOJ and OMB for comment. Both have expressed concerns. On September 29th a delegation of COG member attorneys, together with DHS presented our case to DOJ and OMB.

Although they were not convinced on the extent of relief sought, the Administration acknowledged our need and concerns and will attempt to craft a modified solution. We expect this within a week and will convene our attorney group to review their response.

4. Hurricane Isabel – After Action Reports, Lessons Learned, and Next Steps:

- **RICCS and Regional Communication:** *Tony Griffin*, Fairfax County Executive, discussed the success of the RICCS system during Isabel, particularly from the perspective of full and complete discussion around closing of schools, offices, and Metro as a result of weather reports received the evening before Isabel struck. He indicated that the COG CAO's discussed the events of Isabel and the response of each government at length the previous day; the CAO's will revisit their discussions subsequent to a complete after action analysis.
- **WMATA:** *Richard White*, Metro general manager, reported WMATA's active participation in the RICCS process. RICCS was critical as to community collaboration and coordination, including employers, governments, schools and other stakeholders. Metro used the experiences of Miami and other jurisdictions in planning for the hurricane/tropical storm, realizing that this region has not defined thresholds for specific storm-related responses. Must plan with certainty before the event, rather than real-time, and react without the ability to fully plan and coordinate. Power failures did present a problem – not traction power, but power for several stations and service yards. *Jay Fisette*, Arlington, pointed out that there was a public perception that the governments followed WMATA for closing decisions; rather, these closings were a result of a joint decision. Mr. Fisette suggested that an op-ed piece might be appropriate.
- **PEPCO:** *John Derrick*, CEO, Pepco, discussed the power-related experiences of Isabel, including differenced with grids underground and normal grids. Pepco will be presenting its issues to both the DC and Maryland public service commissions. Power customer expectations seemed unusually high, given the broad-based nature of the incident. Isabel highlighted the need for ongoing tree trimming and tree management programs, programs that do not necessarily have full public support during normal times. Pepco response was governed first by public safety (e.g., intersections without traffic signals working; power lines down and hot), and second by the need to restore power to residential and commercial customers. He noted that not all downed lines were power – some were telephone and some were cable. Pepco has hired James Witt & Associates to perform an analysis of Pepco response and to make recommendations for the future. *Mr. Williams* suggested that a part of this review should address infrastructure mapping and the need to relate power decisions and power-related communications to common descriptions of addresses or neighborhoods.
- **Business Community:** *Bob Peck*, Board of Trade, suggested that a major weakness of the process was a failure to have public discussions in advance.

Participation in RICCS would permit the business community to have information, and the perception that their needs and concerns would be considered, if those needs were not formally addressed or totally supported. This inclusion would permit the self-identification of the business community as partners and as participants. **George Vradenberg** added that the active use of RICCS by the business community, both before and after events, would permit more unified response to issues like closing or evacuation/shelter-in-place by the region's non-governmental employers. A test-to-voice adaptation is much to be desired.

- **Emergency Response and Recovery:** **Lt. Gov. Hager**, Virginia, stated that the National Capital Region "did it right," particularly in comparison with Hampton Roads. The GWU study on infrastructure will focus, inter alia, on "interdependencies." GW will accelerate its study of the roles and responsibilities of the infrastructure players. There must be enhanced relationships between the VOADs and the localities. ONCRC-DHS has been very supportive of the VOADs and the Red Cross. Maryland reported that the after action report will demonstrate a success. Maryland brought in the Corps and FEMA in advance of the hurricane, itself. There were 8 fatalities in Maryland and a loss of power to 1.3 million residents. There have been in excess of 10,000 claims so far, with significant environmental damage along the shoreline, and significant property damage in Baltimore and Anne Arundel counties. Maryland is experiencing major problems with debris removal. **Margaret Kellems**, DC, stated Pepco was tremendous in response, with mobile disaster centers on site. DC has established temporary sites for debris removal.
- **Next Steps:** **Mr. Robertson** suggested the possibility of a regional summit on the specific unanswered questions of Isabel, particularly power and water-related questions. The general consensus was to hold such a summit, but to delay it until the existing after-action analyses and proceedings are complete.

5. Updates and Enhancements to the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan:

- **Transportation, Evacuation, and Protective Action:** **Ron Kirby** and **Calvin Smith**, COG, made a presentation of the REETC Annex, underway since April 2003, including goals, objectives, and deliverables. The annex will examine twelve "situations," with analysis workshops to be held for each. Considerations will include options for communications and coordination, Federal COOPs plans, and integration with associated protective actions planning – communications, schools, special populations human behavior factors, and pet/animal protection.
- **Solid Waste and Debris Annex:** **John Snarr**, COG, gave a brief update on solid waste issues and the engagement of Dewberry & Davis as engineering consultants on the project.
- **R-ESF 14 and Public Information Officers:** **Jeanne Saddler**, COG, reviewed the actions of the regional PIOs on the RICCS system during Isabel.

Training sessions for more complete RICCS use are planned to start shortly. PIOs are reviewing the ONCRC guide, released in PDF format.

6. **Nonprofit Sector:** *Chuck Bean*, Nonprofit Roundtable, and *Terri Lee Freeman*, Community Foundation, presented two reports: "A Region Responds to Hurricane Isabel," an after action summary of the nonprofit sectors role in emergency preparedness and response, and "Building Nonprofit Sector Capacity," the report of the Greater Washington Task Force on Nonprofit Emergency Preparedness."
7. **DHS/ONCRC, Ken Wall**, briefed the EPC on the current review and status of UASI funding requests and projects. Decisions are being made as soon as possible
8. **Next Meeting:** Thursday, November 6, 2003, 2:00-4:00 p.m.
9. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 p.m.