R2 –WEEKLY BULLETIN

MANAGERS MEET OFF-SITE; PRIORITIES MAPPED

Following up on the themes of our "All Hands Meeting" last Monday, Regional Administrator Mike Moriarty led this year's second Division Directors/Branch Chiefs gathering the next day, pressing senior leadership to "think outside their divisions" and put into practice the important concepts of transparency and integration.

At an all-day, off-site meeting, Mike led management through a hypothetical exercise that required each division to explore how to best share information, brainstorm on ways to integrate operations, and engage in robust cross-divisional debates that challenged preconceptions and produced three important priorities.

FCO Jamie Forero, who has been out of the Region on deployments since February, says he's noticed a lot of changes in three months. "Throughout the offsite meeting our managers were engaged. Group presentations went long. There was spirited but respectful discussion about tough issues but also laughter, and a spirit of camaraderie," he said. "One outcome is a group whose relationships are strengthened and whose expectations are better aligned."

Greater transparency on disaster information and measuring success was the first of the top-priority initiatives. The group agreed to develop a public portal for post-disaster information that would anticipate programmatic questions and keep audiences better informed.

Top priority two stressed integrating Regional Planning information, with a process to

Jaime Forero, left, and Dug Sally are part of the RA's working group tapped to address the Region's top priorities.

link complementary data from different divisions.. Among the ideas discussed: a unified JFO approach; and a regional "Weekly Incident Action Plan." .

The third priority targeted improving Regional data collection, storage, and retrieval using GIS, creating a "one-stop data shop" in the DOD.

So what does all this mean for the rest of us?   Jamie Forero summed it up succinctly: "As a child my grandfather used to remind me that the best way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time. So it is for us in FEMA Region II."

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ON THE ROAD:

The VPN Checklist:

1. Make sure you can access the Internet. Check that your wireless antenna or AT&T air card is working by visiting a common, commercial website like Google or Yahoo. Without Internet access, there's no VPN capability.

2. Double click the VPN icon on the desktop. A connection window will appear. Make sure the connection drop down is set to "fema_ipass_vpn." Click "Connect." A username and password screen will appear.

3. Enter your name and FEMA password.

4. The VPN will approve you and ask you to click "Continue."

5. Browse to http://online.fema.net to test this connection. If you can see this website, you're behind the FEMA firewall.

6. Now double click the R2 LOGON icon. This will connect you to the G: and H: drives. Let this script run until it finishes. It will take a minute or two as you are working remotely. Be patient.

7. After the R2 LOGON script finishes, go to Start/My Computer and make sure you can see your G: and H: drives.

8. Start Outlook. You're now working as if you're at the office.

When you've finished, double click the VPN icon and be sure to hit "Disconnect." This is important*. If you don't, the VPN will assume that you are still on a VPN session and you won't be able to log back in next time.*

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Another perspective:

APPLES, ORANGES… AND FRUIT COMPOTE
By Jay Jun

Since joining FEMA as a DAE -- after a year at NYC-OEM – many people have asked me to compare the two operations, as if either agency could be defined by its differences.

Like FEMA, NYCOEM is a coordinating agency. It works with other city agencies to spearhead a common response to incidents citywide. But unlike FEMA, it has no recovery programs – nothing equivalent to either IA or PA.

Because NYC-OEM responds to all emergencies that require the coordination of various city agencies, its operations are more frequent than FEMA's, and its staff knows that on any given day, something may happen that voids all dinner plans. Its staff accepts this, and institutionally that commitment is formalized by having its three EOC ESF teams rotate being 'on-call' every three weeks.

As a fairly new and small agency, NYC-OEM has been able to leverage the latest technology to support its daily activities. Its 'track-it' program is analogous to the Help Desk ticketing at FEMA, but instead of an email request, it's a program that supports IT help requests, as well as other services like mapping, phone service, email, hardware and software issues.

COMPOTE, continued

Many employees at NYC-OEM are paid by grants. Turnover is high.

Again – perhaps because it's new and small – NYC-OEM fosters socialization. There are monthly 'Birthday Babies' gatherings in the tiny cafeteria where the commissioner leads a chorus of "Happy Birthday" for employees born that month. Prior to the singing, the commissioner will announce work and personal milestones. The birthday cake and snacks are paid for by yearly donations of $20 per employee. In addition, All-Hands Meetings, potluck dinners and holiday parties are routine.

Since NYC-OEM's focus is the five boroughs, employees do not get deployed to incidents outside of the city, whereas FEMA employees can be deployed outside their duty stations for weeks or months at a time.

Like apples and oranges, NYC-OEM and FEMA are different, but have a lot in common, and working here I realize how much they complement each other.

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FEMA GIVES LAPTOPS TO SCHOOL CHILDREN

Puerto Rico's Gov. Luis G. Furtuño (left, back row) and CAD Director Alex DelaCampa (second from right, back row) with students and teachers of Venus Gardens School. FEMA, working with the PR Dept. of Education and the GSA, recently donated 370 excess computers to nonprofits in Puerto Rico. Venus Gardens is among the 26 schools that received 75 laptops. The ceremony marking the gift took place this week.   ♦

BRIEFINGS...BY THE NUMBERS
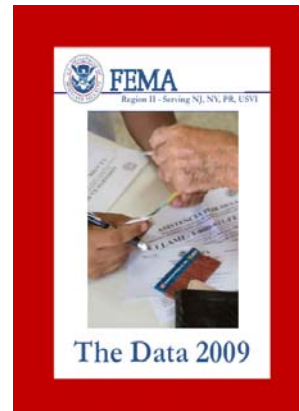
- NJ Congressman Garrett's district received nearly $1.5 million in Assistance to Firefighter Grants in 2008.

- New York State got more than $89 million under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program from 1998 through 2008.

- Residents of New Jersey's Bergen and Somerset Counties received almost half of all Region II's Individual Assistance, and a third of all its Public Assistance, for damage from weather-related disasters from 1999 through 2008.

These are but a few of the myriad facts that define what Region II does, where it does it, and on whose behalf. Detailed in "The Book," and "The Data," this Regional "snapshot" is vital information, both internally and to the many people and organizations we serve.

This data will enable the Region to brief and update Congressmen and their staffs on how we serve their districts in disasters, in Preparedness, and in Mitigation, as well as providing answers to many other questions, and insight into Regional program trends.

In fact, beginning May 27th, the Region will brief six New Jersey congressional districts, with newly-elected Congressmen Leonard Lance and John Adler topping the schedule.

Led by Acting Regional Administrator Mike Moriarty, this outreach effort will feature Disaster Assistance Director Mike Beeman, Acting Operations Director Dug Salley, External Affairs Director Kristina Simpson and Mitigations' Senior Engineer Paul Weberg, who heads that division's outreach initiative.

In New York State, FCO Marianne Jackson is conducting congressional briefings with External Affair's Congressional guru Nestor Llamas in the area affected by this winter's ice storm disaster.