

# REGION 2 BI-WEEKLY

Vol. 3 Issue 16

August 19, 2011

## REGIONAL PLANNING CELL FOSTERS INTEGRATION *Bringing People Together, Sharing Plans, Helps Identify Gaps and Shortfalls*

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** RA Canton has identified Planning as among her top three Regional priorities for FY2012. (The other two are training/work force development, and THIRA.) This is the final article in a three-part series on planning, looking at the Regional Planning Cell, a new working group envisioned as providing an infrastructure for plan integration across divisions.

While Regional staff and outside contractors develop response plans — the Region's All Hazards Plan, and separate earthquakes and tsunamis annexes for both Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, detailed in the last two issues — a new, working group has been convened to review and integrate each of these plans across divisions.

The Regional Planning Cell (RPC) was launched by Deputy RA Mike Moriarty in early June. It was established to "design and implement an integrated process for cross-divisional Region II planning activities to ensure better coordination between divisions and to remove the 'stove-pipe' processes in the multiple planning cycles."

Representatives of all divisions attend the weekly Tuesday meetings, which are co-chaired by PNP Deputy Director David Musick, right, and Recovery Deputy Director Theo Joseph. Each week, a Subject Matter Expert or Point of Contact for a planning initiative presents their planning project to the inter-division working group to gain their perspective and any valuable information that could assist in the planning process.

So far, the group has discussed four of the Region's highest priority planning initiatives: the 'All Hazards' Plan, the Earthquake and Tsunami Plans for both Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands, and the Threat and Hazard Identification Review and Analysis (THIRA) process, which underpins all of the RPC's efforts.

The RPC's charter calls for all Regional planning initiatives to be presented. Recently Emergency Management Program Specialist Leah Lubin briefed the group on ESF-6 Mass Care, emphasizing the current document is actually a 'guide' (as opposed to a plan), because it is not ICS compliant. Nevertheless, Preparedness Officer Susan O'Neill noted the Region's All Hazards Plan, the development of which

she is overseeing, will incorporate the ESF-6 guidance. At this meeting Leah announced that that guidance will be updated "in the coming weeks," with input from the Regional Disability Coordinator.

"This is a pretty good example of how the process works," said David Musick. "By 'cross-walking' the plans between divisions, we utilize the diverse talents and knowledge base within the Region to identify gaps, duplications and solutions, as well as ensuring all divisions are working off the same page. The process itself fosters integration of efforts."

Not only does the RPC provide a venue for integration for planning initiatives, it also educates all the participants involved with the process. There is a lot of



information sharing that occurs during plan presentations, and members of the RPC are routinely exposed to a wide array of knowledge and detailed technical information concerning specific plans they wouldn't have access to during their normal working day.

"And ultimately we will have a consolidated timeline for all the plans," David promises. "That way we can all see, from a 'big picture' perspective, how the planning process is incorporated and integrated across all divisions within Region II."

## **PR COOP DRILL ADVANCES PREPAREDNESS;** *Scenario Evokes CAD's Credible Threats*

Puerto Rico's vulnerability to catastrophic hazards – including earthquakes and tsunamis – has upped the ante for Regional Preparedness. This week, two events were held to help the island better prepare: a COOP Tabletop Exercise, and a COOP Planning Workshop.

Eighty-five officials from state and municipal agencies participated in Tuesday's tabletop drill, identifying their agencies' essential functions, as well as their continuity facility, continuity of communications procedures, reconstitution protocols, vital records storage and management, their agency's orders of succession and other COOP processes.

"COOP activities are helping the municipalities and the state/federal agencies develop plans and procedures to be better prepared if the island is affected by any hazard," said Orlando Olivera, the CAD COOP Coordinator and training facilitator, above right, addressing the group. "The tsunami scenario dramatizes how important this is, and it's also a credible threat. We know that, and need to prepare."

That's also on the mind of Russell Fox, Region II's COOP Manager. "A tsunami would clearly affect the primary locations of so many participating municipalities and agencies. We wanted participants to discuss and test their COOP Plans. The participation of the state and municipal agencies in COOP activities has increased the ability of the Puerto Rican Government to maintain their essential functions and continue to provide necessary assistance to the public under any condition," Russell said.

This week's COOP exercise has special resonance with Response's ongoing Puerto Rico Earthquake and Tsunami Planning initiative. "While our plan will address the catastrophic tsunami scenario in terms of a response operation, having a strong COOP plan in place will ensure smoother operations, both for Response and the agencies' essential functions," said Marie González, Emergency Operations Planner/Task Monitor for Puerto Rico's Earthquake and Tsunami Response Plan. "As a Region, we're going for the comprehensive, integrated response."



From left to right: Russell Fox, COOP Manager; Orlando Olivera, CAD COOP Coordinator, and Antonio Vazquez, Training Specialist



## REGIONAL TRAINING WRAP

# PRIVATE SECTOR INVITED TO THE TABLE

## *NJ Hosts Sector's First Exercise On Disaster Response*

By Terri Winters

New Jersey's Office of Homeland Security (NJ OHSP) hosted the first of several tabletop exercises involving the private sector this week, with Region II both supporting their efforts and providing subject matter and operational expertise.

Response Director Dug Salley was tapped for help in developing the exercise. He helped identify learning outcomes for the exercise, as well as exercise protocols. He also coordinated the participation of the other federal partners that attended, such as the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Energy.



One of the major "lessons learned" from NJOHSP's first disaster response tabletop exercise involving the private sector is just how many stakeholders 'at the table' this entails.

The exercise, Operations and Information Sharing (OAIS) was designed to evaluate how the public sector works with the private sector pre- and post-disaster. The private sector participation for this particular exercise consisted of basic services: Utilities, including electricity, water, and sewage.

The exercise scenario consisted of a terrorist event, which provided a chance to evaluate how sensitive information is shared between NJ's Office of Homeland Security and the NJ State Police Emergency Managers with the private sector. After a short break in the exercise, a hurricane scenario was used to evaluate how the public and private sectors can integrate their post-hurricane responses.

As with any 'first,' this exercise yielded many 'lessons learned.' For example, the sharing of clear, concise, and timely information from both the private public sectors proved vital to both sectors. Awareness of what each sector does during disaster operations – such as when a JFO opens, and when the private sector needs assistance – demonstrated the drill's success: better to identify information shortfalls and address them, then be caught struggling with those issues is an actual event, participants agreed.

Also attending were this correspondent, External Affairs Private Sector Liaison Terry Winters, Recovery Division Director Larry O'Reilly and Deputy Director Theo Joseph, and Response Division Planners Patrick Cornbill and Brice Acosta, who served as exercise evaluators.

"It was a really cool exercise," Brice said. "As the name suggest, it was all about information sharing, and that's where it made its' biggest strides. But there is still a lot of work to do."

## UPCOMING TRAININGS IN THE REGION

**Aug. 24—Aug. 26th.** ICS 400 for Ops Section.

**Sept. 14 and Sept 15** — EEO for Managers and Supervisors; **Required Course; Taught by HQ EEO**

**Sept. 20-21** FEMA *CareerPower™* a workshop designed to train individuals to take charge of and manage their careers. Offered by the FEMA's OCCHCO/Career Development

**Contact Ed Capps for additional information on courses above.**

## **REGIONAL TRAINING WRAP**

# **TSUNAMI SIRENS ANNOUNCE EXERCISE**

## ***Hearing Alert is Music to Ears Of Organizers, Volunteers***

By Devin Kerins

The Virgin Islands Territory Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) tested its Tsunami Warning Siren system last week. This was the first time VITEMA and Region II's Caribbean Area Division (CAD) tested the integration of all the emergency alert systems operating in the islands.

Prior to the exercise, a saturation media campaign alerted residents that a test was scheduled – thereby ensuring the public did not panic during the exercise – and enlisted them in gauging the exercise's success. Residents were encouraged to log onto VITEMA's website, or leave messages on the official VITEMA Twitter and Facebook sites to let the agency know where they were on the island when they heard the alert.

Residents' efforts supplemented those of VITEMA volunteers, the Virgin Islands CERT, the Virgin Islands Police Academy Cadet class, and the staff from the US Customs and Border Protection, who were also stationed around the islands to mark when the sirens were audible and whether messages were clear and easily understood. Volunteers also manned dedicated telephone lines to survey residents who called in, see right.

"Overall this was a very valuable exercise," pronounced VITEMA Deputy Director Noel Smith. "It was more valuable to conduct it this way than to simply do silent tests. We now have a better idea of where we need to put more sirens to make the system more comprehensive."

"Although evacuation is not part of the joint plan, VITEMA's alert system really raises public awareness," said Robert Rascher, Lead Planner and Task Monitor for the developing USVI Earthquake and Tsunami Plan. "We will continue to work with VITEMA to solve issues and find solutions in the event of a catastrophic tsunami."



## **SPEAKING THE SAME LANGUAGE**

Last week, IA and EA staff from the CAD joined VITEMA's PIO in a outreach initiative to the Spanish-speaking community in the US Virgin Islands.

The group discussed individual Emergency Preparedness measures, as well as community efforts. They also enlisted the community leaders to disseminate the educational messages. While there, the community leaders were also encouraged to join the Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster, and to develop partnerships with VITEMA, which is eager to expand its reach into the Spanish-speaking community in the US Virgin Island.

The program got good reviews. Here is what IA Branch Chief Eileen Feikert reported back to CAD Director Alex De La Campa and EA Director Kristina Simpson:

*I would like to express my compliments to Lourdes Cabrera, Jannette Martinez-Cintrón and Yadirra Natal. I was very impressed with their presentation and the attention they gave to having hand outs, CD's, contact information all prepared and ready to go. Each one of them was so well versed in their program area that all the questions were answered satisfactory to VITEMA and the Hispanic community leaders that were present.*

*The feedback that was given to the FEMA group from VITEMA was very complimentary and greatly appreciated. With this team work from the CAD I can see the strong relationships that already exist continue to grow between FEMA/ VITEMA office.*



# **THE FEDERAL TIMES WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU**

GSA is circulating a notice from the **FEDERAL TIMES**. See below:  
The deadline for your story is next week, Friday, August 26

## **Tell us how 9/11 changed your life as a federal employee**

Ten years ago, there was no Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration or Office of the Director of National Intelligence. Building security was focused on preventing another domestic act of terrorism like the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

The war had yet to claim the lives of thousands of U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Only a few Americans knew the name Osama bin Laden and the organization al-Qaida.

The Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon outside Washington and the downed airliner over Shanksville, Pa., changed America — and the work and lives of federal employees.

As we approach the 10-year anniversary of 9/11, *Federal Times* would like to hear your story of how your life as a federal employee changed since that day. Selected submissions will be published in special sections in the newspaper and on the website on Sept. 5.

Please send essays of 400 words or fewer to [fedlet@federaltimes.com](mailto:fedlet@federaltimes.com), with the subject line “10 years after 9/11.” Include your name, photo, job title and agency 10 years ago and today, which we will publish with your submission. Also include your phone number and email address so that we can contact you if we need more information.

All submissions will be subject to editing. **Deadline is Aug. 26.**

