

# R2 –WEEKLY BULLETIN

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## LONG ISLAND VOADS: YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY BABY

Before Sept. 11, 2001, no infrastructure existed in Region II to provide clear, reliable information to thousands of disaster victims, or to equip human services organizations to manage a crisis of any size. The events of 9-11 changed all that, dramatizing the need for stronger collaboration and more coordinated efforts among human service agencies.

The Health and Welfare Council of Long Island (HWCLI), partnering with FEMA, and supported by the September 11th Fund and the McCormick Tribune Foundation, called on agencies across Long Island to come together to identify services that would be needed in a post-disaster situation, and to develop a mechanism to efficiently delivery them. Long Island Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (LIVOAD) was established in December 2001 with support from a number of human services organizations and government agencies.

Today, LIVOAD is a regional coalition of 80-plus non-profit, government and for-profit organizations committed to working together in the areas of disaster preparedness, response and recovery.



Ken Curtin, Region II VAL Coordinator, with LIVOAD members. The group's planning meetings analyze topics central to disaster recovery, including Disaster Case Management, Volunteer Management, Food, Mental Health and Special Needs.

## THE NEXT 30 YEARS



(Back, left to right) Edgar Pellet-Ortiz, Mike Wagner, Ben Sklaver, David Heitner (Front, left to right) Laura Swedlow, John Alonso, Kim Anderson and Audrey Massa at their swearing-in ceremony last month. ARA Mike Moriarty (far left) administered the oath.

Happy Birthday Team!

FEMA turns 30 this month, and we're looking pretty good for our age, considering what you've been through.

FEMA has responded to more than 1,800 disaster declarations — from Three Mile Island to Hurricane Hugo to the Northridge Earthquake to September 11<sup>th</sup> to the current Midwest floods of 2009. But the vow we all take reminds us to never forget where our power to serve comes from – the people, as immortalized in the opening words of our governing document: We, the people...

If you think back to when you were playing sports as a kid, you'll recall parents or coaches yelling "keep your eye on the ball" and "follow-through!" These 'reminders' are second-nature for great athletes.

Now, although we won't be yelling (much), I hope that you'll be hearing the workplace equivalents in our meetings, our conversations or just walking these labyrinth halls: "decision-making transparency," "build the bench," and "push information down."

For FEMA's next 30 years, good leadership habits must become second-nature. And it has to start with all of us now.



## REGIONAL NOTES:

◆ As Region II strives toward greater transparency and integration, a modest- looking Directive from Regional Administrator Mike Moriarty known as *Delegations of Authority* may prove a keystone.

*Delegations* takes a detailed look at regional responsibilities and authorities based on over 20 statutes, Executive Orders, and FEMA Instruction documents. In addition to spelling out responsibilities, *Delegations* also provides a look at the line of leadership succession for the RA and each division.

The obvious first successor to the RA is the Deputy Regional Administrator. After that, it's less obvious. *Delegations* explains that, should the DRA be unavailable, the baton will be passed to the division directors in the following order: Disaster Assistance, Disaster Operations, External Affairs, Caribbean Area, Mitigation, Federal Preparedness Coordinator, and then Management.

Within each division, there is also a statutory line of succession. This, and more obscure – but important – information on regional authority and responsibilities will soon be available to all staff on the common—or ‘G’—drive. Look for it.

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Last week, the CAD hosted "Individual Assistance Basic Management," a course offered to 24 IA employees from across the country. Attendees included branch directors, supervisors, operation sections chiefs and Federal Coordinating Officers. Instructor Barbara Iles from Region VIII IA is above.

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### HE'S IT



Anyone who's ever worked Region II knows IT help is crucial to get through a day. So it's with real sadness that the Region says good-bye to Al Hosman at the end of the month. Al is a Region I DAE who was on a multi-month loan/deployment. He'll be missed.

## FACES OF THE REGION



Edgar Pellot-Ortiz, Situation Unit Lead, Region II IMAT Team

*Editor's Note: Several readers suggested a profile of Edgar Pellot-Ortiz, Situation Unit Lead on the IMAT team, to demonstrate that DAEs can get permanent, full time positions with FEMA. They cited his story as "inspirational." But in speaking with Edgar, it's clear the path to PFT status was a long haul.*

Edgar started as a local hire on DR-1372, a 2001 flood in Puerto Rico, during which he was offered a slot with Region II's Planning Cadre. The next year, another flood (DR-1396) hit the Hato Rey area of the island, which marked his first deployment as a DEA.

The first years were slow, Edgar says, with sporadic deployments for training, but in 2003 he was sent to upstate New York following a ice storm disaster (DR-1467), then worked the emergency caused by the statewide power outage that August, and was in place for the aftermath of the severe storms, tornadoes and flooding in the Syracuse area (DR-1486) that fall. He was then re-deployed for two more Albany-based disasters (DR-1534, DR-1589). In between, he worked a long deployment (152 days) for another flooding event in Puerto Rico (DR-1553).

"In FEMA, every employee has to be flexible: schedule, positions, deployments – it can all change at a moment's notice. I've been everything from Admin Assistant to Planning Section Chief, sometimes with no FEMA training. But I learn from my mistakes, fix them and move forward," Edgar says.

This past summer, Edgar spent nearly six months in Nebraska, working two flooding declarations. On one, DR-1770, he served as the Deputy FCO for three months. He was also deployed closer to home for Puerto Rico's latest flooding event (DR-1794), as well as Hurricane Omar (DR-1807) in the US Virgin Islands.

"It's a crazy schedule, but I love the work," he says, citing the defining experience of working post-Katrina in Biloxi, MS. "I was working in VAL, which is really the heart of the disaster assistance mission – helping people, delivering services. We put several families back in re-built homes. It's good work, and you really feel good at the end of the day, and in this business, there is a mission everyday."

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