

# REGION 2 BI-WEEKLY

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## COMMS DRILL IN USVI; HARDWARE, INFRASTRUCTURE TESTED

By Sean Kielty

A comprehensive, pre-hurricane season, emergency communications exercise that tested the US Virgin Island's communications infrastructure was held earlier this month. The territory's satellite telephones, VHF Repeaters, VHF Direct, and HF Radios were all put through their paces by the participating federal and territorial agencies.

The VHF Repeaters and VHF Direct capabilities of both St. Thomas and St. John's were fully operational throughout the exercise, and public safety agencies communicated with one another and VITEMA without interruption. Equally important, federal coordinators were consistently in contact with each other via both VHF Repeaters and VHF Direct FEMA-owned frequencies.

However, due to its geographic distance from St Thomas and St John, St. Croix's exercise participants were only able to establish and maintain VHF



All three islands had HF radios which are established and maintained by Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) volunteer exercise partici-

*Sean Kielty, Regional Emergency Communications Coordinator, operating the VITEMA Emergency Communications Vehicle radio during the exercise on St Thomas.*



*Murad Raheem, Supervisory Regional Emergency Coordinator for HHS Region II, operating the FNARS Radio on St John.*

repeater and simplex communications with other agencies on that island. While federal coordinators were able to establish intermittent VHF Repeater communication between St Croix and St Thomas – as well as with St John – this was only possible from the northern coast of St Croix.

pants, and territorial and federal coordinators. These HF radio transmissions from the VITEMA EOC on St John reached the Frederick MERS detachment within two hours of the exercise's commencement.

Exercise participants on all three islands were also successful in establishing repeated, reliable communication with the Region II Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) Watch, using satellite telephones. The only issue was a technical one: with no external antennas, operators needed to call from a vehicle during inclement weather.

This pre-hurricane season emergency communications exercise validated the territory's baseline capability, and identified recommendations for improvement, including the need to elevate the current FEMA VHF Repeater Antenna to increase coverage in St Croix, and the need to assemble, test, and maintain a cache of satellite telephones on each island.

With that, the countdown to hurricane season has begun.

# INSTITUTIONALIZING DISASTER MITIGATION

## *New Building Code Focuses on Wind, Flood, Seismic Events*

The International Code Council, the nonprofit that sets building codes for both commercial and residential construction, lauded Region II's Caribbean Area Division (CAD) and FEMA's Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration (FIMA) - Building Sciences Branch this past week, for their co-sponsorship of the nine new International Building Code workshops in Puerto Rico that resulted in the adoption of a new building code for the island. The new 2011 Puerto Rico Building Code strengthens the seismic, winds and flood provisions of the Codes. *Puerto Rico is one of few U.S. jurisdictions adopting all these codes in the International Code Series.*



The newly adopted building code is the outcome of 18 months of state, federal and private sector collaboration. "This demonstrates what government and private sector partnerships can produce," said CAD Director Alejandro DeLaCampa. "Having the whole community involved in this important project has allowed the prompt adoption of these new construction codes which will help mitigate disaster damages and losses in the island."

DeLaCampa, above left, also attended a meeting in which Governor of Puerto Rico Luis Fortuño, above right, and ICC officials formalized their mutual commitment to ensure full implementation of the new building code.

## UP TO SPEED:

Between deployments, many DAEs feel that policy and SOPs change...

To keep you apprised of policy updates — i.e., DAE sick leave policy, travel, mileage updates, etc. — HQ External Affairs has developed a website with the latest developments that is outside the firewall. To access: [http://www.fema.gov/about/divisions/disaster\\_operations/](http://www.fema.gov/about/divisions/disaster_operations/)

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The American Heart Assn. *5K Heart Run/Walk through Manhattan's Financial District* takes place **May 17 at 6:45 PM**. Team **ESF#5** consists of runners & walkers from FEMA Region II, NY OEM, and other metropolitan area emergency managers. To register, use our team name, **ESF#5**, on this link: <http://www.kintera.org/faf/teams/groupTeamStats.asp?ievent=436578&lis=1&kntae436578=464E1277CB514F8E86B6308DBAC2B2B3&lis=1>, and follow the instructions provided. To use the NYRR discount, enter 000000 in the membership number section of the registration.

## ***CELEBRATING JUDY FLOHR***



Dr. Judy Kay Flohr, 57, the daughter of Region II's longtime External Affairs DAE Rev. LeRoy Flohr, passed into eternal life last week.

A *Celebration* will be held on **Sunday, May 15th** at the Hope United Methodist Church, 31 Main St., Belchertown, PA at 1:30pm. LeRoy and his wife Joyce will be receiving friends and family at the

Church beginning at noon.

To access an online Guest Book (copy and paste): [http://beersandstory.com/\\_mgxroot/page\\_10794.php?id=922261](http://beersandstory.com/_mgxroot/page_10794.php?id=922261)

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Judy Kay Flohr Memorial Scholarship Fund c/o Isenberg School of Management, 121 Presidents Drive, UMass Amherst, Amherst MA 01003-9310 or Hope United Methodist Church Memorial Fund at the address above.

# 'KIDS AT WORK' DAY

By Kristina Simpson

**Editor's Note:** The Region celebrated the 18th national "Bring Our Sons and Daughters to Work Day" Thursday with 18 children (and some grandchildren) of staff. Highlights of the day included attendance at the 8.30 Stand Up Briefing, right, a FEMA Kids picture ID, below, a Preparedness briefing and a visit by bear.

The day's program was put together by Emergency Analyst Carri Hoffman and External Affairs Director Kristina Simpson, whose account follows.



The funny things kids say can make your day. Yesterday, they made ours. ("Thanks Don, but I just want a juice box.")



It was great to meet the extended family of the Regional team—ages 3 to 19. With their bright ideas and fine attire they entered the Region with these words of wisdom "Candy is good for you—it gives you energy."



# FEMA KIDS-2

They did not lack energy, and neither did our FEMA team. Between the sugar treats, magic, coloring books, badges, puzzles, and a bear that walked in off the street, Region II displayed its warmth and humor.



It was also great to see kids help each other, forming fast friendships. Their natural, spontaneous impulse to help may well portend a career in public service. After all, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

