

REGION 2 BI-WEEKLY

Volume 2, Issue 8

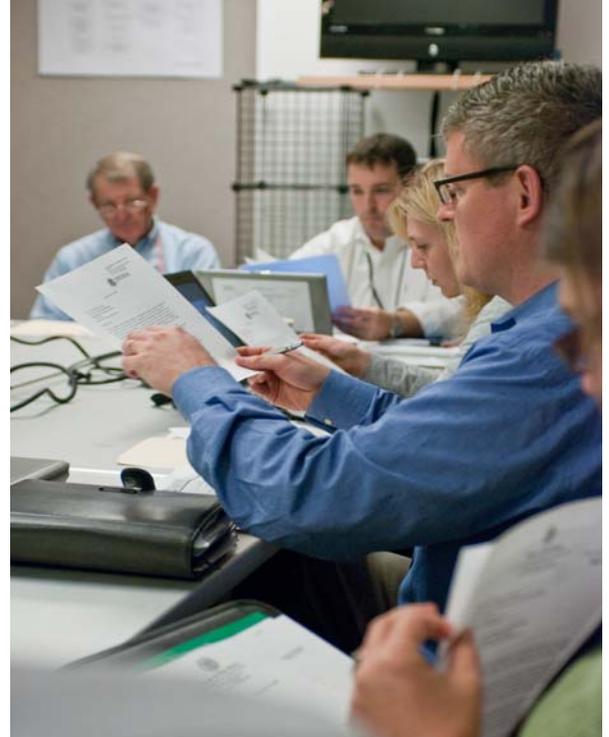
May 7, 2010

Regional Mitigation: MORE BANG FOR THE BUCK

Region II Mitigation, the NJ Association of Floodplain Managers (NJAFM) and NJ Office of Emergency Management held their quarterly meeting at the Somerset, NJ Joint Field Office for DR-1897 last week. On the agenda was the coordination of their flood plain management roles and priorities.

NJAFM is a chapter of the National Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM), a respected voice in floodplain management practice and policy in the US. The New Jersey chapter has over 150 members statewide. Discussion centered on NJAFM's priorities throughout the state, and in response to recent flood events and presidential declarations.

Attendees also participated in a Mitigation Planning Meeting which sought to implement a new Regional strategy to focus mitigation funding on repetitive loss communities, coordinating all available funding from FEMA, HUD, USACE and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection. With Severe Repetitive Loss funding and HMGP funding from DR-1897, FEMA alone can bring more than \$160 million to the table. "The goal is to coordinate both available funding



under non-disaster mitigation grants and disaster funding to develop a comprehensive approach to priority areas," said HMGP Branch Chief Robert Tranter.

NJAFM's mission is to reduce loss of life and property damage resulting from floods and to promote sound floodplain management at all levels of government. With similar goals, the Mitigation Division plans to continue to support NJAFM's outreach and training opportunities by providing the technical expertise to conduct FEMA's Elevation Certificate training and other floodplain management training workshops and courses. In addition, the Mitigation Division supports the NJAFM annual conference as an exhibitor. Deputy Administrator Michael F. Moriarty addressed the group's conference last year.

NEXUS OF FACT AND PROGRAM EXPERTISE

FACES OF THE REGION

Even in an era of severe government deficits, Puerto Rico's situation is dire. Operating under a State of Fiscal Emergency, the island has a \$3.2 billion deficit, a credit rating flirting with junk status, and it recently instituted a 10% cut for all government salaries and benefits. Chronic revenue shortfalls have also affected the island's emergency preparedness stance: **more than 250 firefighters have already been laid off.**

This is the situation that greeted Region II Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) Program Specialist Dave Gronsbell (below right), on his recent trip to the island. His mission was to assess the local needs of Puerto Rico's 95 Fire Stations and present the FY2010 AFG Workshop to the Commonwealth's Fire Command Staff.

And while Dave knows the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants are competitive, he also knows the prime criterion of a successful application: getting a career or volunteer department fully staffed in "the most economical way possible."

Currently, Puerto Rico's fire service is a paid career department. Applying for a grant to reinstate the service's 250+ laid off workers would be expensive. But if the department adopted a career/volunteer combination structure, not only would it be less expensive to achieve full staffing, but all the hiring, recruitment and retention activities could also qualify for SAFER grant support. Clearly this is the most economical – and efficient – way to protect the Puerto Rican firefighters, and ultimately the island residents they serve.

Dave proposed this strategy to Puerto Rico's Fire Chief Carmen Rodriguez Diaz (below left), a former Region II DAE in Community Relations, who will present it to the Governor. Program expertise may prove better than cash, Gronsbell says.



Brian Stewart Thomas joined the U.S. Marine Corps at age 18. He served four years as an Intelligence Analyst in various locations including Okinawa, Japan and Quantico, Va. In 2003, Brian deployed with 2nd Marines to serve in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

After being honorably discharged from the USMC, Brian attended college at CUNY Lehman in The Bronx, N.Y. where he earned his B.A. in Political Science.

With military service and a degree in Political Science, Brian began his career with the Federal Government at Ronald Regan Washington National Airport as a Transportation Security Officer for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). After a promotion, he transferred to the Transportation Security Operations Center (TSOC), located just outside of Washington, DC.

As a Watch Officer at the TSOC, Brian learned the skills and gained the experience he needed to land his current position as a Watch Analyst with FEMA Region II.

Brian was born in Stamford, CT., but his family moved to Yonkers when he was quite young. His new job enabled Brian to return to New York. He is currently living in Woodlawn section of the Bronx, and sits on the Board of Directors of the school of the Sacred Heart, which he attended for grades 1-12. He looking forward to a long career with FEMA and the Federal Government.



GETTING THE WORD OUT TO EVERYONE



We all know by now that working for FEMA requires a great amount of flexibility.

Each deployment calls for new and imaginative ways of getting the recovery message out to affected residents. When a disaster hits a state as large and diverse as New Jersey, Region II personnel can be counted upon to work as a team, bringing out the best in each other.

On learning that Rowan's University offered to produce a Public Service Announcement on their radio station, Community Relations AEAO Linda Colón thought of ways of expanding the message to non-English speaking residents throughout the state. A multilingual team of Region's II personnel was brought together to record announcements in English, Spanish, French, Arabic and Creole, drawing on various departments, including Community Relations, Individual Assistance, and Public Affairs. CR specialists Maribel Rovira (above right), along with her CR colleague Andre Delice, who is proficient in Creole, worked along with Arabic speaking Sherin Nassar (an Individual Assistance specialist) in tracking the one minute announcements.

PIO Michael Powell was the liaison between FEMA and the University's radio station, making sure everything ran smoothly the day the announcements were recorded. External Affairs photographer Michael Medina was on hand to capture the event. A sample of his work is above.

The new public service announcements — dealing with assistance available to affected residents in the 12 declared counties of DR-1897-NJ — are now being distributed to radio stations serving those areas.