

REGION 2 BI-WEEKLY

Volume 1, Issue 18

June 5, 2009



▶▶ ARA Michael Moriarty channeling Zeus and lightning bolts

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EMPIRE '09 EXERCISES DIRTY BOMB RESPONSE

More than 550 first responders from New York, federal and local governments, and hospital/healthcare workers from over 30 federal, state and local agencies in Albany and Rensselaer counties played in an intensive, three-day emergency response exercise in Albany's Capital Region this week.

The exercise --Empire '09 --is one of the largest drills to be conducted in New York State. It began in early May with a two-day facilitated tabletop in Albany.

This week's full scale exercise brought together officials from all levels of government to respond to a frightening scenario: the detonation of a "dirty bomb" in Albany's downtown government area.

A third phase, dealing with long-term recovery and cleanup, will take place in a facilitated exercise setting in Albany in mid-June.

"It was a great learning experience, especially for the state which doesn't routinely conduct interagency drills," said External Affairs Director Kristina Simpson. "For FEMA, deepening our coordination with federal partners, like the folks at EPA, puts us in a better place if the unthinkable happens."

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LIGHTNING BOLTS ON R-2 HORIZON?

By Michael Moriarty

FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate recently informed his management team that he will begin instituting what he calls "Thunderbolt" exercises. These exercises will be NO NOTICE events for FEMA. Mr. Fugate has used these exercises with great success during his tenure as director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management.

In outlining his vision for these exercises, Mr. Fugate did not reveal many details, but the Thunderbolt exercises are intended to test our readiness, and discover areas where improvement is needed. Exercises, especially no-notice exercises such as Thunderbolt, give FEMA the opportunity to identify shortfalls, and work toward a more effective and efficient delivery of services during actual emergency and disaster events.

The entire Region II team needs to be aware of these upcoming Thunderbolt exercises. Should Region II be tapped to participate in one of these "Thunderbolt" exercises, we will receive little to no notice, but will be expected to participate as though it were a real life event. This may mean RRCC activations and deployments, as well as unforeseen changes to work schedules (i.e. meetings, site visits, employee work schedules, will all give way to the exercise, etc.).

To re-state the obvious: FEMA is first and foremost an emergency management agency, and every employee is "on call" for disasters, no matter what other activities are ongoing or scheduled. Participation will be mandatory; any absences must be approved by the second level supervisor of an employee or by Mr. Fugate himself.

I thank you for your expected responsiveness and readiness.

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LOOKING AHEAD



Caribbean Area Division Director Alejandro De La Campa addresses mayors and emergency managers attending PREMA's annual Hurricane Conference this week. Alex reviewed FEMA's readiness plans for the 2009 hurricane season, and reviewed disaster assistance programming.

MITIGATION 101

Considered the cornerstone of emergency management, "Hazard Mitigation" is a simple concept: taking preventative actions that significantly reduce or eliminate future damages and losses to individuals and property caused by natural or man-made hazards.

FEMA sponsors five Hazard Mitigation Assistance grant programs that are administered within Region II's Flood Insurance and Mitigation Division:

- the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), which is funded through Presidential disaster declarations;
- the Pre-disaster Mitigation Program (PDM), a nationwide competitive program;
- the Flood Mitigation Assistance program (FMA), targeting structures insured under the NFIP;
- the Repetitive Flood Claims (RFC) Program, targeting structures insured under the NFIP that have experienced one or more claim payments for flood damages;
- the Severe Repetitive Loss (SRL) program, targeted at structures insured under the NFIP that have had severe repetitive losses.

Over the past 10 years, Region II's Mitigation staff has reviewed hundreds of grant applications in collaboration with our partners in NY, NJ, PR, and USVI. In that time, the Region has allocated more than \$613 million in HMGP grants alone.

From property acquisitions and home elevations to drainage projects, streambank stabilization, and undergrounding of electric utilities, these projects have successfully mitigated damages from natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes and nor'easters, ice storms, tornados, and landslides.

During the coming months, this newsletter will highlight some of these projects.



The next day Paul was among 150 CERT volunteers who played victims at a NYCOEM exercise that centered on an improvised explosive device detonated on a PATH train. More than 800 emergency personnel from the Port Authority of NY & NJ, NYPD, FDNY, EMS and NYCORM participated.

CAN'T GET ENOUGH



DEA Paul Tashjian is prepared for emergencies.

On May 16th Tashjian, above, played the role of a government liaison for the American Red Cross at a simulated commercial airplane crash exercise at Stewart International Airport in Newburgh, NY.

From the airport EOC, he coordinated ARC's service delivery with airport and Orange County emergency management personnel, local fire and EMS responders, and federal agencies such as the TSA, CBP, and the NTSB. ►

STANDING WITH MIKE



Mike Dabney, seated left, surrounded by his Mitigation Division staff at this retirement luncheon this week. Joining the party, former Deputy Regional Administrator Joe Picciano, second row right, and former HMA Branch Chief Bruce Swiren, back row, fifth from the left,

The conference room was strewn with festive crepe but it was the food that evoked New Orleans at Mardi Gras: Seafood Gumbo, Creole tomato Jambalaya, Chicken Etoufee, bread pudding and cake filled with fresh fruit. Party organizers trekked to Stan's Place in Brooklyn's for Big Easy specialties to honor one of that city's native sons...and their friend and boss.



AN OPEN LETTER FROM MIKE DABNEY

Will The Last One Out... Please Turn Off The Lights ?!?

To My Friends and Colleagues,

It is with mixed emotions that I wish you all a fond farewell, as my last "official" day with FEMA was Wednesday, June 3rd. After 32 years of Federal service it's time to retire and move on to the next phase. Immediately, the "next phase" will probably involve spoiling the grandkids, the extensive "Honey Do" list my wife Joanne has compiled over the years, and running my Bimmerforums web-site, which started out as a hobby and has now become a "job."

As some of you may know, I started this journey after graduation from Howard University in 1977 by working as an Architect with a Division of USACE. I had the responsibility of analyzing structures for protection against nuclear attack and overseeing the design and construction of emergency operating centers during the days of the Cold War. (For my younger colleagues, Google "Cold War." I'm sure there is a Wiki about those days.)

Speaking of "cold," as a kid from New Orleans, I thought it was a cruel irony to have one of my first TDY locations with USACE, in that never-ending search for those elusive fallout shelters, in Cape May, NJ during the Blizzard of '78, but history shows that I stuck it out up here regardless.

I am especially proud to be one of the charter members of FEMA, probably one of just a few dozen remaining, as in 1979 during the Carter Administration, my section of USACE was transferred as part of the agency's creation. During my 30 years with the agency, I have had the honor to serve in many positions ranging from numerous staff-level slots to management, including Division Director and Deputy Regional Director. I worked in every area of the Region, probably because I couldn't hold a job. And with all due respect to the mission of all divisions, I have found working in our disaster assistance and mitigation arenas to be the most personally rewarding.

Reflecting back, a couple of responses of special note come to mind. Working as the FEMA liaison to the ARC during our response to Hurricane Hugo in '89 in the Virgin Islands was probably my most personally rewarding experience here, assisting in the delivery pipeline of food and supplies for victims of that catastrophe.

And on a more somber note, being on point on the day of the WTC and Pentagon attacks, and ultimately working as the Deputy FCO for Mitigation following those attacks, are events I will never forget. None



of us will. I commend all involved for your support, service and dedication to our mission.

Finally, I would like to personally thank each and every one of you for your well wishes and generosity at my Retirement farewell on Tuesday, with special thanks to Zandra, Adie, Mary, Jason and Julia. I am sorry if I missed anyone. It was a very nice sendoff, thanks in part to the comedy-stylings of Mary and her slide-show. I'm still wondering if they ever found that elusive Dabney guy...

In closing, I wish you all well. But I have to give my special thanks to the Mitigation Team, both in Region, CAD and the field for your talents, dedication and support all these many years. You are all second to none, and don't let anyone, internally or externally, tell you otherwise.

I look forward to the next time we all meet.

Regards,
Michael J. Dabney