

REGION 2 BI-WEEKLY

Vol. 3 Issue 12

June 24, 2011

NEW YORK HEADLINERS WOW UASI *New Technology, Funding Cutbacks Dominate Meeting*



More than 1,700 federal, state and local officials representing all areas of homeland security and emergency preparedness converged on San Francisco this week for the 2011 National UASI and Homeland Security Conference.

Hosted by the National Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) Conference, Inc., a 501c non-profit, in conjunction with DHS, FEMA and FEMA's Grants Program Directorate, this 5th annual gathering of stakeholders from across the homeland security and emergency management spectrum focused on *"Enhancing Capabilities through Regional Collaboration."*

Bagpipes serenaded the group as they made their way to their seats. "It definitely put a little spring in my step," reports PNP's Analysis Branch Chief Terra Flynn, who oversees the Catastrophic Planning Group in Region II. "It was the largest conference I've ever attended," he added.

FEMA Deputy Administrator Rich Serino delivered the welcoming remarks, and FEMA Deputy Administrator for Protection and National Preparedness Tim Manning was also a guest speaker. The keynote address was given by John Chambers, CEO of Cisco Systems, who described a 'brave new world' of secure collaborations via pre-encrypted video that will be transmitted and shared via PDAs, Blackberries, I-phones or future handheld devices. Chambers

told the audience that video will be the dominant information medium of the future, and its secure sharing will happen with 'one or two keystrokes.'

But for Terra, the conference highlight came when NYPD Commissioner Ray Kelly, NYFD Chief Sal Cassano and NYCOEM Chief Joe Bruno all took the stage to discuss "9/11 — 10 Years Later." They discussed 'lessons learned,' and reflected how far the country has traveled from that day. "With the three of them on the huge screens, it was like the three tenors up there. It was really amazing. You could hear a pin drop," Terra said.

However, all that glitters is not gold. When asked by an official from an Tier 2 UASI city in Connecticut whether New York would be willing to share some of its grant money with jurisdictions that have lost funding, Cassano, a 41-year veteran of NYPD, demurred, saying, "Like Commissioner Kelly, I feel it's a bad time to cut homeland security money, but no, New York is not willing to share..." Terra reports.

"Everyone is concerned about the funding cuts," said conference organizer Steve David. "It means finding ways to sustain programs already in place, instead of funding new ones. Or appealing to Congress."

MITIGATION GOES UP CLOSE & PERSONAL

At the request of Congressman Steve Rothman's office, (NJ-9), Region II Mitigation staff met with Secaucus Mayor Michael Gonelli and other town officials to discuss the town's new flood maps, which are scheduled to be issued in June 2012.

Mayor Gonelli pointed out that Hudson County had already spent a good deal of money to combat flooding, noting that the Meadowlands Commission had put in a number of dikes. "How do we prove that we can't have floods in several large areas?" he asked.

Mitigation's Senior Engineer Paul Weberg presented the mayor with the current flood map, as well as the latest flood insurance data, demonstrating the town does have some flooding issues, pointing to 54 resident claims, 20 of which were for repetitive losses. The mayor called this "great information."

Town Councilman James Clancy asked about a specific case in which a portion of a property (although not the structure) was in the flood zone. This person complained he was required to purchase flood insurance. Paul explained that since the structure itself is not in the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), this individual was eligible for a Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA) which technically removes him from the SFHA, and thereby also removes the mandatory flood insurance requirement.

Natural Hazard Mitigation Specialist Kim Rizzo then answered a number of questions on LOMAs, the application process, flood insurance, deductibles, content-coverage, and related topics.

Paul proposed a meeting for additional interested Hudson County communities this Fall, and floated the idea of a Webinar, which the group termed 'ineffective,' saying they favored person-to-person meetings.

But the mayor and his officials heartily endorsed the idea of meeting again this Fall, saying, "I've already learned a lot today."

NYC'S FOREIGN NATIONALS GET PREPAREDNESS TIPS

More than 80 foreign nationals – many from the United Nations – attended an information session last week hosted by Region II, FEMA's Division of International Affairs and the US State Department that was designed to get out the word on programs available to the international community in the wake of a domestic disaster in the US. Similar events are being held throughout the US for communities with large populations of foreign nationals. The first Consular Corps Roundtable was held in Washington, DC in February.

Attendees learned from FEMA, New York State Emergency Management, New York City's Office of Emergency Management, the American Red Cross, and the Office of Foreign Missions about how efforts are coordinated and united during a disaster. FEMA Headquarters also made a presentation on how foreign governments can help the US in time of disaster.



RA Lynn Canton, above left, provided the welcoming remarks in tandem with Thomas Gallo, the Regional Director for the U.S. State Department Office of Foreign Missions, above right. Director Andrew Feeney gave an overview of State-level emergency management and the "home rule" philosophy of many of the states. Throughout the presentations the importance of cooperation and collaboration among partners at every level was emphasized, including partnerships with public, private and non-for-profit sectors.

"I was particularly impressed with how engaged the audience was," Lynn said. "They clearly wanted to know what we do, and what they can, and should, do *before* anything happens."

The success of this event is not only being measured by audience engagement, but also as a example of how different agencies can come together in a whole of community model to provide emergency services during a disaster to foreign nationals working and living in the United States.

CAD CARES



Public-Private Hurricane Preparedness Initiative in CAD

For a second year in a row, the Caribbean Area Division (CAD) collaborated with the global health care company Abbott, and *Feeding America*, the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief charity, to pre-position disaster relief packs at the Puerto Rico Food Bank. CAD staff assembled approximately 400 disaster relief packs. Each pack can meet the immediate nutritional needs for three days, and are designed to sustain families ranging from two to four members. In 2011, Abbott and *Feeding America's* disaster relief packs will serve nearly 20,000 people. Betsy Rivera and Jason Sanclemente, above left, pack supply kits. Miguel Rodriguez, right, does some heavy lifting.



CAD Kids at Work: Learning, Preparing

Last week, the CAD celebrated its own "Bring your Kid to Work Day" activity, in which approximately 30 kids, ages 4 to 15, participated in different preparedness activities, including "How to Prepare an Emergency Backpack," "Mitigation Tips," and "Creating a Communications Plan." All of them took home coloring and activity books with Preparedness information, as well as a certificate for *Preparing Your Kit*, proudly displayed above, left. CAD Security Officer Carlos Fonseca, above right, with the 'official ID badges' he created for the children participating in the event.

MARIA PERAZA

1948—2011



The lilting laughter of Region II's Community Relations (CR) cadre was stilled this week, with news of the passing of Maria Peraza, who died following emergency heart surgery while deployed on DR-1980 in Missouri.

The response to Hurricane Hortense in her native Puerto Rico brought Maria to FEMA 15 years ago. Since then, she has served on more than 50 major disaster operations across the country, including the World Trade Center attacks, and hurricanes Georges and Katrina.

The CR team in Joplin, MO, rallied around Maria following her brief illness and hospitalization. Her beloved husband and daughter made it to her bedside before she passed.

Maria was committed to FEMA's mission to help disaster survivors. She was always positive, upbeat, with a twinkle in her eye and an infectious smile. Not insignificantly, many photos of Maria show her dancing or socializing with her FEMA colleagues. Maria is survived by her husband César Marcano, daughters Sheila and Eileen Marcano, and three grandchildren, Stephanie, Andrés and Gabriel.

Arrangements for a memorial service in Puerto Rico are not finalized, but condolences can be sent to the family at this address:

Mr. Cesar Marcano
PMB 2124
PO Box 4956
Caguas, PR 00726

Editor's Note: Angie Thompson was the CR Cadre Manager from 1997—2008. Below is her memory of **Maria Peraza's Flory: The Kid in the Goat**

Maria Peraza always had a glint in her eyes, a sunny smile, and a gushing giggle. She adored her daughters, grandchildren, and her husband, Cesar, and he enjoyed spoiling her. In Spanish you say, "Ella era su consentida," because he delighted in indulging her. Many years ago, I affectionately dubbed Cesar "El Santo" (The Saint) for the loving solicitude he showered on Maria. They both loved the nickname, and whenever I called the house he would proudly say, "Es El Santo", and we would all laugh.

About 10 years ago, she and Cesar moved from the city to a lovely rural community. Their property had slopes with a lush pasture. Cesar was responsible for mowing it. Maria got the idea of getting a grazing animal to lessen his workload. They bought a baby female goat, and named her Flory.

Things went well as Flory grew, playing with Maria and Cesar's grandchildren, Andres, Gabriel, and Stephanie. The children fed her treats, and soon she began to mimic the other 'kids'. She saw them jumping into the backseat of Cesar's car, and she'd jump in right after them. Cesar would try to eject Flory, but couldn't without the assistance of the children. Flory then began to try to eject Cesar, bumping him with her horns to push him out of her way.

As time passed, Flory behaved more and more like a child. She would stand outside the balcony with her sad eyes peering over the veranda looking into the family room to watch television, as if to say, "Please let me in," and soon enough, she was.

That image often comes back to me: Cesar listening to Maria and Flory squabbling, and then, moments later,



catching a glimpse of them sitting together, side-by-side, watching their favorite "novelas", and munching on treats. I never tired of hearing and watching Maria tell the story about her darling Flory-the Kid in the Goat.

The greatest thing about this simple story is the enduring love of a couple who met many years ago; faced a multitude of challenges, raised a family, and in the process, became soul-mates. The same couple looked at each other this past April 2011 with the freshness, originality, and love they felt on their wedding day 45 years ago.



Sketch: Elisse Goldstein

Like Maria Peraza, each of our disaster workers is unique. They come from diverse backgrounds, and with the support of their loved ones, they join FEMA, and form the lattice of the "FEMA-Familia" - dedicated to our agency's mission of serving the public in times of national crisis. And they do so with grace, and a smile.