

# REGION 2 BI-WEEKLY

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## DRILL SHOWS THE (EAGLE) FLAG

*Week-Long Test of Comms.; Medical Response; DCE; IMAT and RRCC*

By Devin Kerins

Last week, men and women from various local, county, state, federal and military agencies participated in a week-long series of exercises under the moniker Eagle Flag/August Surge 2010. The full scale drill, developed by the NJ OEM, FEMA, the Defense Coordinating Element (DCE), and the US Air Force Expeditionary Center at Fort Dix, was intended to test Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA). In this exercise, that support was directed to FEMA logistics operations and state medical operations.

The exercise scenario was the landfall of Hurricane SARA, a Category 3 hurricane, around the Point Pleasant area. FEMA and the Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst Office of Emergency Management hosted a multi-agency, interoperable communications drill at Lakehurst. This brought together over a dozen agencies from local, county, state, federal, and military agencies in New Jersey to test their interoperable communications frequencies and equipment. "It was a great exercise," remarked Joe Burlew, Communications Unit Leader for NJ USAR Task Force 1. "We identified a lot of programming errors that we were able to easily correct before the end of the exercise."

The next day, a tabletop exercise, facilitated by FEMA, brought together all agencies within the NJ Cabinet, as well as federal agencies, such as FEMA, HHS, Veterans Affairs, GSA, CBP and the FAA. Participants discussed the preparations the state and federal agencies would be making with a hurricane looming, as well as their response activities in the 24 hours following landfall. The Defense Coordinating Element followed up, detailing several topics being tested in the full scale exercise, including military air medical evacuation.

The morning of August 4 began with several briefings at the NJ EOC, where exercise players were challenged with assessing the damage statewide, and coordinating the response. The New Jersey Civil Air Patrol deployed aircraft to fly aerial photography missions for NJ OEM. The NJ State Police Aviation, supported by an NJ EMS Task Force Helibase Management Team, deployed helicopters from Somerset Airport to provide transport to FEMA communications and public information specialists, and FEMA's RRCC in Manhattan processed requests for federal assistance, determining the appropriate federal agencies to mission assign.

The next day, while FEMA and NJ OEC communications personnel flew with the NJ State Police



Aviation Bureau to test the range of handheld mobile radios, an isolated parking lot on Lakehurst Naval Air Engineering Station was the site for emergency medical response. The NJ EMS Task Force and Mobile Acute Care Hospital (MACH) from Hackensack University Medical Center established a field hospital to manage the surge of Hurricane SARA survivors seeking medical attention. The goal of this portion of the exercise was to establish a sustained, 48 hour medical treatment area.

Most triage/evacuation exercises are over within 90 minutes. Eagle Flag forced the teams to be with patients for an extended period of time, to truly test medical surge capacity. Both "Rescue Randy" training mannequins, and 38 actors demanding care challenged the staff, and added stress and realism. Patients were seen at the field hospital and transported to an awaiting Air Force air medical transportation team.

By the end of the drill, the MACH and EMS Task Force had treated 156 patients. "While we didn't reach our objective of 100 patients a day," noted EMS Task Force Leader Mike Bascom, "we certainly proved that the teams and equipment are capable of field deployment in response to a large disaster. We identified several take aways and best practices we're going to work on incorporating into the future."



The writer, left background, with "victim"/actor.

# CARIBBEAN GAMES: FACES OF THE REGION

## HIGH PROFILE SUPPORT

The 21st Caribbean and Central American Games took place in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico last month, and personnel from the Caribbean Area Division (CAD) were in the Multi Agency Coordination Center (MACC), along with the Defense Coordinating Element (DCE), and other federal agencies, standing by to support the Commonwealth if needed.

The Games are a regional multi-sport championship event, held every 4 years, in the even year prior to the Summer Olympics. Due to the significance and international participation in this sports event, they received a *Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR)-Level 2 Event* designation.

But even this support could not thwart some untoward weather: the Games' Open Ceremonies were delayed for one day after a water sprout made landfall and destroyed a portion of the stage.

"Mayaguez 2010" marked the third time that Puerto Rico hosted the Caribbean and Central American Games. A total of 4,965 athletes participated in 39 sports held at various venues across Puerto Rico.

Among the competing athletes was **Omar Rodriguez** (below), a Region II DAE since 1998, who is currently assigned to HQ's Logistics cadre. Omar is Captain of Puerto Rico's Handball team, and has been a member of the national team for the past 10 years.



**Sam Benson** is Region II's new Operations Section Chief on the Response Division's IMAT team.

During his tenure at NYC-OEM, he was part of the city's response to many incidents familiar from the headlines, including the 1999 heat wave, Tropical Storm Floyd, and the Northeast Blackout in 2003. During 9-11, he was its Branch Director for Health & Medical, a job he also held during the anthrax incident and the crash of AA flight 587 on Far Rockaway. He supported the casualty management, fatality management, and environmental health operations, and was a member of the Safety Steering Group that oversaw responder and worker safety. He was also a member of the NYS IMAT, and was deployed to Hurricanes Katrina and Gustav.

Sam has been a paramedic for the past 25 years, and was among the first group trained in HazMat Operations for pre-hospital care. He was also a member of the city's Urban Search and Rescue Team, and was on the Diplomatic Protection Unit.

Sam left EMS to become Coordinator of Emergency Services at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, where he managed the daily operations of the Adult Emergency Department and supported the Pediatric and Psychiatric Emergency Departments. While there, Sam oversaw a site renovation that doubled the size the Adult Emergency Department, and was on the management team that upgraded the hospital to a Level 1 Pediatric Trauma Center. Sam has written a number of articles on the nexus of public health and emergency management.

On his off time, Sam plays the bagpipes with the New York Scottish Pipes and Drum Band. He is married and has two daughters.

# A REGION II 'FIRST'

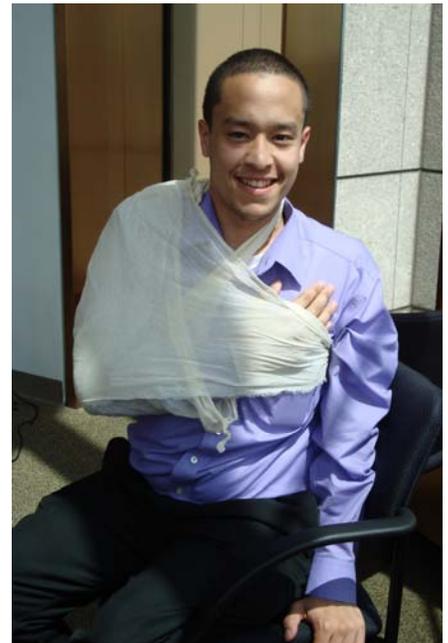


CAD Director Alejandro de la Campa looks on as a representative of the Government of Puerto Rico signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with FEMA for the full implementation of the National Shelter System (NSS). With this signed MOU, Puerto Rico becomes the 7th jurisdiction in the US to achieve this partnership, and the 1<sup>st</sup> in Region II. The FEMA NSS allows the states to identify, track, analyze, and report data of shelter facilities caring for people and/or household pets after a disaster.

## Preparedness Begins at 26...



A recent training in First Aid, CPR/AED and BBP (blood borne pathogens) was given by Medic First Aid at 26 Federal Plaza. All participants were certified, though some, like Violet Zekaj, far left and Teresa O'Connor, did better than others. Joshua Garcia is at right.



Last month, **Region II's Terra Flynn** returned from a three week deployment to Ethiopia, helping that country identify gaps in its emergency operations. The mission was financed by USAID, under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture's Forestry Service. Right, the assessment team maps out its' itinerary, which included five federal agencies, two regions and four 'woredas' or small towns. Lower right, one of four commodity warehouses where US donated flour is pre-positioned.



Terra, far left, attends "jijiga woreda," a local town meeting to collect feedback on federal and regional support. Village leaders were pleased their central government pays for the training of their local emergency response community.

Above left, Terra visits St. Gabriel's, a church outside the ancient city of Harar, founded in 1200 AD. Although Harar is the country's most important Muslim center, St. Gabriel's is renowned for its art and icons.