

The Bridge



Connecting New England's Emergency Management Communities

February 2007 • Issue 2

Director's Vision

This issue of *The Bridge* is dedicated to addressing one of my greatest concerns as an emergency management director - individual preparedness. Are we, as emergency management professionals and citizens of New England, prepared to survive on our own for three days in the event of a disaster?

As emergency personnel and first responders, we must insure that our own families preparedness and communications plans are in place. We will not be able to do our jobs effectively without knowing our families are safe. Resolve to be ready in 2007.

In addition to being prepared citizens ourselves, we need to provide continuous and consistent messages to the public about individual preparedness. Even though local, state and federal governments have disaster assistance plans, citizens may need to be self-sufficient for the first 72 hours. There is NO substitute for individual and family preparedness.

I believe New England can lead the nation in preparing our citizens for disasters - it will always be an uphill challenge, but one that we must never abandon.



Arthur W. Cleaves
Arthur W. Cleaves
Director, FEMA Region 1

FEMA Improves Disaster Assistance

With the passage of the *Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006* come several important changes in the Stafford Act, including how FEMA will deliver disaster assistance. In addition, many of the components of the former DHS Preparedness Directorate have been returned to FEMA. The new changes will allow FEMA to more quickly and compassionately deliver disaster assistance in a straight-forward manner. Highlights are as follows:

Creating a "new" FEMA

– The act merges much of the current Preparedness Directorate with FEMA, effectively returning FEMA's former Preparedness Division and its functions to the Agency. FEMA will now be a standalone agency within DHS, similar to the Coast Guard and Secret Service, and be headed by an Administrator rather than a Director or Undersecretary.

Individual Assistance pilot program

– FEMA is to initiate a pilot program aimed at making greater use of existing rental resources, and can now enter into lease agreements and improve properties if necessary. FEMA must issue a report on the program's progress by March 2009.

Home replacement and repair subcaps have been lifted

– the subcaps of \$5,600 for home repair and \$11,300 for home replacement have been lifted, bringing the overall housing grant cap to \$28,200.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding increase

– HMGP funding has been set at 15% of total grants under the Stafford Act for amounts spent up to \$2 billion, 10% for amounts spent between \$2 billion and \$10 billion, and 7.5% for amounts spent between \$10 billion and \$35.33 billion.

Public Assistance pilot program

– Requires FEMA to develop a pilot program designed to lower federal disaster costs by allowing more flexibility in the administration of the program. Several initiatives related to debris removal are included, as well as an option for applicants to receive an in-lieu contribution of 90% of the federal share of the federal estimate to repair or replace a structure.

Changes will give FEMA more flexibility in funding debris removal

– This will ensure that communities will receive at least 50% of estimated debris removal costs within 60 days of the estimate and within 90 days of the application for assistance.

Curbs against fraud and waste

– The FEMA Administrator will enter into pre-disaster contracts for such goods and services as can be anticipated prior to a disaster event when such contracts are cost-effective. There will be limitations on the use of subcontractors for completing contracted work. FEMA will receive funding for oversight of missions undertaken by other federal agencies.

As of Fiscal Year 2007, the yearly consumer price index changes for disaster assistance programs became effective. The changes apply to all disasters declared after Oct. 1, 2006. For the Public Assistance program, the new limit for small and large projects is \$59,700 and the damage indicators for a disaster declaration are \$1.22 per capita state-wide and \$3.05 per capita for individual counties.

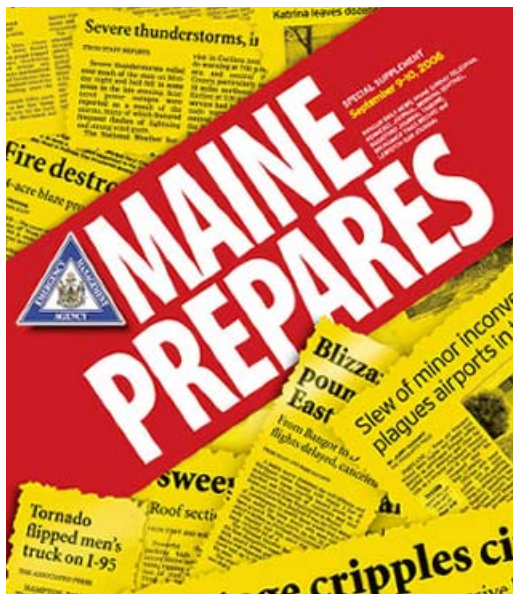
NEWS BRIEFS

Maine Prepares

Last spring the Bangor Daily News approached the Maine Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) with an idea for a newspaper insert devoted to preparedness. The two organizations worked together on this effort – MEMA suggested story ideas and set up interviews and the Bangor Daily News provided a reporter. The final product was a 24-page insert that was distributed to nearly 800,000 homes in Maine during National Preparedness Month. Public response to the insert was positive and additional copies were requested. Both sides are interested in another insert for September 2007.

The insert was awarded first place at the International Association of Emergency Managers 2006 Media Awards for Special Publications. To view the insert go to http://www.state.me.us/mema/mema_news_display.shtml?id=23713.

For additional information, contact Bruce Fitzgerald, Acting Director of Homeland Security Division, or Ginnie Ricker, Deputy Director of MEMA at 207-624-4400.



New MEMA Director Nominated

Maine Governor John Baldacci has nominated Robert P. McAleer as Director of the Maine Emergency Management Agency. The appointment is expected to be confirmed by the Senate soon after a hearing before the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee on February 12. Congratulations, Robert!

Six Flags Certified as 'StormReady'

On October 30th, Six Flags New England Theme Park of Agawam, Mass., was certified as New England's first and the nation's fourth *StormReady* commercial site by the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Officials from NOAA's National Weather Service, as well as numerous local elected, public safety, and school officials were present to praise Six Flags for completing a set of rigorous warning criteria necessary to earn the distinction of being *StormReady*. *StormReady* encourages communities to take a new, proactive approach to

improving local hazardous weather operations and public awareness. From April to October, Six Flags New England Theme Park is open to the public with a daily attendance as high as 15,000 guests and workers, similar to that of a small town. *StormReady* arms such communities with improved communication and safety skills needed to save lives and property – before and during severe weather. For additional info about this story, go to <http://www.mass.gov/mema>. More *StormReady* info can be found at <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/stormready>.



On Air

Whether you want to promote fireworks safety or to increase family disaster preparedness in your state, there are Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on the FEMA Web site that will help your emergency management agency reach the masses. The PSAs are profes-

sionally edited 30- and 60-second MP3 files that can easily be downloaded and played by a local radio station. The PSA library covers a vast array of disaster topics of universal concern, and many are available in both English and Spanish versions. Have a listen at www.fema.gov/radio.

It's Never too Soon to Plan Ahead

Save the date

N.H. Homeland Security and Emergency Management and other agencies are working on the 2007 emergency preparedness conference, titled "Working Together: Effective Strategies for Emergency Planning, Response and Recovery," to be held on Monday, June 18.

The conference is aimed at local emergency management directors, first responders, hospital and public health officials, town managers and selectmen from New Hampshire. This conference is open to all New England states and will be a good opportunity to share ideas and strategies.

For more information on location and registration contact Jim Van Dongen at 603-271-2231.

PARTNER PLAYBACK

State of Massachusetts Animal Response Team (SMART)

Whether a natural disaster, unexpected explosion or a train derailment, the possibilities for a catastrophic event requiring an evacuation are endless. Therefore it is imperative for individuals and families to include animals in their personal disaster plans so that animals, as well as people, may be safely evacuated if the need arises.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has addressed the need for disaster-related animal issues and assistance through the formation of the State of Massachusetts Animal Response Team (SMART). SMART is a network of organizations, agencies, and individuals who are committed to responding to the needs of the animal population in disaster situations.

Formed in 2004, the goal of SMART is to provide a timely and effective response to any intentional or unintentional emergency involving animals. SMART also:

- Helps local communities develop their own animal disaster plans.
- Offers pet first aid classes to the public in conjunction with the Veterinary Emergency and Specialty Center of New England.
- Helps to educate the public on animals in disasters by offering educational courses and free publications.

- Encourages you to contact your local emergency management directors and animal control officers to see if there are established groups of animal assistance volunteers in your communities. It recommends offering support and assistance in organizing that effort if no such group exists.

There are seven teams that make up SMART. During a disaster, any or all of these teams may be activated depending upon the situation. For example, a disaster involving an evacuation may require animal control officers. A disaster involving a wildfire may require a wildlife services team to be activated, while a hurricane may require activation of all teams. The SMART team leader oversees the activities of all the teams and activates them when necessary.

SMART urges people to create a pet disaster kit and store it in a closet so that it will be ready if needed. SMART urges, "DON'T LEAVE YOUR PET BEHIND!"

For more information or to contact a SMART representative, please visit the SMART Web site at www.smart-mass.org.



DANVERS, Mass. -- SMART teams assisted with pet evacuation following a chemical plant explosion in Danvers, Mass., on November 6, 2006

President Bush recently signed the PETS Act into law. This law requires local and state emergency preparedness authorities to include in their evacuation plans how they will accommodate household pets and service animals in case of a disaster.

[*Read more about this act.*](#)

"Before anything else, preparation is the key to success." ➤ Alexander Graham Bell

Cooperation and Planning Pay Off During Vermont Ice Storm Response



For four days, thousands of residents of southern Vermont were without power following the ice and snow storm that made its way through the state on January 15.

Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) and its partners, including the state's utilities and human services organizations, were able to effectively meet the needs of those affected by the storm, thanks to persistent planning, coordination, and cooperation.

VEM held regular briefings with power companies to assess recovery efforts and determine what course of action was needed to help those in the affected

areas. The utility companies were able to pinpoint communities where residents were without power so efforts could be centered in those areas.

VEM then coordinated with the Red Cross to offer assistance and shelter to residents and communities. Red Cross successfully implemented its toll-free phone service to offer shelter to those in need, and put staff on standby to activate if needed. By using this service, VEM and the Red Cross were able to allocate resources only where they were needed, saving resources and man-hours that might have been needed later. *Submitted by Mark Bosma, Public Information Officer, VEM.*

Rhode Island Shares Strategies for Hurricane Preparedness Outreach Campaign

Beginning in 1635 with the Great Colonial Hurricane, the first recorded hurricane to strike Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth colony, New England has been susceptible to the loss of life and potential damage from hurricanes. Fortunately, today, we have much better detection and warning systems in place than we did in 1635. But the technological advances and public notification methods in any disaster are only as effective as the public's response to them.

Armed with that knowledge, The Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) implemented "Prepare RI,"



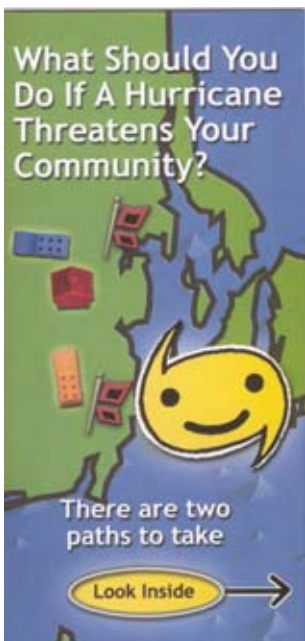
BLOCK ISLAND, R.I. -- Rhode Island Governor Donald Carcieri and FEMA Region I Director Art Cleaves discuss how state officials will help residents throughout New England following a federal disaster declaration.

a proactive outreach and education campaign. The campaign was designed to ensure that a high number of at-risk individuals, families and businesses be notified and prepared in the event of a disaster, in particular a hurricane.

The campaign kicked off with an open house hosted by Robert Warren, the Executive Director of RIEMA. During the open house, Warren spoke about RIEMA's hurricane preparedness response and recovery initiatives and ongoing preparedness planning activities.

The agency's new Emergency Operations Center was also showcased and the media was present.

This type of media and community outreach is a crucial component in any state's disaster preparedness activities. Emergency management agencies and first responders throughout New England are continuously carrying out similar outreach campaigns. Whether or not your organization is one of those, there are a few tried and true tactics that are easily practicable.



Tactics for Increasing Your Agency's Emergency Preparedness Outreach

Collateral Materials.

In Rhode Island, preparedness brochures were created and hand-delivered to local police departments, travel and tourism councils, visitors bureaus and colleges, as well as to Rhode Island real estate associations that deal with summer rentals.

Public Service Announcements.

As part of "Prepare RI," RIEMA partnered with a local university that volunteered to recruit students to film and produce the ad. Once the PSAs were completed, RIEMA members met with a local cable company that offered to air the PSAs on local access channels free of charge.

Expert Advisories/ Leveraging Breaking News.

Taking note of breaking news stories and sending out a release to inform reporters that a designated person in your agency is available to comment is a fresh way to get your organization's name into a story that is important to the organization.

"Brown Bag" Lunches.

Inviting local media members to unclassified planning meetings is a great way to forge new relationships with key media members in your community.

Editorial Board Meetings.

Meeting with influential editorial writers is an effective way to educate the media about your organization and the steps it is taking toward disaster preparedness.

Sharing these types of ideas helps all of us. By working together to increase public awareness and to educate communities on preparation methods for all kinds of disasters, we are building momentum from the local to the federal level and collectively promoting public understanding and cooperation.

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