

# The Bridge

*Connecting New England's Emergency Management Communities*

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## Canton - A Success Story

A few days before Christmas 2003 a devastating flood inundated Canton, Maine. This small rural town in Western Maine situated on the Androscoggin River was no stranger to flooding. However, this particular flood would become a catalyst for change. In late December an early winter freeze followed by thawing and heavy rains caused an ice jam to form on the Androscoggin River just south of town. The resulting backflow of water swept into the town of Canton, flooding streets and homes.



Emergency workers rescue Canton homeowner.

By the time the ice jam broke, 219 residents and 39 homes had been evacuated. The fire station, town office, local nursing home, sewer plant, two churches, and the elementary school were flooded. A significant portion of Canton homes had water depths of over two feet on the first floor. Remarkably, no one was hurt.

Canton was once a prosperous middle-sized New England village. In many ways, Canton was the quintessential Maine small town up until the mid 1960's, after which it began decades of decline and deterioration. Prior to the flood, a comprehensive plan was launched for land use and town rejuvenation known as the Lazarus Project. One of the five major components of the plan was to remove and reduce the risk of loss of life and property due to flooding.

Canton's Lazarus Project is a guide -- developed, voted on, and enacted by the town's people -- that provides direction to elected officials and citizens to help focus town efforts on what the town feels is important for the future of Canton.

Sixty-six structures were identified as having a severe flood risk and prioritized to be acquired by the town. The relocation of the town center to higher ground is also being undertaken. Preliminary estimates for acquisition and demolition were greater than \$5 million. The big question the town faced was how to help people get into new homes and where to move the fire and emergency services as well as the town center so that they would be out of the floodplain.

The Lazarus project began seeking funds to purchase these at-risk structures, relocate families out of harm's way and demolish or remove structures. It is still an ongoing project that will take several years to complete. To date, Canton has secured \$3.3 million through FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs for acquisition and demolition of homes in the floodplain. Thirty-five structures have been demolished and about 80 residents have moved to existing homes outside the floodplain areas in Canton and surrounding towns. Canton

has also acquired \$950,000 from the state's Community Development Block Grant. From this funding source, \$250,000 was used to build a fire station out of the floodplain and the balance will be used to match Federal Grants and assist in new housing. Also, the Maine State Housing Authority contributed \$500,000 in grants and low interest loans towards new housing costs.

All successful mitigation programs in any town across the country have a "town champion," a tireless, dedicated volunteer with a lot

of patience. The champion is the one person who organizes the effort and spearheads the cause. That person in Canton is resident Diane Ray. Diane is the first to say that no one person is doing all of the work. The initiative is made-up of teams of volunteers who help shape the effort and decide its direction. People ask Diane why she works so hard and why does Canton need to change? Diane responds, "The truth is, change is going to happen whether we like it or not so we might as well embrace it and manage the change ourselves rather than let others determine our future."

Continued on page 2

### Mitigation Works...

**Every dollar spent on mitigation saves society an average of \$4.**

-- Multihazard Mitigation Council

## Canton continued

Community Concepts, a community-based organization based in South Paris and chartered member of the national Neighborworks® network played a key role in both the immediate emergency response to the Canton flood and in the long-term recovery process. Immediately following the flood, Community Concepts staff played a vital role in ensuring that housing, food, and other social service aid flowed to Canton residents. Community Concepts was instrumental in shaping state agency officials' understanding of the needs in Canton, and pushing hard for resources to support the housing buy-outs and village relocation.

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Canton was successful in obtaining a patchwork of local, state, and federal funding. They found experts at each of the governmental agencies and learned from them – creating a skills support network. They started early and planned often. They unearthed every stone looking for money and have been successful in getting a majority of the funding they need. Facing forward, three major tasks remain: conclude the buy-out relocation efforts by addressing the remaining 20 or so homes, continue to secure financing for the Village Center – 40 new residential structures, 3-multi-family units and a Community Center, then on to Economic Development!



56 School Street, Canton prior to demolition



56 School Street during demolition

## A New FEMA

What is this new FEMA that we continue to hear about and what does it mean to a State Director or first responder? To me, a New FEMA is a proactive organization that creates a seamless system from local first responders reacting to an emergency up through the state emergency management agencies to the federal level. In a significant event, any one of these entities can't go it alone. It takes the combined system.

A New FEMA is being able to pre-position supplies prior to an event occurring. A New FEMA is an organization that brings federal aid to state and locals in a timely manner in the quantities they need. A New FEMA is being able to provide individual assistance to families who have had major losses in a disaster and deliver that assistance in a timely, compassionate and easy-to-understand manner. A New FEMA is one that recognizes and assesses areas of weakness that could exist in a disaster such as evacuations, shelters, and medical surge capabilities and try to improve those through training, exercising, and replenishing resources. A New FEMA is one that recognizes there is no substitute for individual preparedness. I am encouraged to see local communities throughout New England are becoming "Storm Ready" by working in partnership with the National Weather Service.



New England has banded together and made great strides over the past year. I don't want to leave you with the impression that we have "arrived." There is still so much more to be done. The Hurricane Yvette Exercise was an opportunity for us to test our capabilities prior to hurricane season. We will continue to work with the states and governors to ensure local first responders are supported and the best emergency management system is in place.

Arthur W. Cleaves  
Regional Administrator,  
FEMA Region 1

## States strengthening initiative to pre-position disaster supplies

One of the major difficulties in emergency management lies not in dealing with the effects of the disaster itself, but in the logistics of responding to the needs caused by the incident. Since during the first 72 hours of an event or incident, commodities are often supplied by local governments, many states throughout New England have begun pre-positioning life-sustaining commodities.

### Connecticut

Last year, Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell began receiving inquiries from municipalities about where to get cots during a disaster. The Connecticut Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) began working to beef up its stockpile. The result: Connecticut went from 3,500 cots to 25,000 cots. That effort led to a new mandate put forth by DEMHS Commissioner James M. Thomas. Some of the pre-positioned supplies now include: prime movers, decontamination trailers and pharmaceuticals.

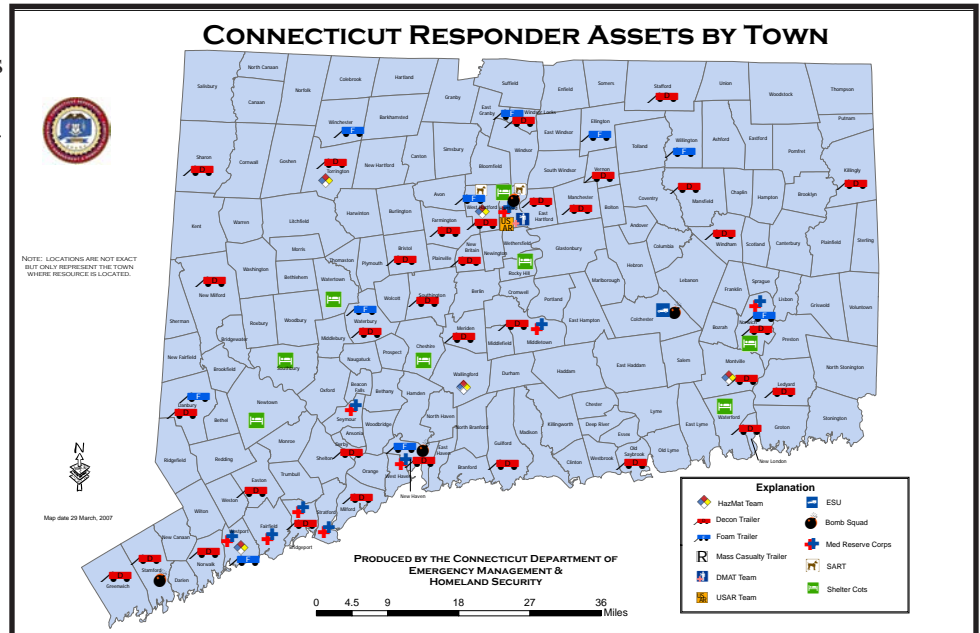
“In the past our answer was to call FEMA, but we realized that in a real disaster the trailer trucks available to us might be consumed in the first day,” said Deputy Commissioner for DEMHS Wayne Sandford.

Sanford noted that during a disaster the most sought-after commodities in his state are water and meals in the summer and generators in the winter.

“We are building on the capabilities of our existing first responder communities by purchasing equipment that they can bring to the scene (of emergencies). By doing that, we are able to better serve the residents of those communities,” said Sandford.

### New Hampshire

In New Hampshire, twelve trailers containing a variety of medical and other emergency supplies have been deployed to strategic locations statewide. The trailers are available to first responders and contain blankets, cots, gloves, masks, bandages



and duct tape – anything that would be needed to quickly set up a field clinic or treatment center in response to an incident.

“These trailers enable us to lean forward and provide medical and administrative supplies quickly wherever they are needed in the state,” said Christopher M. Pope, N.H. director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. “They can be used to rapidly establish a field treatment center for a mass casualty incident or to set up a clinic to provide vaccinations for an infectious disease outbreak.”

*“Failure to prepare  
is preparing to fail.”*

*Benjamin Franklin*

Complete instructions for emergency management directors, police and fire chiefs and other response leaders are on the N.H. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Web site at: <http://www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/bem/trailers/index.html>.

Logistics trailers are located in Concord, Conway, Laconia, Littleton, Lincoln, Manchester, Nashua, Pittsburg, Raymond, Rochester, Salem and Unity.

### Vermont

Vermont has also developed a comprehensive plan for managing pre-positioned disaster supplies. “Having these resources pre-deployed obviously allows us to respond to emergency situations quicker than having to bring them in from one central location,” said Barbara Farr, director of Vermont Emergency Management. “Even in a small state like Vermont, time saved can be life saving,” she said.

This trend toward pre-positioned commodity placement is a vital step in the right direction when it comes to preparing state and local entities for disaster. New England states have undoubtedly recognized that and taken action.

## The Big Eight

There are eight critical supplies most commonly requested from local communities during a disaster – these are referred to by the agency as The Big Eight. They are: water, ice, MREs, generators, cots, blankets, tarps and plastic sheeting. What exactly happens during a disaster when local communities and/or states request The Big Eight from FEMA? The following describes the process.

Local communities develop requirements based on true needs.

Those requirements are funneled to the state through various processes including conference or phone calls, faxes, electronic transmissions or hand-delivered requests.

The state consolidates the request and submits the shortfall that they have to FEMA using the Action Request Form (ARF). This is done on a daily basis.

Once the ARF is received the request is filled at the federal level. FEMA stockpiles anticipated resources at a facility called a staging area. One key location within New England is Westover Air Force Base. There are two variables in this step.

If it is a single state or small to medium-scale response – all of the coordination and ordering takes place between the state and the Emergency Response Team (ERT) in the field. The staging operation regardless of where it is located falls to their (ERT) control.

In a larger-scale or multi-state response the ERT validates the requirements with each respective state and requirements would be funneled back to the Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC). This allows the FEMA leadership to insure that resources are brokered if necessary so that all state requests are treated and filled equally.

These requested commodities and resources will be ready for the next operational period. It is designed so that a request made on a Monday will be delivered to the state for distribution on Tuesday morning.

Commodities for back-filling or the initial pre-positioning that FEMA does, come from various locations bordering New England, such as Edison, NJ or Middletown, NY. FEMA also has key warehouse facilities called Logistics Centers located in key geographic locations around the country.

As part of FEMA's mission to get supplies to disaster victims, FEMA engages with multiple federal agencies and privately owned trucking companies to ensure that there are sufficient tractor trailers available to expedite the delivery process.

During the peak response to Hurricane Katrina, FEMA had at its disposal, approximately 4,000 tractor trailers to move commodities and resources to disaster victims. These tractor trailers represented a large portion of the total privately owned trucking fleet in the United States. Over 11,000 truckloads of various commodities and supplies were moved by FEMA in Louisiana alone during the initial response.

### Commodity Facts

One truckload of water = 18,000 liters  
 One truckload meets the needs of 5,000 people for one day (3-3.5 liters per person)  
 212 trucks = 1 million gallons of water

One truckload of ice = 40,000 lbs.  
 Ice is distributed in bags  
 5,000 bags per truck  
 1 bag of ice per person per day  
 25 trucks = 1 million lbs. of ice

One average truck carries 21,744 MRE's  
 2 MRE's per person per day  
 46 truckloads = 1 million meals



FEMA warehouse, Edison, NJ. FEMA photo.



Members of New Hampshire's 744<sup>th</sup> National Guard unit put finishing touches on this three bedroom home before setting off to deliver it to a family in Cutoff, Louisiana who lost their home during Hurricane Katrina. The New Hampshire based group, There's No Place Like Home is spearheading the effort to build homes for families who have lost theirs from natural disasters. The house was built by students at Somersworth High School and the entire team left on April 16 to deliver the home personally. There's No Place Like Home plans on coordinating the building of nine homes this year for displaced families both in Louisiana and in New Hampshire. Nine technical schools in New Hampshire have signed up to build the homes as part of their school project next year.

## Workshops planned to “demystify” disaster crisis counseling

The Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP), authorized by §416 of the Stafford Act, is requested by states through a grant request process that can be daunting and cumbersome. FEMA's Region I office is helping to alleviate some of the difficulties associated with applying for the grants by hosting a two day workshop from 8:00 am and 5:00 pm on Wednesday and Thursday May 23 and 24, at the Federal Regional Center in Maynard, MA. Attendees will be from New England and will include human services personnel from state emergency management agencies, state disaster behavior or disaster mental health agencies, and fiscal agents responsible for processing the grants.

The grants must be applied for within 14 days from the presidential disaster declaration. The program is designed to provide supplemental funding to states for short-term crisis counseling services to people affected in presidentially-declared disasters.

“What we're doing is trying to demystify the grant process for states,” said Becky Szymcik, Emergency Management Program Specialist for FEMA's Region I Response and Recovery Division. “We have condensed the copious amounts of information into user friendly language so that we can ultimately make it easier for states to complete the grant process within the 14-day time limit,” she said.

There are two separate portions of the CCP that can be funded: immediate services and regular services. A state may request either or both types of funding.

The immediate services program is intended to enable the state or local agency to respond to the immediate mental health needs

by assisting the disaster survivors with understanding their current situation and reactions, mitigating additional stress, assisting survivors in reviewing their options, promoting the use or development of coping strategies, providing emotional support, encouraging linkages with other individuals and agencies who may help survivors recover to their pre-disaster level of functioning.

The regular services program is designed to provide up to nine months of crisis counseling, community outreach, and consultation and education services to people affected by a presidentially declared disaster. Funding for this program is separate from the immediate services grant.

To be eligible for crisis counseling services funded by this program, the person must be a resident of the designated area or must have been located in the area at the time the disaster occurred.

For more information please contact Becky Szymcik at 617-956-7565 or Kay McLaughlin at 617-956-7605.

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Cheryl Kitts  
**Editor**

Darby Duffin  
**Assistant Editor**

Lauren Smith  
**Special Contributor**

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