

Regional Partnership- Southern West Virginia Preparedness Partnership

Summary

Our partnership covers nine counties in the southern region of West Virginia and incorporates the participation and support of numerous stakeholders. These include local government officials, emergency responders, the business community, non-governmental organizations, as well as citizen action groups.

Background

Our partnership was created in May 2009, with the assistance of Michigan State University's Critical Incident Protocol program. It was formulated to solicit the resources needed to carry out our newly adopted city emergency operations plan.

Goals and Objectives

One primary objective is to create an environment where our partners are engaged so that they embrace their responsibility as it relates to emergency preparedness and willingly participate in that collective effort. A complimentary objective is that they are empowered to a degree where their levels of competence, confidence, and self-sustainability are increased.

Description

Prior to conducting the initial planning workshop, a partnership working group was formulated. It is comprised of six individuals, providing equal representation for both the public and private sectors. Those serving within this body include the local fire chief, a member of city council, a county health employee, the president of our local chamber of commerce, an insurance agent, as well as a person who oversees our region's convention and visitors bureau. These individuals serve as both the central planning and decision-making entity of the overall partnership, but also as liaisons on behalf of all individual members. Concerning the overall membership, it includes members of both our city and county governments, owners and operators of our various businesses, media, utilities, public works, emergency response (fire, law enforcement, EMS), as well as a number of non-governmental organizations (Red Cross, Salvation Army, United Way, local ministerial association, etc.). As far as structure is concerned, the following positions have been established: chairperson, co-chair, secretary, and treasurer. We have been fortunate enough to obtain department of homeland security grant funding which has allowed us to conduct a number of activities. These have included the following during our first year:

*Incident management training for both public and private sectors.

*Sponsored a two-day NFPA 1600 continuity of operations workshop.

*Conducted two table-top exercises. These were focused upon our local university and our regional airport. After-action reports were produced in accordance with HSEEP guidelines, and follow-up meetings were held to discuss lessons learned.

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*A full day informational conference was held that incorporated the help of a number of experts at both the federal and state levels. Collectively, they presented information on issues such as critical infrastructure, information sharing, and credentialing.

*Also, in an effort to streamline our efforts in a more productive and prudent manner, we conducted a strategic planning workshop. With the help of a professional consultant, we identified a number of focused goals that we look to accomplish over the next one to two years. These include increasing the participation of our business community, enhancing the relationships we have between our partnership and our city and county governments, as well as researching ways in which to publicize our partnership and broaden those who are part of it and the area served. To that end, we have developed our own partnership logo, informational brochures, and are in the process of formulating our own website.

Currently, we meet once a month, and assemble at a location provided by one of our members, a facility that serves as one of our identified emergency shelters. Our meetings are limited to one hour, trying to be respectful of member's already hectic schedules. Each meeting begins with an overview and update of current partnership activities, and then focuses upon a particular topic that is presented by an invited speaker or partnership member. Reminder e-mails are sent out approximately one week before the meeting, as well as the day before. Currently, 25-30 individuals attend these regularly scheduled meetings. From time to time, other activities are conducted (planning sessions, workshops, training, etc.) that require a greater commitment of time. These are scheduled and advertised well ahead of time, and have been attended by as many as 80 participants. A future initiative is to work with our state's critical infrastructure protection task force to identify our region's critical infrastructure and working with the owners and operators of them in order to comply with the National Infrastructure Protection Plan. Another is to serve as a liaison between our state's fusion center and the public at large to enhance this center's information and intelligence sharing initiatives.

Requirements for Success

Through real-life experience and exhaustive research conducted on community-level preparedness efforts, it has been concluded that there are a few core components needed for such successful ventures.

*The first concerns mission, and the necessity of having a complete understanding of why this partnership was formulated, what it hopes to accomplish, who is needed to carry the mission out, and how the partnership will recognize when goals and objectives are achieved.

*The second requirement concerns the stakeholders, and who should be a part of this initiative. They must not only be considered as participants and supporters of the partnership, but also consumers and benefactors of the finished product. Therefore, broad representation of the area and full participation of identified members is a must.

*Having a well-developed strategy is also a requirement, one that details the goals and action steps needed to accomplish the overall objectives.

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*The fourth requirement addresses the necessity of resources. These include the finances and funding needed to carry out partnership efforts as well as the facilities where meetings and other such activities will take place. However, some of the most vital, yet most precious resources, concern the people who will carry out the many partnership efforts and the time needed to do so.

*Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, is the leadership needed to incorporate the various perspectives, agendas, and needs of such an eclectic group.

Resources

SWVPP has the following resources available through its partnership- Resources to help prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters; grants; and tools and templates.

Training and Exercises

SWVPP host and participates in joint training exercises with the private sectors.

Communication Tools

SWVPP uses the following methods of communication with their public/private sectors; email alerts; in-person meetings; conferences and other events; media outreach; and paid advertising.

Links

We are currently in the process of selecting a vendor to design our website, but the address will be www.swvpp.org.

Contact Information

Kevin Taylor
Fire Chief, Beckley, WV Fire Department
ktaylor@beckleyfire.com
Office (304) 256-1780
Cell (304) 890-6306

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