
EMA NEWSLETTER

WINTER EDITION

ISSUE # 13

FEBRUARY 2004

ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN "2003"

Now is as good a time as any to reflect on how far we've come during the past twelve months. This will help us as we plot our course to where we still need to go. We are pleased to report the following:

- Columbia County has adopted a new emergency operations plan, with an updated continuity of government annex and SOP checklists that conform to the requirements of the National Incident Management System.
- All thirty-three municipalities have adopted new emergency operations plans that conform to the new state format. We were also pleased to have been able to funnel nearly \$32,000 in funds to help support our local EMA's.
- The Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) provided \$7,000 in funding for advanced hazardous materials training which benefited 102 local emergency responders.
- The LEPC also purchased \$8,000 worth of pads, booms and oil dry. and with the assistance of the Fire Chief's Association these materials have been strategically placed throughout the county.
- The final shipment of PAPR kits was received. A total of 59 kits have been distributed to police at a cost of \$700 per kit. Now every patrol vehicle in the county has respiratory and skin protection to help protect the officer from chemical or biological terrorism.
- \$15,000 of Act 147 Radiological Response Funds, have been placed into the community to support our nuclear power plant safety program.
- Over \$30,000 in counter-terrorism funds have been secured. These funds were used to buy equipment for the Police Star Team and PA Urban Search & Rescue, Squad 1. These units have been identified as regional counter-terrorism assets.
- Over 1,000 copies of our family emergency planning booklets have been distributed through various community outreach programs.

These accomplishments resulted from a lot of hard work and cooperation on the part of federal, state, local agencies, public safety departments and many dedicated volunteers. However as long as there are still people out there who think emergency management is of no concern of theirs, than we still have unfinished business to tend to.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There are two major projects still on the table from last year.

- **PennFIRS** (Penna. Fire Incident Reporting System) – We've been experiencing tech problems on our end that are being addressed. We have been assured that **this delay will not adversely effect any fire department who has received a grant that was contingent on their using PennFIRS.**
- **CERT** – (Community Emergency Response Teams) – This program was a federal initiative to provide basic emergency response training to private citizens, so they could be part of the solution if a major disaster were to devastate their community. We recruited a team of trainers, spent thousands of grant dollars on training aids and advertising, only to receive four or five phone calls inquiring about the program. Overcoming **apathy** continues to be our greatest single challenge.

ANOTHER MAJOR PROJECT TO TACKLE

Columbia County has been fortunate to have qualified for federal assistance to develop yet another plan.

However, this one is slightly different.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has designated 5 Counties in Pennsylvania as eligible to receive assistance in writing a natural hazards mitigation plan for the entire county.

This mitigation plan will describe the 5 top natural hazards that affect Columbia County, how many people are adversely affected by them, the areas most affected and what measures could be taken to minimize the impact of those hazards. Although there will be some man-made hazards that may be included if they increase the impact of the natural hazard.

A primary example is flooding and we all know how often that occurs around here. Mitigation for flooding can be as complex as the Bloomsburg project with flood walls, moving appliances to the first or second floor, flood plain ordinances that prohibit all but specially designed structures or as simple as getting a NOAA weather radio for early notification of impending flood waters.

The Mitigation Plan is due by the end of August, 2004 for state and federal review. If it is not prepared and submitted by that date, Columbia County could be considered ineligible for federal/state assistance following the next disaster.

FEMA has already sent the contractors out to the Counties to begin the process with us. **HOWEVER**, (here it comes), we will be needing your help initially to determine if the list of hazards and their affects on your municipality are anywhere near correct. You are the experts and have the greater knowledge of what the impacts are.

Very soon, we will be sending you a simple questionnaire to fill out asking for basic hazard information. We at the County hesitate to make too many assumptions since our information is quite generalized and may not properly describe your situations.

We will also be asking if we have targeted the proper hazards or if another should have been included. We will then have the committee analyze, prioritize and develop mitigation strategies all of which will be based on information we have and that you provide. This will not cost you or the County anything in dollars. It will cost you about 1 or 2 hours time.

Some of you along the Susquehanna have already done the flooding part of this project and your valuable information will be incorporated into the County-wide plan.

If you want more details about this project, the PEMA website www.pema.state.pa.us and the FEMA website www.fema.gov have some excellent, in depth information on mitigation and the planning requirements.

If you have any questions, would like to serve on the committee or know someone who would be interested, please let us know.

NEW EMA WEB SITE

We're putting on the finishing touches of our new, enhanced, web site and hope to have it on-line within the next few weeks. It is our intention this will be another vehicle by which we can get valuable information out to the public.

Hopefully this will also be an asset to our emergency service providers. Hazardous materials, counter-terrorism, radiological response, mitigation and incident command are just a few of the programs EMA is involved in that needs "organized" police, fire, EMS and local EMA input.

A FEW PARTING THOUGHTS ABOUT WINTER

Have you done anything to prepare for a winter weather emergency or are you in the group of people that just takes things as they come? If you're part of the latter and you haven't experienced any problems so far, consider yourself lucky.

Winter is only half over and I'm sure we have plenty of snow, ice and cold weather left. So it's not too late to take a few steps to protect yourself and your family just in case.

- Have an emergency supply kit available in your home containing, flashlights, a first aid kit, battery operated radio, extra batteries and enough potable water and non perishable food on hand to last at least three days..
- If you don't have an alternate source of heat in your home, have you identified a relocation spot in case of an extended power outage.
- Pre-identify things you will need to take if you are relocating such as; clothing, money, keys, medicines, personal items, etc.
- Keep ample fuel in your vehicle, a flashlight in the glove compartment, rock salt and a blanket in the trunk along with your spare tire, jack and tire iron.

COLUMBIA COUNTY EMA

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