



RIEMA NEWS



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Director- Major General Robert T. Bray

Executive Director- J. David Smith

PAR



*By J. David Smith
Executive Director*

The publication of the RIEMA Newsletter coincides with the distribution of perhaps one of the most important documents in the history of our agency. The Performance and Accountability Report, or PAR has been posted on our website and is available in hard copy as of today. Accountability is defined by Webster as “an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one’s actions; answerable.” We are both obligated and willing to share our successes and challenges with a desire to hear your comments and gain your trust.

Why now? I will not dwell on what has already been written in newsletters past, but it is important to place this report in a relevant historical perspective. The privilege of guiding this agency after coming from an outside agency allows a fresh perspective at a fundamental level. You have all shared in our excitement as the RIEMA team has rewritten our mission statement and reconfigured our table of organi-

zation. These changes and constant evaluation of our function and purpose has enabled and enlightened our service capability. Our internal review and assessment has provided a focus that is very sharp. It is our intent to use this report as a baseline of accountability and the foundation on which to build upon. It is after all, the next logical progression of our professional development as an agency.

For nearly the past two years I have witnessed the dialectic perception of our agency from outside perspectives as well as the reality of our agency from within. The perception by some is that we are primarily an agency focused on storm assessment, warning, monitoring and response. While this is certainly an important component of our constituent support, it is only a very prominent tip of the spear. This report is a tool that will help educate individuals who are not aware of our varied resources to recognize our agencies’ true capabilities.

The PAR was necessary also to answer the questions from members of Congress and our state legislature who reasonably inquire; “what have you done

with the grant money?” During this time of burgeoning budget deficits and balancing budgets, it is critical for our partners and constituencies to know how seriously we take fiscal challenges. The acronym “par” can also be read as the word par which is defined as “an acceptable standard, normal, or an amount taken as average...” We will never be content to rest on these laurels. The business of emergency management is never normal or average and our commitment will never be either.

Please take the time to read the report which can be found directly on our website’s homepage at www.riema.ri.gov. You should also know that we are taking our annual report, photos of events, training, hazards, and personnel and melding them all together with the PAR for a color brochure that will be an easy read and graphic representation of who we are and what we do.

I will be leaving the office on Friday to attend the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) mid-year conference in Alexandria, VA. The conference runs through the weekend and provides a chance

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to meet with some high-ranking officials and our congressional delegation to discuss evolving challenges and of course, money. You can be sure that the PAR will be widely distributed and I will let everyone know about the findings and information gleaned from this conference.

Please also know that I will represent your interests and will convince the right people that Rhode Island leads the country once again with best practices and is positioned for a vibrant and proactive future.

I'd like to lastly note that the investment of this report was done collaterally with other schedul-

ing challenges such as the holidays, grant report deadlines, strategic planning and as evident by the report, many duties and responsibilities. Each of the staff members are thanked for their commitment to this product of excellence. Great workers always seem to find a way to prioritize and get the job done and this is only the latest example of their efforts. A public thank you to the staff.

There are always many and exciting stories within our RIEMA newsletter each month. Thank you for taking the time to read these stories and as always, see you next month...

Something to Crow About

I don't know about you, but I'm getting a little tired of hearing how bad things are here in Rhode Island. Our economy has been in recession for over two years, and things look like they won't get better anytime soon. Unemployment rates are in the double digits. Houses aren't selling. Taxes are too high. Businesses are leaving. The state government is broke. The cities and towns are broke. No one can agree on how to fix things, because everything is just too big, too complex and, well, too screwed-up, right?

I think it may all come down to attitude. We've convinced ourselves things are hopelessly broken, and now the only thing left is to wallow in despair. If this goes on much longer we should change the state's nickname from the Ocean State to the Can't-Do State.

How do we get out of this funk? I think the solution is pretty simple, and it could just start with us. We need something to crow about—something we've done that works, that makes life here a little better—ideally a little better than in other states (at the very least, better than neighboring Massachusetts and Connecticut). If we could do something that worked—in our homes, our communities, dare I say it—across the state—we could begin to shake off this can't do attitude, and start to see what we can do. If one small success put us out ahead of other states, it might rouse a long dormant competitive spirit, and who knows where that might go? We might even find a way to fix our schools, deal with corruption, get our budget bal-



BRUCE RUTTER, CEO OF RI RED CROSS

anced, start attracting businesses and new jobs...

Here's where I'd start—with us—the emergency community. We've made a surprising amount of progress in the past few years. If a disaster were to strike today, we're much better prepared than we were just five years ago. The Amtrak Rail and Scituate Dam drills showed we can mobilize a lot of trained people, quickly. They showed us weaknesses, too, but now we're fixing them. Here at the Red Cross, with the help of EMA Directors around the state, we've more than doubled shelter capac-

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ity—it might be a stretch, but we think we could handle as many as 40,000 people during a hurricane, and take care of half that during a prolonged cold weather incident.

We're making progress in this area because we've started to catch a can-do attitude. We're finding ways around obstacles. Can't get families to think about emergency preparedness (less than 10% are even remotely prepared)? Try something new—go through the schools, get 5th graders to bring it home as a homework assignment. It works. By the end of the year we'll have every home with a 5th grader emergency-ready. And every year it will grow with a new crop of 5th graders. We're leading the nation on this! Can't afford to run programs in 39 different municipalities? Ban together locally. Groups of EMA Directors around the state have begun to use the R-word. Yes, we can regionalize. It saves money and time—something we all have in short supply. Don't have enough people? Just ask. Working with Citadel Broadcasting last year, the Red Cross ran a brief radio campaign on HOT 106 called "Give us 5". 132 people signed up, and 52 completed training as shelter volunteers. We're

finishing a similar campaign with PEMA this month, and it's brought in twice as many people! A recent study showed that volunteerism in Rhode Island is way below the national average...for every group but teens and young adults, where we're near the top of the country. Something's working. Could we tap them? I think so—I spent the past month going around Rhode Island thanking school and youth groups who'd come out in support of Haiti. Thousands of kids got involved to help fix something 1,600 miles from here. This is their state, and I'm betting they'd like to fix it fast. Have we asked?

Here's a simple proposition. Let's start talking about the progress we've made as an emergency community. See what's working, what we can build on. Let the public know. And then let's aim for something higher—something inspiring, something I'm sure we can reach—let's plan to make this the safest state in the union, from an emergency standpoint. It's something we can do, something we're already on track towards. It could inspire people. It would give us something to be proud about, something to crow about, and that might be the start to fixing everything else!

Proposed Legislation Upsets Local EMA Officials

The Rhode Island Association of Emergency Managers (RIAEM) was officially incorporated in 2008, in order to provide a vehicle for cooperation and collaboration among local emergency managers throughout the state. For years previous, several local directors met regularly to discuss emergency management issues; however, as the field rapidly grew, so did the need for a more formal organization. In the two years of its existence, the RIAEM has also progressed swiftly and is now confronted with its first political challenge.

Unfortunately, the exponential growth of the emergency management field has coincided with a nationwide recession that has affected local and state governments. Nevertheless, local directors are presently accountable for an unprecedented

wide spectrum of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities. Yet, despite the responsibilities placed upon local directors, the large majority either provide volunteer service to their communities, are compensated with a small stipend for their efforts or are required to perform EM duties as part of their primary job function (i.e. police chief, fire chief or public works director). Indeed, only two cities employ full-time directors (kudos to Providence and Pawtucket).

Despite the obligations faced by local directors, we are indisputably invested in our communities and uplifted by the public service we provide. Recently, we were asked to stand-up a point-of-distribution for H1N1 vaccinations by the Department of Health, which was accomplished with great

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JASON M. RHODES
PRESIDENT
RI ASSOCIATION OF
EMERGENCY MANAGERS

success in the vast majority of our local cities and towns. Additionally, we have been tasked with revising our Emergency Operations Plans to a new format, developing Continuity of Operations Plans, overseeing the implementation of Dam Emergency Action Plans and ensuring compliance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) directives within our communities. Certainly, the time demands for these activities are tremendous, yet the missions were gracefully accepted and skillfully performed by local EMAs.

Section 30-15-12 (Chapter 30-15) of the Rhode Island General Laws, essentially mandates, by statute, that each municipality within the state maintain a local emergency management agency headed by a director, similar in nature to RIEMA. The aforementioned political challenge is particular to this law; bill 7537, introduced in the RI House of representatives, proposes to repeal this statute, apparently as part of a reform movement to eliminate any and all unfunded state mandates to local municipalities. While I understand that such unfunded requirements are a legitimate concern to cash-strapped local communities, the need for local EMA offices is crucial, particularly as the burden they assume is ever-increasing. Furthermore, local EMAs are staffed by directors and personnel

that have intimate knowledge of the nuances of their respective communities, a characteristic that should be robustly considered by our legislators.

Hopefully, should this piece of legislation be passed, local communities would continue to maintain their local EMA offices, as their functions are vital to their health and public safety. Elimination of local EMA offices would place additional and unneeded encumbrances upon other officials within local government, who are already overburdened as agencies are being downsized. Moreover, the field of emergency management, as previously mentioned, has evolved into one with its own characteristics and obligations; it merits a director within each municipality to provide the focused attention an emerging discipline deserves and demands. Therefore, it is imperative that we, as EMA directors, advocate our place in the governmental structure with local officials and state representatives.

Obviously, the State of Rhode Island, given the current bleak landscape, is not in a position to directly finance the budgets of the local EMA offices; however, the RIEMA plays a crucial role in supplementing the monetary needs of local communities by administering a myriad of federal and state grant programs, from which we receive funding on an annual basis. Truly, with some effort by local EMA directors, their budgets can be augmented via a state-based system and 30-15-12 is not wholly unfunded.

I would like to propose that our state legislators now use this challenge as an impetus to educate themselves regarding the local emergency management process and comprehensively understand the operation within their constituencies. Furthermore, I urge the lawmakers of Rhode Island to strongly consider the needs of the citizens of our local communities, particularly in the face of disaster or state of emergency, as H7537 is deliberated. Local EMAs impart an invaluable service to their municipalities; please do not allow 30-15-12 to be caught in the widely cast net aimed at rescinding all “unfunded” state mandates. As described, the good and welfare of the citizenry and the services afforded by local emergency management agencies far outweigh the perceived benefits of H7537.



L-R BRONWYN GRODON, INTERN JIM MCDAVITT, KEVIN CLAPP

Regional Planning Team Wins Gold!

During 2009, there have been significant improvements in Regional Planning. Under the direction of a new Regional Planning Coordinator, members of the Regional Planning Team spearheaded outreach efforts to EMA Directors in 39 Rhode Island communities. These visits have improved working relationships with each of these partners.

The Regional Planning Program at RIEMA was designed to provide a direct link from the local communities to the state agency. Each member of the team has a group of communities that they work with based on the current reorganization of the LEPC regionalization. Each planner is responsible for the creation and renewal of plans which currently includes; the Dam Emergency Action Plans, the Emergency Operations Plans, and the Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP). Along with coordinating with the communities, each planner has an additional area of expertise that makes them a unique asset to the planning team. These areas of expertise include Dam Emergency Action Plan (EAP) coordination and approval, Red Cross

liaison, Fire Mutual Aid revision, and Community Rating System Plan development.

The Regional Planning Coordinator is currently working on the revision of the State's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). As part of the EOP revision process, each of the Emergency Support Function (ESF) Annexes is also currently being updated.

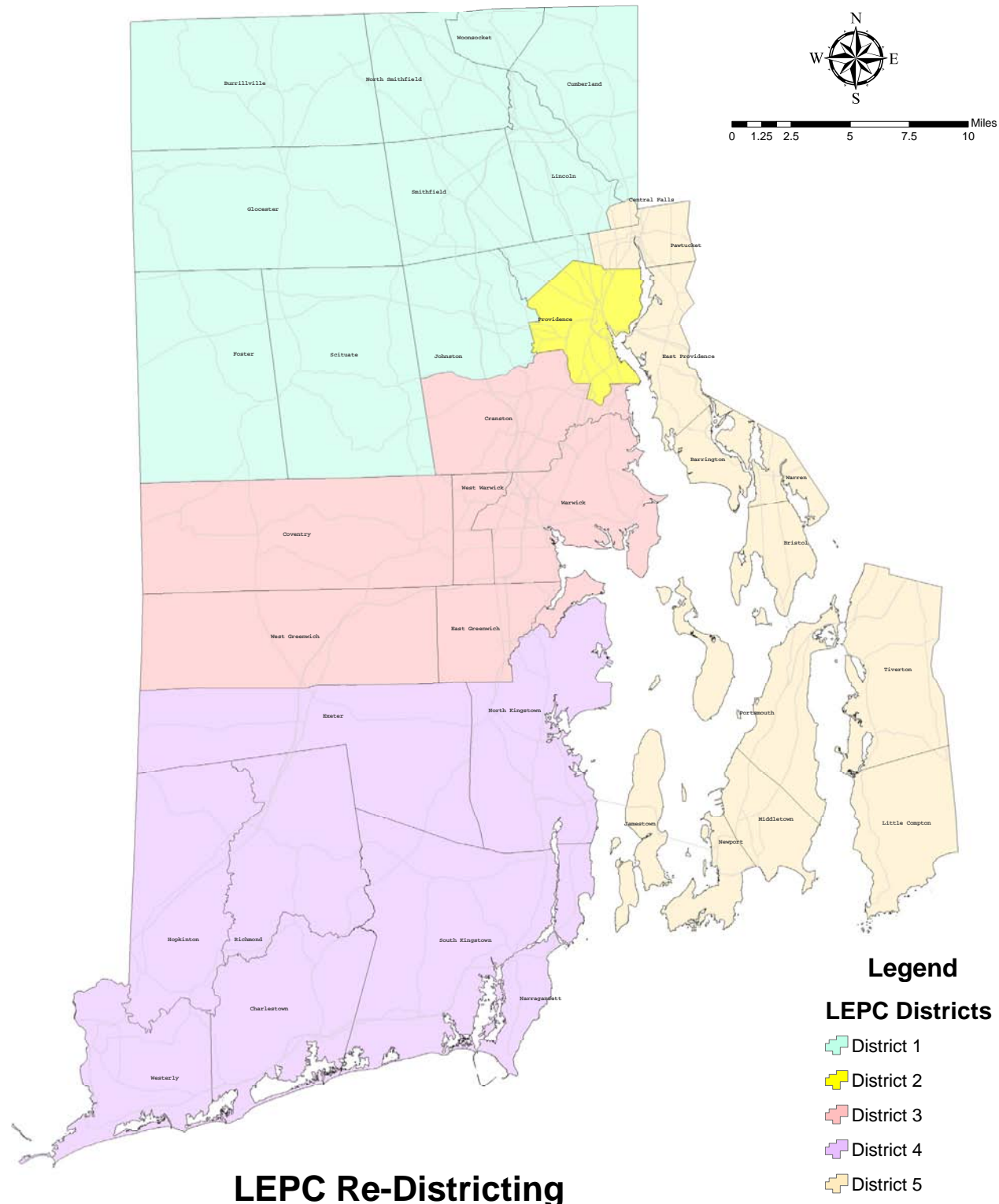
As part of revising these plans, the Planners meet with the partners and local EMA Directors to discuss the relevant State, Federal and local stakeholder's responsibilities during an all-hazards incident. The visits reiterate how all of these documents are essential for each community's emergency preparedness.

Norm Menard-District 1
 TBD- District 2
 Ellary Gamache-District 3
 Bronwyn Gordon- District 4
 Kevin Clapp-District 5

RI Divided Into Five LEPC Districts

The Rhode Island State Emergency Response Commission, chaired by Paul D'Abbraccio of RIEMA, has made great strides along with a new web site with the assistance of Chief Dillon of the Providence Fire Department and Providence College. <http://www.riserc.org/> Links are pro-

vided for contact with your district chairman and e-forms from the United States Environmental Protection Agency. You will also notice that the State has been divided into five LEPC districts. Simply indentify your community and the corresponding LEPC district.



LEPC Re-Districting

New Rescue Service Proposed

The LoJack SafetyNet Service Is Now Operable in Smithfield, West Warwick & Portsmouth, RI

Keeping a loved one who has autism, Down syndrome, Alzheimer's or dementia safe is a full time job for caregivers, particularly if they are prone to wandering. A recent survey revealed that 92% of respondents stated that their child with autism was at risk of wandering. Additionally, 60 percent of individuals with Alzheimer's wander at some point – many of them repeatedly. In either case, a caregiver can be left with a constant sense of fear for their loved ones' safety.

Fortunately, there is a solution designed specifically for protecting and rescuing individuals who wander. LoJack SafetyNet puts search and rescue directly in the hands of public safety officials to successfully locate missing people who have autism, Alzheimer's or other similar cognitive conditions.

LoJack SafetyNet uses Radio Frequency technology, which has proven over time to be the most effective technology for search and rescue operations. Individuals who are enrolled in the service wear a lightweight, waterproof personal locator device typically on their wrist or ankle. If an individual wanders and becomes lost, their parent or caregiver simply notifies their local public safety agency. Agencies are extensively trained and certified on search and rescue procedures, how to use LoJack SafetyNet's electronic tracking equipment, and how to appropriately approach and interact with a loved one who has a cognitive condition. Additionally, public safety agencies have access to a client database, which includes a recent photo and key information as to where the individual might have wandered in the event that he or she goes missing. Equipped with LoJack SafetyNet's portable, handheld electronic tracking receivers, the public safety agency is dispatched to the missing person's last known location and begins its search.

Unlike a Global Positioning System (GPS), which requires a line of sight from multiple satellites, Radio Frequency technology operates even



if an individual has wandered into a marsh, body of water, densely wooded area, concrete structure or building constructed with steel. It delivers unprecedented real-time precision in pinpointing the exact location of a missing individual, which expedites the search and rescue process. The LoJack SafetyNet receivers used by public safety agencies can actually detect the Radio Frequency signal from the personal locator device within a range of approximately one mile in on-the-ground searches and 5-7 miles in searches by helicopter. This service has drastically reduced search times and helped find individuals in an average time of 30 minutes or less.

Once a month, a LoJack SafetyNet representative either hosts or visits the client to change the personal locator device's battery and answer any questions from the parent or caregiver.

For individuals subscribing to LoJack SafetyNet, there is a \$99 initial enrollment fee and a \$30 monthly service charge. To learn more about this valuable service, please visit <http://www.lojacksafetynet.com/> or call 1-877-4-FINDTHEM (1-877-434-6384).

Revision of EOP Continues

RIEMA continues the process of revising the State Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). As part of this process, we will be scheduling meetings with each Emergency Support Function (ESF) in the coming months to discuss their ESF annex.

On March 3, 2010, an ESF #5-Emergency Management follow-up meeting will be held at RIEMA. ESF #5 will be discussed by representatives from RIEMA, RI Department of Administration, RI Department of Health, RI Department of Transportation, RI Department of Environmental Management, RI National Guard, FEMA, RI State Police, RI Civil Air Patrol, Serve Rhode Island, and the University of RI- Environmental Data Center.

On March 23, 2010, ESF #7-Logistics Manage-

ment and Resource Support partners will meet at RIEMA to discuss the revision of ESF #7 of the State EOP. Representatives from RIEMA, RI National Guard, RI Department of Administration, RI Department of Environmental Management, RI Department of Health, RI State Police, RI State Fire Marshal, RI Department of Transportation, RI Department of Human Services, RI Department of Labor and Training, RI Department of Corrections, RI State Sheriff's Department, American Red Cross of RI, Salvation Army, FEMA, and the Coast Guard will discuss revisions to ESF#7.

Anyone with an interest in attending this meeting should contact Regional Planning Coordinator Theresa Murray at 462-7336.

RIEMA is now on Twitter: RhodelslandEMA

Upcoming RIEMA Courses & Training

HSEEP
March 2-4th Course is Full
Radisson Airport Hotel

ICS 300
March 8-9th Course is full
Sheraton Airport Hotel

Radiological Instrumentation Training (invitation only)
March 16-18th - Course is Full
Sheraton Airport Hotel

Radiological Instrumentation Training (invitation only) March 19th
Sheraton Airport Hotel

Critical Incident Stress (invitation only) March 21st
Radisson Airport Hotel

Radiological Instrumentation Training (invitation only)
March 22-24th
Radisson Airport Hotel

ICS 400 March 24-25th
Course is Full
Sheraton Airport Hotel

Michelle San Souci
Training Coordinator
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NATIONAL THREAT ADVISORY
ELEVATED

Significant Risk of Terrorist Attacks

NATIONAL AIR TRAVEL ADVISORY
HIGH

High Threat of Terrorist Attacks



Questions?

If you have any questions regarding this newsletter or any articles that have appeared in it, please contact:

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