



Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection

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Preparing For The Next Emergency: Symposium Attracts Hundreds of Local Leaders

On any given day, dozens of state and federal emergency response experts are on the lookout for a growing list of threats facing Connecticut, from cyber attacks to hurricanes and other natural disasters.

This week, they joined with 400 local leaders for the Connecticut Emergency Management Symposium at Camp Nett in Niantic to learn more about preparedness – before the next crisis arrives.

"It's important for them to hear about all of these things," said Brenda Bergeron, deputy commissioner at the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. "I don't think it's an overdramatization. There's a lot more going on right now."

The event, co-sponsored by DESPP's Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, the Department of Public Health and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, featured detailed sessions on responding to emergencies, including both manmade and natural disasters.

"A lot of it is knowing what resources are available to municipalities," said William Turner, State Emergency Management Director for DEMHS. "Everything we do is behind the scenes."



Jonathan Hale from DEMHS's Connecticut Intelligence Centers addresses a group about cyber security

The symposium offered a chance to pull back the curtains and show emergency management directors, top elected officials, and other municipal leaders what services and programs are out there to help them in the event of an emergency.

“This is one of the better opportunities for me to get the information that I need,” said Lisa Fasulo, Director of Health and Emergency Management Director for the town of Essex, after she attended a session on how the coming hurricane season might affect Connecticut. “It’s good to see people face to face.”

During the presentation from the National Weather Service and DEMHS, officials pointed out new forecasting that suggests a higher likelihood of a tropical storm striking Connecticut this year. In another presentation, Dennis Mott of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, warned participants about external cyber threats, particularly from the government of the Peoples Republic of China.

“If you see something, say something – this is still very true today,” said Mott, Protective Security Advisor for DHS’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.



DESPC Commissioner Ronnell Higgins, at left, and Deputy Commissioner Brenda Bergeron

Since the Sandy Hook school shootings, Connecticut has learned a great deal about disaster response, said Richard Branigan, CEO of the American Red Cross Connecticut and Rhode Island Region. Disasters, both natural and manmade, will happen and Connecticut must be prepared for any emergency.

“You can’t sit around and wait for it to happen. It will happen,” Branigan told a room crowded with emergency management officials. “We need to plan now.”

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