

**DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT & HOMELAND SECURITY  
COORDINATING COUNCIL**

**Regional Collaboration Subcommittee  
January 18, 2007**

Attendees: Cheryl Assis, CRCOG; Bill Austin, CREPC; Brenda Bergeron, DEMHS; Deanna Chaparro, DEMHS; Pam Daniels, DEMHS; Mary Rose Duberek, DEMHS; Marian Evans, Bridgeport Health Department; Richard Fournier, DEMHS; Libby Graham, DEMHS; Bill Hackett, DEMHS; Melanie Kerr, DEMHS; Jack Leonard, DEMHS; Rick Lynn, LHCEO; Virginia Mason, COGCNV; Denis McCarthy, Norwalk Fire Department; Jim O'Leary, Council of Small Towns; Murray Pendleton; Waterford Police Department; Anthony Scalora, DEMHS

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Graham at 1 p.m. Graham reviewed the committee's past work, as well as work done within the agency through in-house meetings. That work concluded in a draft Regional Emergency Support Plan that represents an almost full consensus of staff opinion. McCarthy asked if there was anything in the document that was or was not part of the consensus. Graham said that ESFs were a major point of contention, and that the staff tried to come up with terms that eased concerns while reflecting the ESF functions. Pendleton said that good work had been done in a short period of time, providing a good basis to work off of.

Mason asked how regional planning organizations fit in with the plan as she saw only one reference made to them. She suggested the language be changed to CEO/RPO and that the municipalities be given the option of choosing an RPO to lead the regional planning effort. Lynn said the roles were not clearly defined in the document. Graham said a new paragraph could be introduced that properly defines the roles of the CEO and the RPO. O'Leary said that the model takes the planning perspective but the crux of the plan is operations. CEOs are involved in both but fit each side differently. Graham said that CEOs are the lynchpin of the plan because incidents start at the local level and they are the ones with the authority.

Duberek said that it seemed like a strategic plan was needed for each region and that the document was a small piece out of a larger puzzle. Graham said the plan is not intended to be a strategic plan. Each region should develop a long term plan.

McCarthy said the document should more explicitly recognize those with the legal authority to act: DEMHS, CEOs, law enforcement, fire, etc. COGs and RPOs are collaborative partners but do not have a legal responsibility to act. An RPO could not be required to participate in an incident but those with the legal response authority could be. Graham said they should go in knowing the potential risk of an RPO no longer being a partner. She asked Austin how the issue was handled with CREPC. Austin said that CRCOG has no legal authority to act but served as a common denominator for those planning. The same could be true for the other regions. Austin said it was important to go to the mayor and stress the importance of getting involved in the planning effort. The plan is not a command document but an agreement to share resources with layers of redundancy built in to ensure an incident is handled properly throughout. Scalora said there should be training of the RPOs, EMDs, and CEOs to go over the authority issues.

Bergeron said that legally the CEO does have the main authority in an incident but that does not cut out RPO involvement. Pendleton said the group had to market the intent and purpose of the plan. RPOs will follow the consensus of the CEOs.

Graham said the plan will be shared at the Connecticut Council of Municipalities Conference on May 1 with a possibility of regional meetings to further cultivate the effort. Before then, the plan will be vetted through the appropriate constituencies – the agency, the regional subcommittee, and the coordinating council.

Pendleton said that in making a similar plan with police departments in his region, they were unable to capture all of the towns and that he would have liked if there were representation from towns in the northeastern part of the state. Graham said that doesn't make the effort a loss but serves as a foundation to build from.

McCarthy said they needed SWRPA's involvement in their planning. RPOs are a critical partner and local officials should not be threatened by their involvement. The most important issue is who is in charge of what and who can give orders. Continuity is crucial.

Bergeron said they needed to hear from the RPOs about what they perceive their role to be. The RPO representatives in the room would contact their counterparts in the other RPOs to clarify their role.

Austin said that it would be easier to get towns to buy into the process by making the money regional and DEMHS has not done that in the past. The only way the relationship changes between responders is if the governor declares a state of emergency.

Graham said the plan is a road map for others to use. The plan covers both formal and informal mutual aid agreements. Austin asked if Public Act 01-117 covered the mutual aid agreement issue. Graham said that statute could be included in a future version of the document but the current version of the plan allows for both written and handshake agreements. Bergeron said they tried to be broad in addressing the issue. McCarthy said there were weaknesses in the process in a large incident. Bergeron said they did not want to affect handshake agreements but wanted to formalize the process in serious incidents. The plan addresses issues not covered in current statute. The plans are inclusive and would require a town to opt out. It also allows for mutual aid outside the DEMHS regions. It was not about imposing bureaucracy but was a local initiative of CEOs talking to other CEOs. Evans asked who would keep track of those who opt out. Bergeron said that DEMHS would keep track.

Mason asked what the impact on Citizen Corps would be. Bergeron said the plan deals with who can be sent and who is protected. O'Leary said it was best to refrain from specificity. If the plan is revised to include groups there was the risk of leaving someone out. The current plan was very broad.

McCarthy asked who created the mutual aid process. Bergeron said it would happen CEO to CEO. Austin said the plan gets people together in the same room to create the plan and that each region would need to develop its own. Graham said the goal was to create an even playing field.

Mason asked how other agencies fit in. Evans asked specifically how the Department of Environmental Protection worked with CREPC. Austin said they worked with DEP on Haz-Mat incidents through a FEMA grant to DEP.

Graham said the plan focused on discipline-oriented (ESF) working groups. Austin asked why the National Incident Management System (NIMS) was not used. Graham said there was a concern that NIMS implied the level of authority was transferred. Austin said there was a need to understand the incident command structure. Graham said the staff got bogged down in terminology. Austin said that regionalization did not change ICS but it helped fill functions. The key was to think of roles and not people. O'Leary said they should follow the national standard. McCarthy said it had to be similar. Austin said they needed to get the groups together to flesh out the plan through resource typing. The hard part, he said was getting people to buy in. O'Leary said the process will be evolutionary. The regional plans will likely have a similar structure as there will always be collaboration with the state.

McCarthy asked if the state was going to endorse the Region 3 plan as a model. He said most towns would rather adopt a model and tweak it. Graham said there will be commonality in the regional plans through Commissioner Thomas granting approval of them. O'Leary and Austin said the towns will still need to go through the process of putting a plan together. They will have to make it work for their regions, Austin said. Graham said there was a template available.

In the end, Graham said, they will develop a statewide plan which establishes ESF subcommittees. To the draft plan, they will add a section on roles and responsibilities, include related statutes but also further flesh out the language, and define municipal assets. She also said they would address the issue of using NIMS to prevent confusion and reassure those involved that authority is not being lost. Lynn suggested dropping the bullets in the ESF section as they were redundant and asked that DEMHS provide a context for the other RPOs to provide an accurate description of their roles. Graham suggested reviewing the 2005 Regional Planning Model with regards to RPO involvement. Lynn said the need for regional collaboration is a rare incident. The RPO could serve to prevent the CEO from being overwhelmed. However, in most cases this is not needed. Graham asked the RPOs to share what they could and they would weave in that information. She said she would also describe the relationship between the emergency support plan and the emergency operations plan.

McCarthy suggested encouraging the towns to update their plans using the ESF structure to ease the transition from local to regional planning. Graham said it would be possible to guide them through that. Austin said that might not always be necessary as in a town there is usually only one agency that performs each function. Pendleton said he didn't see how they could avoid NIMS language.

The subcommittee also agreed to move the date of the next meeting from February 15 to February 14. That meeting will take place in the DEMHS Training Room, Brainard Field.