

**SECURE COMMONWEALTH PANEL**  
**July 9, 2008**  
**Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center**

Attendance: Bruce Benson, Bob Crouch, Kay Goss, David Smith, Kelly Hobbs, Jim Horton, Dan Jenkins, John Knapp, Dario Marquez, Tom Martin, Cathie Hutchins, Leigh Middleditch, Mike Neuhard, Bob Mauskopf, Jeff Rezin, Norris Royston, Henry Stanley, Gail Jaspen, Charles Werner, and Regina Williams.

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**WELCOME**

Bob Crouch opened the meeting by thanking panel members for their attendance and noted that the legislators were not here due to the General Assembly special session.

Bob introduced our host Jim Junkins, Director of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center and thanked him and his staff for their hospitality. Mr. Junkins addressed the panel by thanking them for their involvement and support in the Harrisonburg area. A new \$20 million radio system is managed and maintained in this building along with the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Operations Center, which is our meeting room for today. A tour of the communications center can be arranged during lunch for those interested.

Bob noted to the panel that a reporter from a local Harrisonburg television station was in attendance.

Bob briefed the new panel members and new audience members on the history of the Secure Commonwealth Panel. It was first created by Governor Warner on the recommendation by the Gilmore Commission to address preparedness gaps by an all-hazard approach to natural and man-made events. The Secure Commonwealth Panel has been codified and put in the *Code of Virginia* in 2006 with support from Governor Kaine and the Attorney General's Office. Membership includes private entities, state government, local government, and the first responder community. The panel meets three or four times a year and tries to move around the state for their meeting locations. Our next meetings will be held in Hampton Roads, Northern Virginia and maybe Southwest Virginia. This is a chance to expose the panel members to the different regions around the Commonwealth and their uniqueness.

Bob welcomed Chief Charles Werner to the panel. Chief Werner is the City of Charlottesville Fire Chief and the former Chairman of the State Interoperability Executive Committee.

At the panel's last meeting, the panel embraced the new focus on preparedness in our schools. We do not want to re-invent the wheel, but examine and build upon the programs that are already out there.

## **PUBLIC FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

*Billy Shelton and J.D. Jenkins, Department of Fire Programs*

Please see PowerPoint presentation.

Question/Answer period:

It seems lately fires have been on a rise. Why are there so many fires? People are using more appliances. Most fires are a result of unattended cooking. In addition, people are not taking care of their house's infrastructure, i.e. heating systems and not scheduling frequent check-ups. Overload of a home's circuit board is another reason for an increase in fires. So, please pay attention to your electrical units; they are wearing thin.

With the high cost of fuel, people seemed to be burning wood more. Are chimney fires a concern? Have you engaged the community with safety tips? The Department of Forestry and Department of Emergency Management provide the public with fire safety tips and preventive maintenance measures such as using hard or soft wood, cured wood, or watching out for creosol buildup. Education is the key.

How many firefighters died or were injured in the line of duty for 2007? One firefighter died (Kyle Wilson) and 167 injured. Firefighter Wilson died in a residential fire. An after action report was done.

Another reason for more house fires is the increase size of the house; firefighters are not looking at 1,500 square feet houses anymore. Houses now exceed 6,000 square feet and enough water is not being put on the blaze. Need to put more wet stuff on the red stuff.

A good tip to remember is that firefighters need to know as soon as they arrive on scene who is left in the house. Firefighter Wilson was looking for victims in the house fire that claimed his life and the family was safely at a neighbor's house.

Wanda Willis, Public Education Officer for the Harrisonburg Fire Department spoke about supporting their effort in getting the General Assembly to have lighters that look like toys banned in Virginia. Bob Crouch was very interested in this effort and informed Ms. Willis to provide information to the First Responder Sub Panel and work through them so they can bring the legislation forward to the full panel for the panel's approval/support. The Secure Commonwealth Panel can be a very strong advocate for legislation and provide a little extra juice to help support the cause. Wanda let the panel know that two other states have passed similar legislation which might help the cause.

The Harrisonburg school system works with 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, 7<sup>th</sup> graders, and seniors to enhance their fire safety education. This is a worthwhile program and very popular with the schools.

Harrisonburg also has a great program that was first funded by the Department of Fire Programs through a grant, whereas citizens call in to order pizza and the fire department

delivers the pizza and checks their smoke alarm to see if it is functioning properly. If the smoke alarm needs a battery, they replace the batteries. If the alarm is not working at all, the fire department comes back and replaces the alarm with a new one. This is very popular and the City Council now funds this endeavor through the City's budget. An estimated 400 households participate.

A question was brought up concerning OSHA 501's Train-the-Trainer program on occupational / electrical safety and whether or not that parallels with what fire departments are teaching? Yes, OSHA does parallel fire standards.

Bob Crouch thanked Billy Shelton, J.D. Jenkins, and Wanda Willis for providing an excellent overview of fire safety programs. Bob then introduced David Hudson, Principal for Linwood Holton Elementary School in Richmond.

Mr. Hudson is very involved with fire safety because of his experiences with two house fires and understands how important it is to teach the children.

Mr. Hudson discusses his school's fire safety program which runs from October to May, involves weekly homework assignments and is taught by a firefighter. This is part of the student's instructional day. Focus includes topics on how to put out a fire, emergency phone numbers, how do you escape a two story house, etc. It is very important to have the teacher's buy-in when starting this program. Mr. Hudson brings in the fire and police departments to interact with the students. This is an outstanding program, but the education needs to continue at home also.

Bob thanked Mr. Hudson for coming and his work on preparing our children.

Bob Crouch directed the panel that it is the shared responsibility among our sub panel groups to focus on this important outreach effort. Obviously there are good products out there; we just need to find out where the gaps are located. Fire safety is a major priority in preparedness, but also need to expand into all-hazards such as the tornado drill. Also we must keep in mind not all communities have the outreach events Harrisburg is currently working on. There are communities in the Commonwealth who are not able to commit resources to this type of program.

J.D. Jenkins discussed the creation of a free online database of resources for teachers to download materials. In addition, the state Fire Marshal is getting more involved with preparedness efforts. It is not perfect yet, but it is headed in the right direction.

A question was asked about who the coordinating agency was for response actions? The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) coordinates the state's emergency preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery efforts. The Department of Fire Programs is a sister agency under the Secretary of Public Safety who works with VDEM closely on National Incident Management System training and jointly participates on public information issues and public safety conferences as well.

Janet Clements gave a Ready Virginia update:

- VDEM just hired Pulsar Advertising to help with upcoming preparedness campaigns.
- VDEM participates in various focus groups around the Commonwealth to share and gather information for their preparedness campaigns.
- Public safety inserts are being used in news articles dealing with preparedness.
- Press releases have been circulated regarding hurricane season and what people need to do to get ready.
- VDEM is partnering with VDOT to advertise the hurricane evacuation routes.
- LISTO VA is up and running. VDEM has just hired a Spanish speaking public information officer who will reach out to the Hispanic community.
- The Tornado Drill was voluntary participation about 10 or 12 years ago and now it is in the *Code of Virginia*. Teachers are now aware of the seriousness of tornadoes and do special programs during the drill as well.

Bob Crouch reminded the panel that Ready Virginia is a Governor's program for all hazard preparedness and all public education efforts should fall under.

A panel member suggested using the Block Neighborhood Watch program as a way to provide fire safety to our communities. There was an Escape Program in the '70's in Hampton Roads dealing with fire safety that was very successful, but DARE took over and pushed that program out.

Janet Clements told the panel about Citizen Corps and how Neighborhood Watch is a component of Citizen Corps. 40 localities have Citizen Corps Councils; we are not where we want to be, but we are on the path.

Bob Mauskapf let the panel know that the Medical Reserve Corps units are up to 26 and they help community-based organizations develop local volunteer medical emergency and public health response units. Health educators have been active in schools with programs such as the hand washing stations.

A panel member suggested using the big retailers such as Wal-Mart and Target to spread the message on developing the culture of preparedness.

Bob Mauskapf indicated the good works of Prince William County who produced a short video on the proper way to sneeze which won an Emmy Award.

A panel member suggested that the proper mechanism to getting preparedness in our school systems is to incorporate it into policy; a mandated, actual program.

At the next meeting, we will schedule a candid discussion with the Department of Education on the challenges/gaps of preparedness programs in our schools.

Gail Jaspen mentioned the New Parents Tool Kit, which is a kit that provides clear, easy-to understand information about early childhood development to new parents. This is a

Governor Warner initiative that Governor Kaine supports. This might be a good avenue to help with teaching new parents in at-risk communities about safety.

Bob Crouch thanked the panel and speakers for a great discussion.

### **INTEROPERABILITY UPDATE**

*Constance McGeorge, Office of Commonwealth Preparedness*

*Jim Junkins, Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center*

Please see PowerPoint presentation.

### **HEALTH AND MEDICAL SUB PANEL REPORT**

*Bob Mauskopf, Department of Health*

Please see PowerPoint presentation.

Dr. Lisa Kaplowitz has changed positions within the Department of Health. She is now the new Health Director for the Alexandria Health District. Bill Nelson has taken over as Interim Deputy Commissioner of Emergency Preparedness and Response. A nationwide search is underway for a new Deputy Commissioner.

The next sub panel meeting is scheduled for August 5 and the panel is invited to attend.

### **FIRST RESPONDER SUB PANEL REPORT**

*Colonel Henry Stanley*

The sub panel meeting was held on June 18 and was well attended by the Commonwealth's first responder community to share information. Attendees included the Virginia Firefighters Association, Police Chiefs, EMS, VDEM, Sheriffs' Association, and Virginia Professional Firefighters Association.

The sub panel discussed a *Richmond Times-Dispatch* article on George Foresman speaking to about 300 people at a conference. Mr. Foresman asked the audience how many of you are prepared. Only about 9 people raised their hands. How can we help with getting the public prepared? What types of mechanisms can we use? It was discussed creating a central website to display information on upcoming events, tips, etc.; just something to get the word out.

The group might also want to explore avenues working with the American Red Cross, Boy and Girl Scouts to have merit badges in preparedness or having a National Ready Day.

## **BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY SUB PANEL REPORT**

*Leigh Middleditch*

The sub panel has created three working groups to expand on their major focus.

### *Credentialing – Dan Jenkins*

Developing a post event credential – having vital services able to get into a disaster area after the event. This is not to be confused with the First Responder Authentication Credential. This program deals with power services, tree trimmers, etc. They are looking for the Virginia Emergency Operations Center to control the database.

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has an excellent model in their boat licensing program that can be tailored to fit our needs. Ultimately the jurisdiction will have the final say as to whether they want it or not.

The credential will have accountability attached to it and does not lend itself to be duplicated. The credential will not be long term; it will expire.

The credential will have a tiered approach. The first tier will gain this type of access, the second tier will be able to do such and such, and so on.

Terms and conditions are being drafted. This document should be completed and out for review by the end of the month. The sub panel will review and then provide to the full panel.

A suggestion was heard about using DMV as the standard facility to issue credentials. The bar code on the back of the licenses can download important information. Also, DMV can vet licenses with other states quickly.

### *Information and Sharing – Marc Follmer*

This working group provides an avenue for private interests to share information with the Virginia Fusion Center. Private industries might have foreign relationships that might be of interest to the Virginia Fusion Center and the working group is trying to plug in private security into the fold. Looking at refining the Homeland Security Information Network towards businesses.

Also trying to develop a Business Resource List for all businesses in Virginia who are willing to lend or sell their assets to the state. This will create a “virtual depot” allowing the Virginia Emergency Operations Center to visually see what is needed. It will also allow the Virginia Emergency Operations Center to send out messages for resources and have companies like Wal-Mart fill the order.

The third part of the working group is to educate businesses. An aid matrix will be developed that will allow companies, depending on the disaster, to donate their resources or services.

There is a lack of funding.

Education is the final working group within the Business and Industry Sub Panel.

This working group is mobilizing around the Chamber of Commerce who have developed their own taskforces on preparedness.

The working group is encouraging businesses to have a Continuity of Operations plan that addresses all-hazards.

Leigh Middleditch is concerned about the overlap of sub panel's work and making sure the sub panels are sharing information.

The panel discussed communications during a disaster. Reverse 911 was an effective way to alert citizens during the San Diego fires. There should always be multiple ways to reach the public during a disaster.

Mr. Middleditch would like to look at the state's process for after action reports. Bob Crouch agreed and has noted this for the October or December meeting.

Matt Cyr let the panel know that LLIS.GOV is a national online network that posts after action reports.

### **CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION SUB PANEL**

*John Knapp*

Please see PowerPoint presentation.

### **OUTREACH SUB PANEL REPORT**

*Bob Crouch*

Regina Williams has stepped down as chair of the Outreach Sub Panel. Greg Lucyk has agreed to step in as chair.

Bob Crouch asked the panel if they have any objections with a working group being formed under the Outreach Sub Panel that will build on preparedness outreach in our school system. Likely members include David Hudson, Wanda Willis, J.D. Jenkins and any others on the panel who wish to participate. Kay Goss voiced her acknowledgement as wanting to participate.

### **NOVEMBER '08 STATEWIDE PANDEMIC INFLUENZA RESPONSE EXERCISE AND PANDEMIC FLU PLANNING STATUS**

*Bob Mauskopf, Department of Health*

Please see PowerPoint Presentation.

The next meeting will be on October 8 at the Virginia Port Authority. Agenda items will include outreach follow-up, sub panel reports, after action reviews, and a tour/briefing on port security.

Bob Crouch thanked our hosts, Jim Junkins and his staff for their assistance and adjourned the meeting.