

Secure Commonwealth Panel  
Business and Industry Sub-panel Meeting  
April 10, 2008

Leigh Middleditch - Chair

A meeting of the Secure Commonwealth Panel's Business and Industry Subpanel was held on April 10, 2008 at the Charlottesville office of McGuire Woods. Participants included: Jim Neale, Mary Loose DeViney, Dexter Owsley, Calvin Royal, Matt Patterson, Tom Wilcox, David Smith, Anthony McKinney, Candy Lindenzwig, Richard Johnson, Johnny Forbs, Jeff Rezin, Christina Ayoitis, Lila Behrens, Ray Thomas, Hugh Keough, Ed Martella, Renee Wentworth, Leigh Middleditch and Marc Follmer.

Following opening remarks and introduction of new members, Mr. Middleditch asked for a report from each taskforce.

Credentialing Taskforce: Mr. Follmer provided the report for the Credentialing taskforce on behalf of Dan Jenkins.

Mr. Follmer stated the goal of the taskforce was to develop a system to provide business with one uniform standard of identification to be used by businesses to gain access to restricted areas following disasters. The taskforce is concentrating on "post-event" credentialing where businesspersons requiring access may not be known prior to the time of the disaster. This system would serve as a "stop gap" until the technology associated with First Responder Authentication Credential cards becomes less expensive and more widely available.

The Credentialing taskforce last met on March 18. The taskforce discussed the Priority Access System (PAS) document distributed by Mr. Follmer. The taskforce agreed on the concept expressed in the PAS but suggested that it contain a "tiered" entry mechanism whereby certain companies deemed more vital to the response/recovery efforts were admitted prior to other companies. The taskforce reasoned that businesses directly involved in immediate recovery efforts, such as utilities and fuel, would most likely be considered in the first "tier." Businesses that could provide evidence of self-sufficiency, such as food, water, private security, health care and personal protective equipment would likely enhance their ability to be granted access.

Mr. Follmer and Mr. Jenkins presented the PAS concept to the First Responder Subpanel, whose members include the Secretary of Public Safety and other very senior law enforcement, fire protection and emergency management personnel. The reaction of the subpanel members was very positive. The state police felt the PAS concept was reasonable and necessary and liked the idea of one state standard credential.

The subpanel thought it would be very helpful to out of state personnel responding to a disaster in Virginia to have an example of the credential included in their Emergency Management Assistance Compact briefings. The subpanel members stated that the PAS would require strong controls and that the integrity of the PAS system must be maintained for local Incident Commanders to have confidence in the system. The subpanel felt the timeline expressed in the document was too aggressive, and may need to be revised.

Mr. Follmer stated that the taskforce would now move from the conceptual stage towards a tangible process by:

1. Creating a classification system which would help to determine the criteria for tiers for priority access; and
2. Creating a sample credential to provide to various stakeholders for review and comment.

Mr. Follmer mentioned that the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries currently have a web-based system for the issuance of hunting and fishing licenses. Mr. Follmer had discussed the system and the license components with DGIF's Chief Information Officer, who had agreed to arrange a demonstration of the system for the taskforce leaders.

Mr. Smith thought that the new "business one-stop" being developed by the Secretary of Commerce and Trade could be useful in promoting the effort to business and providing an opportunity for them to register with the PAS.

Education Taskforce: Mary Loose DeViney provided the report for the Education taskforce, and stated the goals of the Education taskforce were to:

1. Inform businesses as to what to expect from state government during a disaster and what they should not expect;
2. Promote the work of the Credentialing and Information Sharing taskforces; and
3. Encourage small businesses (primarily those with less than 50 employees) to adopt a Business Continuity Plan (BCP).

The taskforce last met on April 4 to review the Education concept document distributed by Mr. Follmer. The taskforce endorsed the concept document and will develop a BCP program based on the National Fire Protection Association 1600 standards which are being used as the standard for voluntary private sector preparedness in the draft Improving America's Security Act now pending in Congress.

The BCP program will be organized into a series of interactive modules, each designed to be completed in 1 hour or less. Completing all of the applicable modules would produce a business-specific BCP. Recognition of completion could include a letter of congratulations from the Governor, special signs or decals that could be displayed by the business, or a special recognition event held by the local or state chambers of commerce.

Various distribution channels are contemplated including web-based delivery, live presentations involving local chambers of commerce and by CD-Rom. Sam's Club has expressed an interest in working with the state to arrange for the modules to be available in their stores for the benefit of their 52,000 small business members. Ms. Lindenzwig mentioned that modules should also be prepared in paper format to reach certain businesses. Thought should also be given to having the information translated into other languages, especially Spanish.

Ms. DeViney stated that Charlotte Franklin, Deputy Coordinator of the Arlington Office of Emergency Management, had agreed to draft the modules with the aid of a consultant. Mr. Follmer was able to secure grant funding to cover the drafting expenses. The timeline calls for the first 2 modules to be completed by the end of June. Ms. DeViney has also made contact with the IT department of Piedmont Community College seeking a student to develop the interactive website.

The Subpanel discussed potential incentives for businesses to complete the modules. It was suggested that the taskforce seek out self regulatory organizations or associations such as the Virginia Society of CPAs, Bar Association, Independent Insurance Agents and lending institutions and discuss incorporating the BCPs into their review/underwriting criteria.

Information Sharing Taskforce: Mr. Follmer provided the report of the Information Sharing Taskforce on behalf of Fred Vincent and Evan Smith. Mr. Follmer stated that the taskforce had not met due primarily to limited availability of the taskforce leaders because of illness and job transfer, respectively.

Mr. Follmer stated that the goals of the taskforce were to:

1. Increase participation in the Virginia Critical Information Shared System (VCISS) with information relating to threats due to terrorism, gang activity and general crime such as phishing;
2. Position the state's Fusion Center as the definitive source of information; and
3. Develop a database with businesses emergency point(s) of contact and business assets that may be available to the state during and/or following an emergency.

Mr. Follmer discussed the need to create a culture in which the public and private sectors felt a "responsibility to provide" information to one another. Information regarding threats due to terrorism, gang-related activity and general crime should be shared using the secure VCISS. Business crime such as phishing was an example that should be reported to the VCISS for dissemination. VCISS would provide participating businesses access to daily briefings on multiple topics. Special threat warnings would be sent to security contacts at VCISS business members.

Mr. Follmer mentioned that the resource database would contain business assets located within Virginia such as equipment, supplies, locations with backup power supplies, parking lots, and personnel such as engineers and IT professionals. Businesses would voluntarily upload data into the database and would receive periodic reminders from the state to ensure the information was up-to-date. The State would develop protocols for requesting private sector assets. Businesses would not be contractually bound to deliver the assets. Mr. Martella stated that the database should not contain assets that may be contractually obligated to any third parties, such as insurance agencies, in the event of a disaster.

The Subpanel discussed resource databases used by New York (Private Asset Logistic Management System) and Pennsylvania (Private Assets for Regional Response) and whether they can be adapted to use in Virginia. The Business Executives for National Security also has a software model for resource listings. Mr. McKinney remarked that FEMA was working on its own system and that any database should be “open architecture” so that it could be interoperable with FEMA and other databases. Mr. McKinney also suggested testing the resource database using a “proof of concept” model – possibly incorporating the database into the state’s next VERTEX exercise.

Mr. McKinney also mentioned that the database would work more efficiently if it were able to make a request for resources and have participants fill the request. The Department of Defense uses a process called TPPU or Task, Post, Process and Use and that we could benefit from researching this model.

Mr. Follmer questioned whether the Emergency Operations Center’s Web-EOC has these capabilities. Ms. Wentworth remarked that Web-EOC does have this capability but that the state has likely not decided whether it wants to use it or to have a stand-alone database to which Web-EOC could access.

There was some discussion of whether business would need incentives to join the resource database such as tax incentives. Ms. Wentworth stated that from her recent experience as a consultant, business – especially larger companies – were anxious to help and did not need money incentives but simply a process in which they can act. She thought that if representatives of the Governor’s office secured the participation of larger businesses that the effort would “trickle down” to smaller businesses.

There was discussion that companies would use the resource database as an opportunity to show shareholders, customers and their communities that the companies were contributing to the preparedness effort. Ms. Ayiotis likened the effort to having companies “go green” and agreed that it provides businesses with self-promotion opportunities.

Mr. Thomas advised that trade associations could be very helpful in convincing their members to participate. He thought that granting more businesses access to Web-EOC, and receiving access to restricted areas through the Priority Access System process would interest businesses enough to participate. Other subpanel members agreed that

information from the state EOC during and immediately following a disaster is of great importance and value to business. Mr. McKinney remarked that the state might be able to secure private sector funding for the project.

Tax Forms Mr. Follmer informed the subpanel that the Department of Taxation has agreed to consider providing the Office of Commonwealth Preparedness with a page in the new Sales Tax booklets that will be sent to business in the next few months. Approximately 260,000 businesses would be receiving the booklets. Mr. Follmer stated that OCP might provide the Ready Virginia message of “Get a kit, Make a plan, Stay informed” but that suggestions from the subpanel would be very welcome. The subpanel members felt that a brief message, in plain English, with a reference to a website for more information would be the best approach.

Recruiting Mr. Follmer mentioned that the subpanel now has 83 members but that it was not a closed group. He encouraged the subpanel members to invite other business members to participate in the subpanel’s work and that he would be willing to speak with them to bring them up to date.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.