

Secure Commonwealth Panel
Business and Industry Sub-panel Meeting
December 7, 2007

Leigh Middleditch - Chair

A meeting of the Secure Commonwealth Panel's Business and Industry Subpanel was held on December 9, 2007 at the Charlottesville office of McGuire Woods. Participants included: Jim Neale, Pat Satterfield, Tony Caputo, Dan Jenkins, Mary Loose DeViney, Fred Vincent, Harry Colestock, Charlotte Franklin, Jacqueline Thomas, Dexter Owsley, Evan Smith, and Marc Follmer.

Leigh Middleditch acted as Chair of the meeting and Marc Follmer acted as Secretary. Following a call to order and introductions, the Chair gave a summary of the last Secure Commonwealth Panel executive committee meeting.

Mr. Middleditch reiterated the subpanel's goals of Education, Information Sharing and Credentialing and stated that the subpanel would form 3 taskforces of its members to develop strategies to accomplish the objectives. Mary Loose Diviney and Charlotte Franklin will head the Education taskforce. The Information Sharing taskforce will be led by Fred Vincent and Evan Smith and the Credentialing taskforce will be led by Jim Neale, Dan Jenkins and Harry Colestock.

Mr. Follmer described the mission of each of the taskforces:

Education: The taskforce will educate small businesses (<50 employees) on the importance of Business Continuity Planning; encourage small businesses to write a continuity plan; and develop a plan to inform businesses of the services they should, and should not, expect the Commonwealth to provide following a disaster or emergency.

Information Sharing: The taskforce will increase the participation in the Virginia Critical Information Shared System (VCISS); increase participation in the Emergency Operation Center's resource list; and develop strategies for businesses to identify their emergency point(s) of contact for law enforcement or emergency managers.

Credentialing: The taskforce will develop a uniform standard of identification to be used by businesses to gain access affected areas prior to being open to the general public.

The taskforces then held breakout sessions to begin to organize and discuss their next steps.

The Education taskforce will standardize a template for training workshops of approximately 1 hour or less in length. The taskforce felt that shorter, more frequent workshops would be more effective than whole or ½ day seminars which cover multiple topics. Ms. Franklin commented that the workshops need to focus on helping small businesses actually write a basic continuity plan. Ms. Franklin and Mr. Follmer distributed examples of documents containing questions to help small businesses begin continuity planning. Future workshops could provide businesses the ability to refine their plan with the help of subpanel members who can help answer questions on business continuity. Draft templates would be provided to local chambers of commerce and the retail merchants associations for their views on membership interest.

A large concern was how to appeal to small business owners to get them to attend the workshops. The taskforce agreed the workshop must be available at little or no cost. Mr. Owsley suggested arranging small focus groups of small business owners to help guide the development of the workshop format and content. Mr. Caputo stated that working through the local chambers of commerce and highlighting the workshops to other local groups, such as rotary and optimist clubs may help to increase attendance. Mr. Follmer discussed appealing to professionals with client development responsibilities such as attorneys, insurance agents, financial advisors and bankers who could suggest attendance to their clients.

The taskforce felt it was important to work with trade associations to find ways to encourage small businesses to adopt continuity plans. For example, the Virginia Society of Certified Public Accountants to add continuity plans to their audit standards. The Independent Insurance Agents could possibly incorporate continuity plans in their risk assessment for insurance. Bankers could add the need for continuity plans to their underwriting guidelines for loans.

The Information Sharing taskforce discussed the Virginia Critical Information Shared System, which is a web-based information sharing system produced by the Virginia Fusion Center. Mr. Vincent explained that the VCISS provides users access to daily briefings on multiple topics. Special threat warnings would be sent to security contacts at VCISS business members. Examples of threat warnings are attached to these minutes – given the nature of the information they should not be shared with the general public.

The Fusion Center can also provide business with a single source to verify information. Mr. Vincent stated the Fusion Center seeks to receive information from the business community, especially information which may be pertinent to the prevention of terrorist attacks.

The business resource list was discussed and the taskforce felt it should contain all types of items that businesses may be able to provide to the Commonwealth in the event of a disaster or emergency such as equipment, supplies, office space, phone lines, parking lots for staging areas, etc. Mr. Smith said he was familiar with Pennsylvania's Private Assets

for Region Responders program which is used to compile a list of business resources, including physical assets as well as personnel which would be of value to emergency responders. Mr. Smith stated that he would obtain further information on PARR and provide it to subpanel members.

The credentialing taskforce will focus on “post-event” rather than “pre-event” credentialing. Post-event credentialing affects those individuals whose identity is not known at the time of the disaster or emergency such as insurance agents, replacement employees, delivery drivers, and small business owners and their employees. In contrast pre-event credentialing entails identifying individuals prior to the time of the disaster or emergency. Pre-event credentials tend to be “hard” credentials such as identification cards or vehicle hang tags. Mr. Follmer stated that other areas of the government are focusing on pre-event credentialing.

Mr. Follmer discussed that any credentialing system must have the acceptance of the law enforcement, fire and emergency responder communities to be of real value. Without widespread acceptance - any credential will be just another form of identification. Law enforcement, fire and emergency responder guidance and opinions can be obtained through the Regional Preparedness Advisory Councils which exist throughout the state and whose membership is law enforcement, fire, emergency responders, national guard and other military personnel.

Mr. Follmer stated that he thought any credentialing system must be flexible, and able to facilitate quick access, if necessary. It should be an easily repeatable procedure that is not labor intensive. The task force expressed that the characteristics of the credential document should include: specific to one individual, numbered, have a short-term expiration and state the area to which the individual should have access. The individual would have to produce a corresponding photo ID. The system should be web-based or be able to fax credentials to where they are needed. The security features of the document will be important to avoid fraudulent duplication. Mr. Follmer suggested that the system be managed out of the state emergency operations center for security and control purposes.

Mr. Follmer will distribute suggested taskforce assignments to all subpanel members. The leaders of each taskforce will send an initial message to the taskforce members with suggested next steps.

Mr. Middleditch discussed two recent articles on Private Sector Preparedness Accreditation and Certification. Recent federal law addresses private sector preparedness and call for the creation of a private sector accreditation and certification program. Mr. Middleditch explained that any program would be voluntary, and expressed concern that the business community, especially small businesses, would not seek accreditation unless there was some tangible benefit for doing so.

A discussion ensued of whether accreditation could result in a credit against insurance costs. Mr. Middleditch and Mr. Follmer recalled a prior subpanel meeting where insurance industry members discussed their doubt about the availability of insurance credits – simply for obtaining certification. They explained that having a business disaster plan and having a loss experience where the disaster plan limited the amount of loss are very different.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.