

GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON SECURITY



**The Task Force Report
to
Governor Mark Schweiker**



November 19, 2001

GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON SECURITY
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

November 19, 2001

Honorable Mark S. Schweiker
Governor
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
225 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Governor Schweiker:

On October 6th of this year, you established a Task Force on Security with the missions to assess our current state of emergency preparedness and our preparedness needs in the event of a terrorist attack and to report to you its findings not later than November 20. As chairman, I am pleased to transmit for your use and review the report of the Task Force.

The Task Force members you appointed, supported by more than a hundred subject matter experts from a myriad of disciplines, have explored the state of our preparedness to respond to chemical, biological, nuclear, and cyber attacks on this Commonwealth. We have examined our abilities to protect critical infrastructure including our water supply systems, transportation lines, medical facilities, communications systems, and other essential community services. We have looked at our needs for communications and for public education and outreach.

Building on your thirteen-member Task Force, we invited a wide range of experts representing key federal government departments, numerous state and federal agencies, county and local government officials and representatives from the private and volunteer sector to also participate. I am pleased to report an extraordinary and robust level of cooperation and communication at all levels during this process.

Recognition and thanks are due to Secretaries Kelly Powell Logan, General Services, and Martin Horn, Office of Administration, and their staffs for their volunteered leadership to the Task Force's work in the area of security for the Commonwealth's facilities and workforce, to Secretary Johnny Butler, Labor and Industry, and his staff for insights on a wide range of areas, to Secretary David Hess and the staff of the Department of Environmental Protection for their assistance in the development of geographic information systems, to Deputy Secretary Eugene Klynoot, Agriculture, for his contributions in the area of bioterrorism, to Secretary James Kauffman, Jr., Banking, for the comments of Counsel David Bleicken, to John Durbin and the staff of the PA Turnpike Commission for their assistance in several key areas, to Executive Director Brent M. Glass of the PA Museum and Historical Commission for his contributions, to Secretary Kim Pizzingrilli, State, for her suggestions, and to Secretary Bradley Mallory for his insightful comments.

We believe that while Pennsylvania remains a national leader in preparedness and while substantial response capabilities already exist, there are opportunities to build upon this solid core capacity to improve our preparedness posture statewide.

The recommendations presented herein were developed based on a detailed assessment of existing capabilities and an understanding of the mission requirements that are emerging.

On behalf of the Security Task Force members and support staff, I want to thank you for your leadership in this essential area and to express our appreciation at being asked to help guide our common path through these troubled times.

Sincerely,

David L. Smith
Chairman, Governor's Task Force on Security
And
Director, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency

Report of the Task Force

On October 6, 2001, Governor Mark S. Schweiker signed Executive Order 2001-6 creating the Governor's Task Force on Security and charging it with the tasks of assessing Pennsylvania's capabilities and needs in protecting its citizens and communities from terrorist attacks, and of providing recommendations to strengthen the Commonwealth's homeland security posture.

It is important to note that development of Pennsylvania's homeland security and counter-terrorism programs began in 1996 with the training and equipping of response organizations in the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh regions and the introduction of terrorism awareness and operations programs into the public safety training schedules. In the intervening years, regional counter-terrorism task forces were created, planning was undertaken, additional training programs were introduced, and exercises were held reinforcing plans and lessons learned.

In general, the Task Force found that Pennsylvania's reputation for leadership in the area of homeland security is justified. In fact, an analysis of initiatives underway in other states revealed that the commonwealth had already completed or begun work on actions only now being contemplated elsewhere.

In response to the Governor's direction to respond to immediate needs as the report was developed, members of the Task Force, working cooperatively with state and federal partners, have undertaken the following actions:

- The Department of General Services and Office of Administration coordinated efforts to develop and activate a special website for use by Commonwealth employees seeking guidance on security, mail-handling and similar issues;
- The Office of Administration (Office of Information Technology) took the lead in developing a new web resource for Pennsylvania's citizens – the new Homeland Security website (www.homelandsecurity.state.pa.us);
- With the leadership of the Bureau of Training and Operations within the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and the Office of the State Fire Commissioner and State Fire Academy, a comprehensive catalog of terrorism readiness and response courses available from the State Police, Department of Health, Department of Environmental Protection, State Fire Academy and PEMA was prepared for distribution to the Commonwealth's first responders;
- The Commissioner, Pennsylvania State Police, completed visits to each of Pennsylvania's nuclear generating stations to assess security systems;
- The Department of Administration and Department of General Services are providing leadership in efforts to ensure that all state agency facilities have up-to-date emergency recovery plans and that employees are trained regularly in their implementation;
- The Attorney General coordinated a benchmark meeting with the U.S. Attorneys serving Pennsylvania to ensure coordination between state

and federal efforts and to provide information concerning the Commonwealth's regional counter-terrorism task force initiatives;

- Working with the Department of General Services, the Office of Comptroller, Office of General Counsel and others, PEMA initiated an expedited process to acquire and distribute first-responder equipment purchased with federal Office of Justice Programs funding (\$7.3 mil) to task force response units;
- The Department of Environmental Protection's Bureau of Radiation Protection, PEMA's Bureau of Plans, Risk Counties and others coordinated development of procedures for the handling of credible threats, not previously addressed within Emergency Conditions Level planning, against nuclear facilities;
- Members of the Task Force and other organizations cooperated with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and federal Office of Homeland Security in answering the assessment of the Commonwealth's capabilities in several, specific areas;
- The Public Utility Commission, State Police, Department of Environmental Protection, PA Turnpike Commission, Department of Transportation and other agencies assisted federal efforts to identify critical infrastructure facilities within the Commonwealth;
- The Department of Health developed, implemented and expanded "Fax Blast" and e-mail capabilities in order to provide advisories and other information to the Healthcare and First Responder communities;
- The Attorney General and Commissioner of State Police initiated efforts to deter "hoax" threats against Pennsylvania's schools, business and governmental facilities;
- The Department of Health laboratory in southeastern Pennsylvania expanded hours to accommodate state and federal analysis needs in dealing with a large number of suspected Anthrax threats;
- Purchases of protective equipment for all Troopers was completed by the State Police;
- The staff of the Department of Environmental Protection worked with water suppliers to distribute information and guidance on security and the opportunities for training.
- Pennsylvania National Guard troops and Pennsylvania State Police troopers were deployed to nuclear power plants and airports to bolster security.
- The Governor specifically challenged the Task Force to identify recommendations by which the Commonwealth could be made even more secure in order to guarantee that Pennsylvania would provide maximum levels of safety for its citizens and retain its leadership position amongst the states.

The findings of the Task Force and key recommendations follow.

State and Local Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans

Emergency operations plans identify threats and vulnerabilities and the resources, procedures and processes by means of which incidents arising from those threats and vulnerabilities can be mitigated, responded to and recovered from.

Pennsylvania law requires all local and county governments to maintain up to date plans to address the range of threats and vulnerabilities identified as part of the planning process. At the state level, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency is tasked with the responsibility of maintaining plans to bring the resources of state and federal agencies to bear in response to disasters and attacks. This is in addition to PEMA's other proactive responsibilities in the areas of training, exercising, hazard mitigation and 911, among others.

In general, state and county response plans are adequate for the multi-hazard perils that traditionally plague the Commonwealth. Local plans, with exceptions, are alternately viewed as less useful and current. Businesses operating under state or federal oversight generally have adequate plans; others, generally, do not. At all levels, proper dynamic planning is essential and must include the fullest possible involvement by all affected or involved entities. In addition, individual agencies and businesses must ensure that adequate planning is done to ensure the continuity of both government and services.

- Each department and agency should assign a senior staff person full-time departmental responsibilities as emergency manager/planner. Each agency should develop a comprehensive emergency response plan that includes the resources and capabilities at the regional level and within special facilities under their jurisdiction. Each departmental plan and annex must include comprehensive implementing procedures that have been reviewed and tested.
- Plans should be developed based on the understanding that they will be implemented using Incident Command/Management System methodology.
- PEMA, working with the relevant agencies, should identify those critical care/infrastructure facilities that do not have emergency preparedness/response plans. A strategy should be developed to correct this condition.
- PEMA, working with other department and agencies, should develop a plan to create multi-agency Regional Incident Support Teams that can be dispatched to assist impacted counties with coordination and communications following a terrorist threat or event.
- The Governor should designate an agency to serve as the single point of contact for all terrorism-related matters.
- The development of all anti-terrorism-related educational other materials should be coordinated through a central clearinghouse.
- The state should consider providing assistance to the counties in the development and maintenance of comprehensive, county and municipal emergency response plans.

- The Governor should establish a state-level advisory committee to coordinate cross-agency activities related to Homeland Security in Pennsylvania. This committee should be chaired by the Governor, and comprised of the Attorney General, the Adjutant General, The Commissioner of State Police, the Director of the PA Emergency Management Agency, and other appropriate state officials.
- The state should explore the prototype program being developed in Westmoreland County to provide an emergency and disaster information center online that would provide information to any first responder, anywhere, on any type of emergency, simply by logging onto the Internet from the emergency site via a mobile data terminal or handheld internet device.
- County emergency preparedness and response plans should be reviewed to ensure that their content is current and includes participation by all pertinent county government programs and agencies.
- Municipal officials must work with state and county officials to ensure that local plans are current and comprehensive.
- Municipal emergency managers must identify all critical infrastructure facilities and ensure that coordinated emergency preparedness and response plans are in place. Regular exercise should be used to test the plans and train the staffs.
- Businesses should develop, maintain and coordinate a comprehensive emergency response plan that includes detailed information on terrorism. These plans must be coordinated with municipal and county emergency managers.
- Businesses and other facilities should review and update their pollution prevention and environmental emergency plans.

Encouraging Mutual Aid

Mutual aid is the system by which manpower, equipment, expertise, financial resources and leadership flow between units of government and between response agencies in times of crisis or emergency. Pennsylvania has a rich tradition of mutual aid spanning its fire, emergency medical, rescue, police and emergency management functions.

Provisions for the delivery of mutual aid are based on the recognition that no single entity, at certain times and under certain conditions, can always meet the demands placed upon it by emergencies and disasters. Absent mutual aid systems, each local government and public safety agency would require tremendous caches of equipment, enormous levels of funding and legions of personnel, most of which would be under-utilized on a daily or yearly basis.

Mutual aid in the commonwealth functions freely but is tenuously based on legal agreements and disparate models. Municipal-to-municipal agreements are most common, while agreements between counties and between counties and state agencies are less in evidence. Law enforcement mutual aid is furthered by statute; other mutual aid pacts are hindered by non-specific or absent laws.

- The state should create in legislation a statewide mutual aid program, which would establish that local emergency service units, when responding to an official request for assistance from either a 9-1-1 center or the county emergency management agency,

are responding under the provisions of the statewide mutual aid program and are therefore covered by the same personal and equipment protection in place for response within their designated primary service areas.

- County mutual aid agreements with state agencies should be explored.
- Pennsylvania should remain engaged in the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). EMAC is the national state-to-state mutual aid system.
- Intra-county agreements, to be signed by municipalities within the county as well as fire, rescue, public works, law enforcement and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) organizations should be explored.
- Specific law enforcement procedures and protocols that address inter- and intra-departmental response, investigation and prosecution of terrorist acts should be developed.

Critical Infrastructure Security

Critical infrastructure is a fixed asset or system possessed by the public or the private sector and used to provide a function or service of value that is so essential that its loss would affect the safety, security, economy and/or governance of society.

In today's Pennsylvania, critical infrastructure includes, among other items, water supplies and electrical generation stations, dams and bridges, roadways and airports, dockyards and communications centers, public-safety facilities and hospital systems, utility systems and computer-based services.

Lessening the chances that this infrastructure will be damaged or disrupted, planning for alternatives to its functions and ensuring its restoration if lost are essential components in providing for homeland security.

- Governments should continue to maintain and improve plans to ensure the continuity of government.
- The Department of Environmental Protection would develop a program through the Pennsylvania Senior Environment Corps to provide additional surveillance of public water supplies through a "water watch" program.
- The Public Utility Commission, in conjunction with the federal government, other state entities, and the private sector, should develop industry standards for the protection of utility infrastructure systems and assets.
- Plans for succession of agency chief executives should be well established and updated.
- Alternate operating facilities should be identified for all critical agencies.
- Appropriate security needs to be in place at all governmental facilities. Buildings should be remediated, where necessary, to incorporate more secure features. New buildings should be designed with security in mind.

- Governmental business continuity plans should be updated as necessary to remain current.
- The Department of General Services should lead a review of all Commonwealth facilities to identify security needs and offer agency executives recommendations for improvements.
- One hundred State Troopers should be added to the complement of the Pennsylvania State Police to meet the anticipated and emerging demands for law enforcement assistance.
- The state should provide planning templates for county and municipal governments to use in preparing emergency plans and procedures.
- The Commonwealth should consider new statutes to protect and secure critical infrastructures.
- Counties and municipalities should carefully review the emergency management structure within their political subdivisions to ensure adequate plans are in place for emergencies.
- Counties and municipalities should actively participate in the Regional Counter Terrorism Task Forces presently organized throughout the Commonwealth.
- Training should be provided for all personnel involved in providing protection of critical infrastructure.
- In light of recent terrorist events, all public safety agencies, including 911 centers, should reexamine the security precautions in place at their facilities to ensure the structures are as resistant as possible from unlawful intrusion.
- ESRI, Incorporated has donated its web-enabled software package to the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency to allow development of highly-complex data sets detailing the commonwealth's critical infrastructure and to share it over the internet, in a secure fashion, with law-enforcement, public-safety and emergency management organizations for both planning and response undertakings. This project should be completed in a timely fashion.

Emergency Response

Well-integrated, coordinated and tiered responses to terrorist incidents by public-safety, public works, investigative and recovery agencies ensure the most effective use of resources and provide the best opportunities to ensure safety and community recovery.

Pennsylvania is protected by thousands of fire, police, emergency medical and rescue organizations and, generally, these organizations function well. The vast majority of personnel staffing these organizations are volunteers. Whether career staff or volunteer, uniform, professional training is essential to the proper functioning of the response systems.

Equally important is the provision of specialized resources that support local, county and regional responses. Pennsylvania Task Force 1, the commonwealth's Urban Search and

Rescue (USAR) Team, is one important example of a specialized resource that can be dispatched in the event of a major collapse or rescue emergency.

Responses to widespread disasters and emergencies, including terrorist attacks, function best when provided in a tiered manner. Tiered response begins with the arrival of personnel with basic awareness levels and basic skills and escalate through additional levels to the point in the incident where highly-specialized technicians with sophisticated equipment augment the response.

- A tiered response system should be implemented across the commonwealth.
- Personnel should be adequately trained and equipped to allow them to do their jobs safely and effectively in responding to a weapons of mass destruction (WMD) event.
- The State Fire Academy should research a shortened version of USAR Operations level response training that would focus on safety and basic techniques.
- A comprehensive, multi-agency security system including the immediate physical cordoning of disaster sites, establishment of secured access points, and issuance of restricted area badges to authorized personnel should be considered.
- Each Regional Counter Terrorism Task Force should identify personnel with training and experience in large incident management and USAR operations for service on Regional Incident Support Teams (IST) and Rapid Assessment Support Teams (RAST). It is recommended that the state explore funding options for regional RAST and IST training for selected personnel.
- The commonwealth should consider providing, through PEMA and mutual aid, mobile Incident Support Units to assist in coordination and communication on the scene of attacks and disasters.
- Resource identification and organization should be performed through the nine (9) existing Counter Terrorism Task Forces in coordination with county emergency management and 911 agencies.
- A standardized database system should be developed that includes information on resources at the county, regional and state levels. This database would be referenced when PEMA receives a report of an escalating incident or a request for assistance. In addition, state RAST and IST elements would receive notification and deployment through this process.
- PA-TF1 should receive the necessary equipment and training required for certification as a Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) team.
- The USAR program at the state level should be augmented by one additional staff member to assist in coordination, research and training.
- A second USAR team should be considered, and, if approved, be fully equipped for deployment within the commonwealth.

Cyber Attacks

Increased reliance on computers and Internet technologies has sped the pace of development, improved information flows and enhanced services across Pennsylvania.

Today, computers play important roles as tools driving economic, manufacturing, service-delivery, defense and information operations. There is virtually no aspect of the day-to-day life of the commonwealth unaffected by the deployment of computers and their networks.

With this widespread deployment comes an expanding vulnerability to attack on this important infrastructure and an increased responsibility to protect it from intrusion, disruption and theft.

- Key Critical Information Infrastructure assets in the Commonwealth should be identified and categorized. All open-source information related to identified key assets should be in compliance with pertinent laws. Lists and other data related to key assets should be safeguarded.
- Establish a Pennsylvania Information Infrastructure Protection Center (PIIPC) to defend against, detect, and react to cyber attacks against information infrastructures that could threaten the delivery of critical safety, health, human, and economic services within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- A Statewide Computer Crimes Taskforce should be established to assist in the coordination of intelligence, training, investigations and prosecutions of cyber criminals.
- The PA State Police should create two Cyber Incident Response Teams to investigate cyber attacks.
- The creation of a multi-level public-private task force to coordinate activities to defend against, detect, and react to cyber attacks against information infrastructures should be encouraged.
- The physical security of telecommunications buildings and switching centers within state control should be ensured, and private entities should be encouraged to follow suit.

Biological Attacks

Attacks by biological means – bioterrorism – have already occurred in the United States. Since September, there are few Pennsylvanians unaware of Anthrax or unconcerned about the potentials for attacks by other bio-agents. The pre-hospital emergency medical system, the medical community, and public health agencies are on the front lines of the battle against such attacks.

These bioterrorism attacks are not exclusively urban, nor are they limited by geopolitical boundaries. It is a fact that such attacks may result in deaths, disfigurements, disabilities and the disruption of society. Troubling is the realization that bioterrorists may employ bacterial or viral agents with effects that are delayed, making prevention, response and recovery problematic. Clearly, the earlier an attack is detected the better the opportunity for successful interventions and treatment.

Early recognition and effective response to threats of bioterrorism depend upon a strong public health system reinforced, informed and guided by advanced detection and communications systems, carefully-developed response and treatment plans, and adequate resources.

- The commonwealth should initiative a review and, as needed, revision of current health statutes to address the areas of biological and chemical attacks and the potential needs for isolation, quarantine and other emergency measures.
- The establishment of a communication infrastructure linking the Department of Health and its District Offices, municipal and county health departments, the 16 regional EMS councils, hospitals, the National Laboratory System, health care facilities and other providers is recommended. Such a system should utilize the most advanced technology and communications network currently available to assure the immediate update of scientific information to both public and private sector personnel and community-based healthcare organizations.
- PEMA's emergency alert system capability should be assessed as a possible means of communicating urgent health information to the public.
- Rapid communication capability between human, animal and wildlife laboratories should be developed.
- Initiatives to recruit prioritized key non-physicians and to utilize volunteers and in response to a biological attacks should be developed.
- A statewide system for ongoing healthcare training covering all aspects of biological terrorism should be developed.
- Staff in behavioral health agencies should be trained on protocols for dealing with mass crisis intervention and victim assistance.
- Hospitals and other health care facilities should develop emergency protocols specifically designed for bioterrorist events, including protocols for patient care, staffing, resource conversion, security and a process for establishing alternative medical sites in cooperation with local and state government agencies and should actively participate in state, regional and local bioterrorism task forces and training.
- The Department Of Health must be prepared to grant regulatory exceptions to licensed entities as required to protect the public health.
- The Department Of Health, in cooperation with the Regional Counter-terrorism Task Forces, should develop protocols for the breakdown and distribution of bulk federal resources such as push-packs or pharmaceuticals.
- The Department of Agriculture should continue to provide information, training and technical assistance to farmers, agricultural producers and suppliers, food industry personnel, veterinarians and other agricultural industry members on biosecurity and the importance of strong surveillance, recognition, reporting and response systems for incidents of bio- and agro terrorism.
- Implementation of an integrated, statewide disease and syndromic reporting system should be completed.

- The capacity of the Department Of Health Laboratory to deal with biological and chemical threats should be assessed, and access to additional BSL 3 laboratory capacity should be facilitated. Emergency preparedness capabilities of other state and private sector laboratories should be assessed and cooperative relationships with laboratories in nearby states should be developed to provide a back-up capacity.
- Training programs for hospital, independent and pharmaceutical laboratories to prepare them to act as Level A laboratories should be implemented.
- The need for additional medical epidemiologists at both the state and local public health level should be assessed.
- The Departments of Health and Public Welfare should collaborate on developing programs that provide mental health, substance abuse or psychological/emotional services following disasters and terrorist attacks.
- A real-time database that includes public, private, and community-based organization sites in each county that could be activated within hours to administer vaccines and/or pharmaceuticals, that includes a vaccine and/or pharmaceutical software tracking system, and that inventories local hospitals, large refrigerated storage facilities, and refrigerated tractor-trailer vans that could be used to store or transport vaccines/medications should be created.

Chemical Attacks

The use of chemicals to attack civilian and military populations is nothing new. Widespread chemical attacks were undertaken during World War One; reports of attacks on civilian populations in recent conflicts in the Middle East are widespread. However, with the advances in the science of chemistry over the past quarter-decade, the range of potential chemical weapons has multiplied dramatically.

Pennsylvania has a system of hazardous materials response teams. These response teams were developed to counter the once-increasing number of industrial and transportation incidents resulting in chemical releases. This system, however, may be better-suited to a scenario involving a single, catastrophic event than to multiple, smaller attacks.

Federal statutes require emergency response personnel to receive training commensurate with their roles in the response system. Despite this statutory requirement, levels of training remain inconsistent. Training, equipping and organizing the Commonwealth's chemical response assets is of utmost importance.

- More training should be provided for Emergency Health Care Professionals (both pre-hospital and hospital), police and firefighters to ensure all have had, at a minimum, awareness level expertise. Training should include site-specific considerations at local chemical facilities as well as transportation-associated information pertinent to the locales.
- Training standards for emergency medical service (both pre-hospital and emergency department), police and firefighters who would be the first responders in a chemical attack emergency should be established.

- Training should be provided for employees of chemical manufacturers and distributors so they can assist offsite response to chemical attacks.
- Additional emergency response drills that involve chemical attack scenarios should be conducted.
- The development of an integrated and coordinated tactical operations specialist program should be considered to enhance current local, county, regional and state-level capabilities and provide specialized technical expertise on-scene in the initial two hours of an event.
- All first response organizations need to be equipped with sufficient personal protective equipment to permit their personnel to safely respond to a chemical attack. This should largely be accomplished using Office of Justice Program funding now flowing from the federal level as part of the commonwealth's overall counter-terrorism program.
- The need for specialized monitoring and analysis equipment should be assessed.
- Local governments and others should to be made aware of their ability to purchase emergency response equipment at lower costs through Pennsylvania's Department of General Services' contractual arrangements with the US Department of Defense.
- Information and technical assistance should be provided via fact sheets, guidelines and a website to assist small non-chemical businesses prepare for emergencies.
- Hospitals, small businesses and others need clear guidance on who to contact in the event of a chemical incident.
- Statewide scale exercises are necessary both to (1) assess the capability to handle multiple-small scale chemical events and (2) maintain the readiness of the system.
- An assessment of hospital capabilities to address chemical attacks should be undertaken.

Radiological/Nuclear Attacks

While the probability of a full-scale nuclear attack on the Commonwealth or our nation is remote, there is need to address the Commonwealth's readiness to deal with attacks on our nuclear power plants and on industries using nuclear materials and for attacks initiated by means of "dirty" nuclear devices, weapons combining traditional explosives with radioactive materials.

The Commonwealth's posture, centered on fixed facilities and limited transportation routes, must be expanded to address the potentials for these types of attacks.

- The security and safeguards regulations of commercial nuclear power plants are the exclusive authority of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission; however, it is recommended the NRC set specific standards for facility security to deal with terrorist and aerial attacks and for communicating those threats to the public.

- Plans, procedures, protocols and distribution of information to address security events at nuclear power plants should be regularly reviewed and updated involving local, state and federal responders.
- An adequate inventory of civil defense radiation monitoring equipment should be maintained by PEMA.
- The Bureau of Radiation Protection's present radiological environmental surveillance program should be expanded to include major populated locales and remote areas.
- A program to inventory available private sector radiological personnel and assets throughout the state should be implemented.

Radio Communications Systems

Radio systems are among the key tools employed in responding to emergencies and disasters. While Pennsylvania has an impressive range of systems to support such responses, there is a dearth of fully integrated systems that allow responders and commanders from different agencies and locales to effectively communicate and coordinate activities.

The Public Safety Radio Project, a commonwealth initiative to provide a common communications platform for more than twenty state agencies, affords the emergency response community opportunity to realize its goal of using a system that permits voice and data communications capable of spanning the geography of Pennsylvania.

Moreover, other communications systems, such as the Emergency Alert System, must be upgraded to provide warning and information to the general population and to provide facilities for secure communications in times of emergency.

- The completion of the Public Safety Radio Project should continue to be expedited, and regulatory, legal and construction relief, as required, should be provided.
- All certified HAZMAT teams should be required to have radios intrinsically safe pursuant to ANSI standards and at least one or two of these safe radios be recommended for use in every emergency response organization.
- The Emergency Alert System (EAS) should be upgraded by providing for satellite-based activation of the state's 23 secondary, or alternate, warning points in order that alerts are simultaneously received and rebroadcast more rapidly.
- National Alert and Warning System (NAWAS) circuits and equipment should be provided in PEMA's three regional offices, at the State Police headquarters and at the National Guard Emergency Operations Center.
- PEMA should ensure sufficient staffing is in-place to provide maintenance of its EAS, NAWAS, satellite-based, automated warning, and data communications support systems.
- A mobile, satellite uplink capability for telephone and data communications to support disaster operations or catastrophic events where the immediate need for telecommunications and data is required for sustained operations should be considered.

- Provision of backup generators, video surveillance, sound surveillance and audible alarms at designated, primary communications sites should be considered.
- Act 78 regulations for 911 centers should be amended to require that all public safety answering points incorporate transmit, receive and electronic crosspatch capabilities on the National Emergency Police Frequency.
- VHF base stations and electronic crosspatch systems should be incorporated into the state radio project.
- Secure communications systems for the Governor and for all PEMA and Pennsylvania State Police headquarters should be provided.
- Security measures at all 911 public safety answering points, emergency operations centers and public safety towers should be assessed and strengthened where needed.
- Options permitting county and local governments to migrate to the new 800 MHz radio system, where practical, should be explored.

Training, Education and Outreach

Communication is essential when dealing with emergencies. It is important for us to know how the public receives important emergency information—how the news gets to them, what the message should be, and how we can improve the communication chain.

Education for first responders, community leaders, families and others in plans, procedures and skills required to meet the challenges of terrorism is essential and will require reinvestment in local and statewide programs once closely identified with the former Civil Defense programs of the Cold War era.

These initiatives must be combined with greatly enhanced opportunities for training and education of first-response personnel so that the challenges of the terror threat can be effectively and adequately addressed.

Family preparedness measures include conventional programs, offered by various agencies such as the American Red Cross, American Heart Association, local YMCA and YWCA facilities and others. Included are basic and advanced first aid, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and automatic external defibrillation (AED) courses, to name a few. Augmented by programs instructing family members on emergency notification, fire alarm escape planning and basic WMD awareness, these core programs can provide the functional foundation for greatly enhanced preparedness.

In addition, the national Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program offers an excellent opportunity to focus non-traditional volunteers on essential post-disaster roles by offering organization and training for civilians.

Pennsylvania is blessed and enriched by the dedication and sacrifice of the men and women of its fire, rescue, emergency medical and law enforcement communities. They are the thin line that defends our citizens and communities from the threats of terrorism, natural disasters and other emergencies.

It is essential that these first responders be fully aware of the dangers of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) attacks and that they possess the skills and knowledge required to work effectively and safely in the event of such incidents.

- PEMA's rumor control hotline should be available when the state Emergency Operations Center has not been activated but information coordination is warranted.
- A Joint Information Center to coordinate all state government news and public information related to terrorist attacks should be created and located adjacent to the state's Emergency Operations Center.
- Training and instruction in terrorism awareness and safety among first responders, community leaders and the general public should be emphasized.
- Family preparedness programs, incorporating existing programs of the American Red Cross, American Heart Association and others, should be emphasized and coordinated.
- PEMA, the Office of the State Fire Commissioner, the Department of Health and the Department of Environmental Protection should cooperate to provide online and distributed programs to afford flexibility in training for first-response personnel.
- The State Fire Academy, in cooperation with the Department of Health and the PA State Police, should update and deliver improved WMD Awareness and Technician Level programs that incorporate the lessons learned from the attacks in New York and Virginia.
- The delivery of Unified Command System classes should be increased by delivering the updated program in each of the commonwealth's counties using existing faculty as primary and secondary instructors.
- Two hundred local offerings of a special 1.5 hour terrorism awareness and safety program should be provided.
- The materials and instructional support documents for the six National Fire Academy programs dealing with WMD and terrorism should be reproduced and made available for use.
- Nine deliveries of the special, 40-hour WMD program for first-response officers should be provided.
- The fire academy staff should be augmented with nine (three in each region) field instructors/master trainers who will function under the supervision of the academy's Regional Supervisors to speed delivery of WMD programs.
- The development of Community Emergency Response Teams should be encouraged and supported.
- Volunteer recruitment for public safety and community response organizations must be encouraged.
- At least one Weapons of Mass Destruction exercise, incorporating all aspects of the response system, should be conducted in each county each year.

- Support to counties should be considered to assist in the development and coordination of programs for both the public and first response sectors.

Task Force Members

Deputy Sheriff Brian S. Copley, Erie County Sheriff's Office
Lt. Fred Endrikat, Philadelphia Fire Department
Col. Paul J. Evanko, Commissioner, Pennsylvania State Police
Hon. General Mike Fisher, Attorney General of the Commonwealth
Hon. David E. Hess, Secretary, Department of Environmental Protection
Major General William B. Lynch, The Adjutant General, Dept. of Military & Veterans Affairs
Rich Matason, Director, Westmoreland County Department of Public Safety
Hon. Luis A. Mendoza, Member, Lancaster City Council
Hon. Jeffrey E. Piccola, Member, The Senate of Pennsylvania
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