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The Pennsylvania Region 13 Emergency Task Force is responsible for coordinating emergency preparedness and response in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Its membership includes the Emergency Management Coordinators of 13 counties and the City of Pittsburgh plus representation from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The Institute of Politics and Region 13 plan to make updates to this guide as warranted by new developments. If you would like to be placed on a list to receive notification of these updates, contact the Institute at **412-624-1837** or **iopadmin@pitt.edu**.

Electronic versions of this guide can be found at **www.iop.pitt.edu** and will be updated with any changes.

You may also receive additional copies of this guide at no charge (while supplies last) by contacting the Institute.



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INTRODUCTION

This *Public Officials Emergency Resource Guide* was originally published in 2006 by the Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Policy Committee of the University of Pittsburgh Institute of Politics in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Region 13 Emergency Task Force. As the incoming cochairs of this committee, we would like to commend the outgoing cochairs, State Senator John Pippy and Pennsylvania Securities Commissioner Tom Michlovic, for their leadership in the creation of this guide.

We intend to revise the guide every three years. As a result, we are providing local governments throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania with copies of the revised pages. If you are receiving the revised pages but do not have a full hard copy of the 2006 guide and wish to obtain one, please contact the Institute of Politics at 412-624-1837 or iopadmin@pitt.edu.

Municipal and county elected officials have several important responsibilities related to emergency preparedness and response. They are required to:

- Receive training in the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Elected officials may tend to think that this level of detail can be left to the professionals, but it is essential that officials understand communications and know what actions will be taken in an actual emergency.
- Appoint an Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC).
- Designate an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and equip it for use in an emergency situation.
- Ensure that their governments have an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) in place and that their EMCs are receiving appropriate training.
- Ratify a declaration of a local disaster emergency.

In addition, public officials are encouraged to remain constantly in readiness for emergencies through such actions as participating in disaster simulation exercises, reviewing emergency response procedures, and keeping key personnel's contact information at their fingertips.

The purpose of this *Public Officials Emergency Resource Guide* is to acquaint public officials briefly with their roles and responsibilities in emergency management. It covers key issues in emergency preparedness and response and discusses actions that may need to be taken during an emergency incident or in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. This handbook is not intended to supersede or serve as an Emergency Operations Plan; it is not an all-inclusive guide to emergency operations. Rather, it seeks to assist public officials in ensuring that effective emergency preparedness procedures are in place and in responding effectively should an actual emergency occur. In addition, this handbook contains a pocket-size pamphlet with essential "first steps" information for public officials should an emergency occur.

In a disaster or emergency situation, you may be held responsible for the decisions you and your appointed professionals make, as well as for how thoroughly your community was prepared. Citizens will call on you for guidance, assurance, and leadership. Few of them worry about emergencies during normal times, but if an emergency occurs, they will expect you to be ready. It is our hope that this guide will help you to make sure that you and your emergency management staff are well prepared.



Timothy Solobay
Member
Pennsylvania House of Representatives



Randy Vulakovich
Member
Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Cochairs, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Policy Committee, Institute of Politics

“The Institute of Politics and the Region 13 Emergency Task Force have created an outstanding resource to help all public officials become familiar with their responsibilities in times of emergency. The entire guide is thorough, reader-friendly, and practical. From assessment and disaster checklists to information about up-to-date legislation, this guide provides many of the tools necessary to plan for and respond to an emergency. Every public official should consult it in order to ensure that his or her community is prepared.”

Tim Rogers

Manager, Shaler Township

Emergency response planning should build on existing relationships among these organizations to develop clear understandings as to the authority and responsibilities each entity will carry in an actual emergency.

In addition, municipal leaders should be familiar with the county's emergency response personnel and capacities, and county leadership in turn should be integrated with the commonwealth's homeland security structure.

MUTUAL AID AGREEMENTS

Many emergencies will overburden the response capacity of the municipality in which they occur or may call for specialized response capability not available in that municipality. For these reasons, local jurisdictions are encouraged to enter into mutual aid agreements so as to enhance their response and recovery capabilities. As suggested in the previous section, mutual aid is not limited to agreements between jurisdictions; it also may include agreements with private entities, such as the American Red Cross, so as to facilitate the timely delivery of needed assistance when an incident occurs.

At a minimum, mutual aid agreements should include definitions of key terms used in the agreement; roles and responsibilities of each party; recognition of each party's qualifications, certifications, and resources; procedures for requesting and providing assistance; procedures for payment, reimbursement, and allocation of costs; notification procedures; protocols for interoperable communications; relationship to other mutual aid agreements in which each party participates; and treatment of liability, immunity, and workers' compensation issues.

In 2007, State Senator John Pippy (R-Allegheny, Washington) and State Representative Paul Costa (D-Allegheny), with the assistance of the Institute of Politics, Region 13, and PEMA, drafted legislation clarifying issues that arise when a local government facing an emerging situation calls for aid from neighboring governments. On October 8, 2008, this bill was approved by Governor Edward G. Rendell, becoming known as Act No. 93.

This bill establishes a clearly defined system of statewide mutual aid in which local governments are automatically part of the mutual aid system unless they vote to opt out of it. In the event that an emergency overstrains the response capacity of a municipality in which it occurs, this bill provides guidelines for how to provide/receive assistance and share resources among participating political subdivisions.

The terms of this bill include the creation of a mutual aid committee, made up of state, regional, and local officials as well as emergency responders, to oversee the execution of a statewide mutual aid system. (As of summer 2009, PEMA was in the process of assembling this committee.) The bill also provides a list of responsibilities by which each of the participating political subdivisions must abide. It states that the municipality receiving assistance must reimburse the responding entity in accordance with procedures established by the committee. Finally, the bill defines insurance coverage and workers' compensation issues, stating that a responding political subdivision shall provide appropriate workers' compensation insurance protection for municipal employees and volunteers who provide mutual aid to a neighboring community.

This cooperation will provide more resources for response and recovery in emergency situations, along with much-needed liability protection for responding entities. The Institute of Politics and Region 13 encourage emergency response stakeholders to review Act 93 carefully.

TRAINING

Training at various levels is essential to emergency preparedness. Emergency Management Coordinators and other key response personnel should participate in ongoing professional development. EMCs also should be involved in countywide emergency response meetings and training activities. At least once a year, each local jurisdiction should hold a realistic exercise designed to test various agencies' responses and how the agencies interface with each other. The agencies should also participate in larger, multiple-jurisdiction exercises such as those held periodically in the city of Pittsburgh.

Public officials are expected to receive training in the National Incident Management System (NIMS). They also should ensure that EMCs and other staff are pursuing appropriate course work and staging suitable practice exercises. Whenever possible, public officials should participate in the exercises themselves. NIMS training is crucial in enabling public officials to understand preparedness requirements, terminology, means of communication, and the rules of engagement in emergency situations. Municipalities not in compliance with NIMS standards may compromise their eligibility for federal disaster recovery funds.

PEMA provides certification training and ongoing professional education for emergency management professionals. These training curricula are constantly being updated, and interested officials should contact PEMA directly for more details. Emergency management coordinators are required to participate in PEMA training; public officials are encouraged to do so.

COMMONWEALTH AND FEDERAL LAWS

The main law governing local emergency management in Pennsylvania is the Emergency Management Services Code of 1978. Chapter 75 of the code covers most of the local issues discussed in the preceding sections of this handbook, such as the need for an Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC), certification and training of the EMC, the responsibility to prepare an Emergency Operations Plan and establish an Emergency Operations Center, participation in drills and exercises, and agreements among political subdivisions. It also authorizes municipalities to declare a local disaster emergency. As of this writing (summer 2009), legislative review and amendment of the Emergency Management Services Code was anticipated in fall 2009 or 2010.

Other important commonwealth laws related to emergency management are the Pennsylvania Radiation Protection Act (Act 147 of 1984) and the Pennsylvania Hazardous Material Emergency Planning and Response Act (Act 165 of 1990).

At the national level, the Federal Civil Defense Act, originally designed as war-preparedness legislation, was subsequently amended to support the development and maintenance of an all-hazards approach to emergency management. The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act provides for federal assistance to state and local governments after a disaster. Title III of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986 covers emergency planning and right-to-know issues related to hazardous materials.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS RESOURCES

The 911 telephone system is the front line in emergency communications across Pennsylvania. Calls to this three-digit number reach trained operators who can direct calls to police, fire, or medical dispatchers as appropriate. Although some municipalities maintain separate systems, in most cases 911 systems have been consolidated at the county level.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's statewide radio network, PA-STARNet, is available to assist in communication needs during emergency situations. Specific applications include communications in the field, communications among local and state first responders, and communications between counties that might be operating on different radio systems.

Communications in the Field. During extended emergency situations, county radio systems may be overwhelmed, resulting in communication delays and clogged radio channels. In these cases, the state radio system offers a valuable alternative means of communication. Each county 911 center has a PA-STARNet control station, and all nine Regional Counter-Terrorism Task Forces (RCTTFs) have caches of 800 MHz radios that can operate on the state network. During an emergency, these radios can be used to supplement communications in the field and take the strain off the local radio system for as long as the emergency condition might last.

Communications among Local and State First Responders. The control station in each county's 911 center can be used to coordinate resources between any statewide first responder, such as the Pennsylvania State Police, and local emergency responders. The state police have an interoperability coordinator assigned to work with county 911 centers on how the center can communicate and coordinate with the state police if needed. Currently, this person is Captain Adam Kisthardt, director of the Dispatch Operations Division, Statewide Radio Implementation and Interoperability Office. His e-mail address is akisthardt@state.pa.us and his phone number is 717-214-0073.

Communications between Counties with Disparate Radio Systems. Because every county 911 center has a state radio, this radio can be used to communicate between 911 centers if the county radio systems cannot communicate with one another. Communications can be routed between 911 centers on the state system and then relayed down and up through their respective radio systems to achieve a level of interoperability using the state system as a bridge between two or more 911 centers, which might be sending resources to the same incident.

The ability to handle any emergency, of course, depends on proper planning before the actual emergency occurs. Communications over the state radio network with state first responders must be considered in advance so as to resolve issues such as what talk groups, call signs, and command-and-control protocol will be used. Procedures detailing how communications between 911 centers will occur must be specified, documented, and practiced. Municipal officials and emergency personnel should work through their county 911 centers to participate in the development of plans for state radio system use.

County 911 centers also have access, through the state radio system, to many state resources as well as to more than 200 hospitals across the state. To facilitate these connections in emergency situations, an agreement should be reached with the particular state agency or other entity as to how communications will occur.

The commonwealth has two interoperability coordinators who can assist counties in developing interoperable communication plans and in setting up meetings with appropriate state agencies to facilitate protocols for interoperable communications. For assistance from these coordinators or with any questions, county or municipal staff may contact the Pennsylvania Office of Public Safety Radio Services. Staff contact information is available at www.radio.state.pa.us.

ALWAYS BE PREPARED

Emergencies don't wait for you to be ready before they happen; you need to be ready at all times. For this reason, you should carry a list of the phone numbers (including cell phone numbers) of key emergency contacts at all times. These contacts/numbers should include the EMC, EOC, mayor or county executive, fire department, police department, health department, emergency medical services, communications director, and utilities. Page 17 of this document and the accompanying pocket guide provide space for you to write down these and other key phone numbers for your location.

COMMONWEALTH

Office of the Governor

Web site: www.governor.state.pa.us

Phone: 717-787-2500

Pennsylvania Office of Homeland Security

Web site: www.homelandsecurity.state.pa.us

Phone: 717-651-2715

Pennsylvania Department of Health

Web site: www.health.state.pa.us

Phone: 1-877-PA-HEALTH (1-877-724-3258)

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

Web site: www.agriculture.state.pa.us

Phone: 717-787-4737

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

Web site: www.dep.state.pa.us

Phone: 412-442-4000 (Southwest Regional Office)

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency

Web site: www.pema.state.pa.us

Phone: 717-651-2007 (Harrisburg); 724-357-2990 (Western Region Office)

Emergencies: 717-651-2001

Pennsylvania State Police

Web site: www.psp.state.pa.us

Phone: 717-508-0033

Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General

Web site: www.attorneygeneral.gov/

Phone: 717-787-3391

ReadyPA

Web site: www.readypa.org

Phone: 1-888-9-READYPA (1-888-973-2397)

FEDERAL

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Web site: www.hhs.gov

Phone: 1-877-696-6775

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Web site: www.cdc.gov

Phone: 1-800-232-4636

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Web site: www.dhs.gov/xprepresp (Preparedness, Response & Recovery)

Phone: 202-282-8000

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Web site: www.fema.gov

Phone: 1-800-621-3362

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Web site: www.fbi.gov; pittsburgh.fbi.gov

Phone: 412-432-4000 (Pittsburgh Office)

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Web site: www.usda.gov

Phone: 202-720-3631

U.S. Department of Justice

Web site: www.usdoj.gov

Department of Justice Main Switchboard Phone: 202-514-2000

U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Pennsylvania

Web site: www.usdoj.gov/usao/paw

Phone: 412-644-3500

INTERNATIONAL

World Health Organization

Web site: www.who.int/topics/emergencies/en

DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

Allegheny County Department of Emergency Services. 2004.
Elected officials handbook.

Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. 2005.
Standing together: An emergency planning guide for America's communities.
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Guidelines for Local Emergency Management Directors
www.maine.gov/tools/whatsnew/attach.php?id=15039&an=1

National Governors Association. 2002.
A governor's guide to emergency management.
www.nga.org/cda/files/GOVSGUIDEHS2.pdf

Prince William County (Va.) Office of Emergency Management. 2008.
Elected officials' guide to emergencies and disasters.
www.vml.org/WNEW/06DisasterGd/06DisasterGuideWeb.pdf

Salt Lake County (Utah) Fire Department Emergency Services Bureau. 2001.
Public officials handbook for emergency management.
www.saltlakefiredistrict.org/pdf/govofficial2.pdf

State of Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security. 2008.
Emergency preparedness guide for elected officials.
www.bhs.idaho.gov/Pages/ElectedOfficials.aspx

Washington State Emergency Management Association. 2003.
Elected officials guide to emergency management.
www.mrsc.org/Subjects/PubSafe/emergency/em101offguide.pdf