



Catastrophic Response

Coordination | Communication | Unity of Effort

Working together makes us stronger

www.regionalcatplanning.org

The range of natural and man-made threats we face when combined seems small when compared with the threat of nuclear detonation. This “mother of all disasters” would bring instantaneous death and destruction on an almost unimaginable scale. The good news (if there can be good news) is that the nature of the threat has changed. As the Regional Integration Center (RIC) Improvised Nuclear Device (IND) Planning Team describes in this newsletter, the modern version of Cold War “mutually assured destruction” is a low-yield improvised device, the impacts of which would be survivable, possibly even manageable. This “manageability” is the focus of our Regional IND Response Plan. Its mission is nothing less than to immediately gather, organize, and effectively employ available personnel, materials, and equipment from the region, the country, and the world.

EXEC'S PODIUM

Partnerships, Technology and Resilient Communities

ADAM R. HUTTER, PH.D. – *DIRECTOR, National Urban Security Technology Laboratory, U.S. Department of Homeland Security*



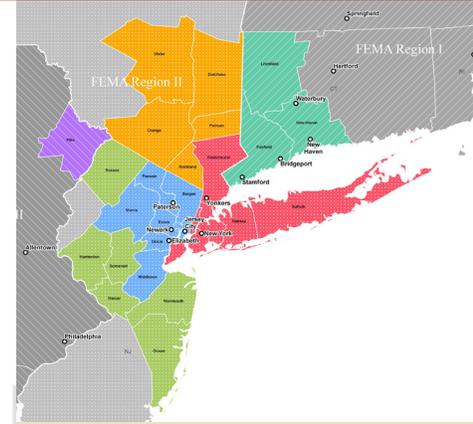
Astrophysicist Carl Sagan said “We’ve arranged a civilization in which most crucial elements profoundly depend on science and technology.” For homeland security purposes, we are reliant on technology to allow us to detect and quantify what we can’t otherwise see, to understand threats and potential consequences, and to communicate more effectively, just to name a few benefits. Specifically, we have very sophisticated radiation detection technologies that have significantly moved us far forward from Robert Oppenheimer’s solution to nuclear security of a screwdriver to open every container. Scientifically rigorous studies have shown that sheltering in place for several hours following a nuclear attack can potentially save hundreds of thousands of lives. The technologies inherent in social media will, I am convinced, play an astonishingly important role in mitigating the effects of a disaster. These and a myriad of other technologies are essential tools in preventing, interdicting, responding, and recovering.

Nonetheless, technology is but a part of the solution. People and partnerships are the keys to being prepared and to making our communities resilient following a catastrophic event.

Technology development can be a brutally slow and frustrating process. Fortunately, in the homeland

security arena, partnerships have matured faster than technologies. For example, grants issued to individual agencies have evolved into city-wide collaborations and to truly regional partnerships that match, geographically, the scale of catastrophic events. Even as catastrophic events are regional in size, they can and will become national problems. So, the maturation of the homeland security enterprise is the involvement of not just governments at the federal, state, local, and tribal levels, but the inclusion and partnering with private industries, universities, non-governmental organizations, and private citizens.

By their very nature, catastrophes overwhelm the resources put in place to prepare for them. However, thoughtful and dedicated planning that is inclusive of the whole community, and that includes key roles for the smart uses of technology, will lead to fewer injuries, fatalities, and a quicker return to normalcy after a disaster. Recognizing that few plans are ever perfectly executed, such planning is nonetheless important, especially when the partnerships broaden and deepen the relationships of those involved and affected. The Regional Catastrophic Planning Team (RCPT) does just that, and their work will significantly benefit the response and recovery following a natural or intentional disaster.



NEWS

October 11th and 13th the Regional Catastrophic Planning Team (RCPT) supported FEMA RII at their Regional Interagency Steering Committee and Regional Advisory Council meetings. A series of facilitated discussions demonstrated how the federal, state, and local response comes together to support incident operations. In a Radiological Dispersal Device (RDD) event the locals will expect FEMA to coordinate all federal response assets into the affected state, tribal, and local governments and they will expect federal agencies to be “all in.” With the Federal Integration Plan (FIP) as the backdrop, the RCPT facilitators put the emergency managers in the middle of a catastrophic RDD job and elicited from them their first thoughts and actions as they would work in a real world RDD event to bring order to the chaos.



October 13th FEMA RII RAC discussion facilitated by NYC OEM Deputy Commissioner McKinney

CATASTROPHIC QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

“In any disaster ... it is going to get worse before it gets better.”

— Jake Cooper, Deputy Commissioner, NYC Office of Emergency Management

Building Silos for Silos

There's a regional catastrophe with thousands dead or injured. Infrastructure is damaged, evacuation routes are jammed, and resources must get to the affected area. You need one thing: actionable information to give your Mayor or Governor so that he or she can make informed decisions and direct partners on what to do and how to help. Your Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated and staff are pulling whatever incident information they have from your incident management system. But there is no information because you're in Jersey City, NJ, while the incident is in Bridgeport, CT, and each city uses different systems that can't share information. It will take hours to gather meaningful information through phone calls and emails, and the only way you know what's going on is by watching the news. Your resources could be helping right now, but you have no information telling you what is needed.

For over a year, our region has been struggling to find ways to get our existing incident management systems in the region (ETeam, WebEOC, Knowledge Center, and DLAN) to share information. The federal government has at least a half-dozen projects which all claim to be the solution for information sharing. There are hundreds of vendor-based "solutions." While these different projects understand the informational need, none can yet help emergency managers do the job. Each of these projects sits in a silo, marketed independently as the "solution" for information sharing. Let's more accurately label these "solutions"—they are a reason to keep unnecessary and duplicative programs alive at the expense of focus on an actual solution, while causing confusion among potential end users. We can't solve information sharing by building new silos for our silos.

There are several steps we must take to solve this problem:

- Our vendors must adopt Emergency Data Exchange Language (EDXL) quickly and commit to supporting an information-sharing standard for the future.
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS) must support these vendors by continuing their support of standards, including building their own information-sharing tools to meet the standards they themselves are developing.
- The region needs to agree to have each vendor build our common dashboard regardless of the system.

Once accomplished this will greatly improve how we do our job. We may not capture every single piece of data we want, but having a dashboard of critical information shared by everyone throughout the region is the first step in making informed decisions. The old way of seeing the job doesn't work any more, and it won't work in a catastrophe.



GET INVOLVED

RCPGP NATIONAL PLANNING WORKSHOP

Attend the Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program National Planning Workshop December 12–13 in New York City.

For additional information go to <http://rcpgp.eventbrite.com> or contact jbrandt@regionalcatplanning.org.

Catastrophic but Survivable

The detonation of an Improvised Nuclear Device (IND) is, without a doubt, a worst case scenario for the NY-NJ-CT-PA Region – catastrophic and devastating in every imaginable way. But, outside of the initial blast it is a survivable event. The abundance of IND planning guidance and scientific modeling emphasizes that if a person is not killed immediately by the blast, he or she can survive. Yet comprehensive IND response plans have not been developed. This short-sighted omission in emergency planning exists because emergency planners have long assumed that most people would perish in an IND detonation, so there would be no point in planning a response. It is imperative that emergency management leaders recognize and communicate the importance of planning for an IND response. Advance planning will save hundreds of thousands of lives.

The sheer magnitude of a response to an IND can seem insurmountable for an emergency manager. However, emergency managers can

anticipate many of the hazards caused by an IND detonation using *National Planning Scenario 1*, a detonation of an IND at ground level producing a 10 kiloton yield. While pre-scripting detailed tactical response operations would be imprudent, emergency managers and government executives can break down the enormous response required into manageable pieces by outlining initial command and coordination actions and designing an integrated response focused on the key principles of the Incident Command System. This type of planning allows the region to share a common operating picture, leverage existing emergency plans, and create a true regional capability.

The region must rally to plan, prepare, and train to ensure survival and recovery from an IND detonation. Through this coordinated planning effort, the region will not only bolster its ability to respond to a devastating attack of terrorism, but also any catastrophe that may occur.

Components of a Regional IND Response Plan

The primary task for emergency managers following an Improvised Nuclear Device (IND) detonation in the New York metropolitan area will be the management of a large, complex, multi-government response organization. Local jurisdictions will be immediately overwhelmed and regional assistance will fall short of the resources needed to implement a comprehensive response. As soon as news reports of an IND detonation hit the airwaves, response units, personnel, and assets from around the country will self-deploy to the area to assist. While broad national assistance in the early phase of operations will be needed and welcomed, managing such a diverse resource and response pool will place an enormous burden on the local incident management organization.

The region's comprehensive IND Plan will be built on the principle that both policy and operational decisions are based on incident specifics. The Plan will build a response structure that can grow quickly while it maintains the ability to make informed policy and operational decisions. It will also need to take into account the varied capabilities and limitations of an ever-growing asset pool. Designating regional resource collection points and staging areas is a prime example of



RIC IND Planning Team (l-r) Stevenson, Smith, and Amir

pre-scripted executive decision-making that can facilitate organizational control in the face of an incident with the magnitude and complexity of an IND detonation. A response structure capable of having many different kinds of assets plug in and start working immediately is a key component of the regional IND Plan, one that will allow multiple jurisdictions to work together to achieve common objectives.

Although incident specific details will ultimately drive operations, there is plenty of planning work that can be done in advance to develop a response structure to process IND incident-specific information and produce actionable policy and operational decisions.