

Summary

Post Katrina Stakeholders Session on EMAC (Emergency Management Assistance Compact)

Virginia Department of Emergency Management

**January 31, 2006
Charlottesville, Virginia**

Present

- Participants – Bill Berthrong, Doug Boggs, Robert Bragg, Rick Burch, Robert Creecy, Kent Doane, Frank Edwards, Ed Elliott, Bob Griffin, Scott Hechler, Willie Howlett, Kevin McGee, Bill Mackay, Mark Morton, Tom Phalen, Paul Pokorski, Robert Rending, A. Earl Sharp, Gene Stockton, James Talbot, Charles Werner, and Jack Williamson
- VDEM staff – Cindi Causey, Stan Crigger, Kenny Hayes (resource person), Anna McRay, Al Pace, Ray Parker, and Bruce Sterling
- Facilitator – Kathryn Burruss, Recorder – JoAnn Maher

Goal: To strengthen Virginia's plans relative to the EMAC so the problems raised by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on the Gulf Coast states would not be an issue in the Commonwealth in the event of similar occurrences in or near the Commonwealth.

Objectives:

1. Review current plans relative to the EMAC in the event of a disaster
 2. Review the list of issues identified by participants prior to the session
 3. Identify any additional issues
 4. Identify how VDEM can address the issues in future planning activities
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Orientation

The facilitator reviewed the session objectives along with the planned process and a list of participation guidelines. Introductions were made. It was noted that VDEM staff with the exception of the persons that were serving as resource persons were present as observers. The purpose of the session was to solicit input from stakeholders outside of the Department of Emergency Management.

Review of Issues

Prior to the session, stakeholders identified the following issues of concern:

1. Need for EMAC training and familiarity
2. Need to accelerate the provision of resources
3. Reduction of competitiveness of participation
4. Development of a statewide standardized “team” base
5. Development of regionally based teams
6. Development of a resource needs list for deployment
7. State to bear deployment cost directly
8. Need for direct liaison with requesting jurisdictions
9. Better access to EMAC requests
10. Review of the “bid system” of tasking
11. Pre-positioning and pre-nomination of teams/responses
12. Incoming EMAC administration/coordination

Kenny Hayes presented an overview of what the existing Virginia plan states relative to EMAC. Questions were taken for clarification. The facilitator asked if there were other issues/concerns that needed to be acknowledged.

Additional Concerns/Ideas

When asked for additional concerns/ideas, participants used the opportunity to share experiences and insights as well as concerns relative to their involvement with the results of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The following information is listed in the order shared by participants:

1. Participants asked that a copy of the draft report from this meeting be circulated among them before the final report is distributed.
2. There is a need to have awareness training and specific training on EMAC for all.
3. It was suggested that information be sought from NEMA’s website.
4. Connect training (EMAC) with exercises
5. Piggy back training to NIMS training
6. Incorporate EMAC training into regional meetings
7. Look at other states’ plans—Illinois—they use integration, deploy within 24 hours, and have the governor’s support.
8. The process—many don’t understand it—it needs to be flowcharted and the scope of EMAC needs to be broadened.
9. Who needs to know about EMAC? Response: local government, local elected officials, not just emergency manager but all responders must know.
10. What is it? How does it work?
11. How: suggest a website to educate and access forms quickly
12. Future will include resource typing of equipment and people—need to stay on top of it and educate all about this
13. NIMS requires it

14. Gap between responsiveness and bureaucracy—look at how it can be narrowed, reduce flex time, look at process/steps, look at each step—are all necessary before deployment?
15. Fundamental problem is that it is too reactive—it waits for locals to decide what they need when they are knee deep in trouble.
16. Better mechanism is needed between states to pre-deploy—be proactive
17. Need to get states together to talk it over—other neighbor states can help plan for needs (those that are not affected)
18. Need to stage ahead of EMAC requests
19. The country has more knowledge than any one individual state—need to use the knowledge
20. EMAC should plan ahead—arrange who will help ahead of time/who will help whom
21. Some systems do work—best practices—look at good in Virginia as model
22. Problems is knowing what you will need and have ready a list of what we anticipate we will need
23. Need to establish relationships with neighbor states—more than one
24. Adopt a locality—one city adopt one locality in the troubled area
25. Rather than EMAC—Richmond formed a compact with 5 cities—its up to the responders to figure out needs (Captain Kirk approach) with no middle man such as the state
26. What should we do—fix EMAC, reinvent EMAC, or replace EMAC? Suggest we fix EMAC due to legal agreements already in place.
27. Need quick help while waiting for state/national help
28. Need to identify staging areas in Virginia to receive help from others
29. Inventory our own resources—decide what we need to protect—needs to be in place before event of trouble
30. EMAC doesn't consider regions—need to use the resources in the closest region first—create regions to draw from first, later move to broader area
31. We are spending unnecessary man-hours pulling teams together that are not used due to “proposal” not selected—you gear up and then don't go or you can wait days
32. Confusion—go/don't go or go soon/go later
33. Causes decrease in volunteers
34. Close gap in loop—know for sure if and when you will go—Frustration
35. Only so much prep time can be done before you are sure—can't authorize overtime
36. Resources get put to the side in anticipation of being called
37. Takes up to 24 hours to put team together and they don't know each other
38. Should identify team in advance
39. Need to know length of mission in advance—need concrete information
40. Where are they going, how long, what will they do? Paper work needs to be done.
41. Need universal liability forms—to be signed by appropriate local official (team members may change)
42. Need universal checklist—need food, water—can't assume you will get it—teams must be self-sufficient.
43. EMAC did state this—the hurry to get through paperwork, didn't read that this is necessary

44. EMAC mission should be received—what commander in local area often wanted were different things—breakdown between paperwork preparer and “boots on the ground” person.
45. “Boots on the ground” knows what is needed—maybe stage a Virginia person in troubled area to guide the missions—will really know needs and can tell EMAC
46. Need to be flexible to meet the local needs
47. Suggested regional teams be formed in advance and have 2 people per slot at least to be called upon—3 or 4 would be better
48. IMT concept is needed here as well as away
49. Need to regroup to consider finance issues
50. Time lag on reports is a problem—bogged down knowledge base of EMAC is low on a national level—they don’t understand either
51. Use “SALT” mechanism to determine needs
52. Troubled area people don’t like the competitive nature of EMAC missions either
53. How can we help with the paperwork? Automate, simplify, pre-done paperwork for established teams, have a member on a team who can help—subject matter expert from a non-stressed area
54. Northern Virginia example—set up incident support team, multi-jurisdictional in nature, determined key positions—functional approach, determined what would be needed in emergency, can share information on how they handled deployments, daily check-backs as example of other processes in place, state can look at and may want to adopt, best practices from actual experience
55. Need to standardize and use common terminology
56. You can make a specific state request thru EMAC—can bring in people you know to work with
57. This might under cut the state’s efforts—if 2 want to only work with each other—it draws away from others who may be more in need
58. Need overall communications systems—SALT is just a part—how do we do this—mandatory training especially for possible teams who will be deployed, need team development, don’t restrict training to regular EOC staff but train all possible help, and include trainings in exercises
59. Need to have a standard check-off list so you request all of the help you need. If you request “a truck” you won’t get a driver
60. Need to have EOC 24 hours a day
61. If we are to receive help, we would need much more help
62. Suggest we automate all possible items to help
63. Let people know if you don’t need any more help—look in one place to see all information—requests, open and filled
64. EOC staff needs to be very deep—many substitutes for regular staff—need many trained replacements
65. Incorporate EMAC into regular training in localities
66. Train all people to know what to ask for if we need help
67. EOC manager needs to know what all people in community/local government really need
68. Need to understand all phases of process including recovery
69. Look at COOP plans

70. Build on incident management process and NIMS
 71. Develop multidiscipline teams—include finance/all areas
 72. Develop IMT's for each region—all levels of government should be reached
 73. Department of Fire has proposed to Secretary Marshall that an IMT be established
 74. We need to focus today on pre-established teams that are “ready to grab” and resource pre-plan—know where the resources are
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Themes Identified

Following the above discussion, themes were identified and an attempt made to determine the appropriate actions that were needed to strengthen the Virginia Plan relative to EMAC. The themes and points to be considered in each included:

1. Training, Education, and Exercise
 - a. Preparation
 - b. Identification of the audience to be trained
 - c. Compatibility with other systems that are in place and working
 - d. Expectations
 - e. Cross-disciplines
 - f. Integration
 - g. Identification of costs
 - h. Delivery method
 - i. Timeline/cycle
 - j. Standards
 - k. Custodians of the program
 - l. Credentials

2. Administration
 - a. Automation and technology
 - b. Process flow
 - c. Staffing and capacity
 - d. Tracking resources
 - e. Priority of responding
 - f. Inclusiveness and the involvement of volunteers
 - g. Streamline process
 - h. Communications
 - i. Reimbursement process
 - j. Team development
 - k. Local government adopting
 - l. Stakeholders
 - m. Best Practices and evaluation
 - n. Review process

3. Deployment

- a. Local conditions update
- b. Needs determination
- c. Accurate situations status
- d. Tiered/layered response
- e. Direct liaison with local EOC
- f. Advance team
- g. Ability to deploy assets to private entities such as hospitals
- h. Liaison in receiving EOC
- i. Team concept
- j. Sustaining teams
- k. Continuum of aide
- l. Incident debriefing
- m. Response versus recovery
- n. Resource impact/depletion
- o. Volunteers as an asset
- p. Defined timelines
- q. Resource typing
- r. Family assistance to team members
- s. Home support team
- t. Integration across all boundaries

Suggested Action Steps

Following the identification of themes and points to be considered the participants identified the following actions steps:

Training, Education and Exercises

1. EMAC awareness is needed as well as exposure—what does a responder need to know?
2. Consider using current training venues, make it a module, and create training courses.
The structure is already in place, have levels of training.
3. Brief elected officials or CEO rather than expect them to take course
4. Need cultural shift to make it a priority by getting their attention—give them the funds or show them their vulnerability, get on the agenda of existing organizations to get the information out
5. Explore use of existing funding
6. Remember not all localities have enough funds for daily needs and not make this an additional burden

Administration

1. General
 - a. Needs to be NIMS compliant with national accepted standards
 - b. Process flow needs to be charted showing ALL STEPS
 - c. Document and publish the process flow for both the giving aide and receiving aide
 - d. Critical review of each step to streamline or eliminate
 - e. Try to get a balance of who responds
 - f. Identify resources available—inventory them and know in advance
 - g. Pre-formed teams
 - h. Look at standardization of regions—one stop shopping
 - i. Clarify what is reimbursable—a list of items—what is the process? Is backfill allowed? Need information

2. Team Development
 - a. Identify generic skills needed in response team
 - b. Define teams and skills sets for each
 - c. Standardize across states what a team consists of (or resources)
 - d. Regionalization of state/states
 - e. Offer to the closest unaffected region first and don't open to all—California is a model
 - f. Team development—internal—advanced credentialing
 - g. FRAC
 - h. Capacity/develop team and still maintain ability at home—need redundancy
 - i. Regional support—more than one locality to make up teams
 - j. Personalities need to be considered
 - k. Sustainability and the funds to support need to be found
 - l. Identify leaders of teams

3. Standardized Communications
 - a. Create template of communication
 - b. Compatible with national

4. Automation and Technology
 - a. Use it
 - b. State needs to be sure that those who use the technology are trained and have access
 - c. Get rid of paper and fax—standardize forms
 - d. The Attorney General have agreed upon language
 - e. Pull down menus are established to get to forms
 - f. Suggest “best practices” taskforce
 - g. Look at other states and industry
 - h. Passwords—Gordon and Pegasus

- i. Use technology to receive EMAC requests—maybe text messaging and SWAN may help
- j. Need paper back-up
- k. Need accessible website for requests and status

5. Staffing and Capacity

- a. Satisfied with state's increase in depth
- b. Make training available to achieve depth at local level
- c. Volunteers—need to research to be sure they have insurance coverage—locality must be willing to take them on

Deployment

1. Team concept

- a. No jurisdiction can sustain for a period of time such as Katrina—state needs to provide leadership to breakdown barriers between localities in forming teams
- b. Needs determination (incident debriefing)—set of steps need to be defined, don't get ahead of the process, process flow for deployment and for whole process

2. Sustaining team

- a. Need support from state, state have logistic supplies to draw from, need help with arrangements to deploy
- b. EMAC needs to be changed to recognize level of support needed
- c. Clarify state policy—the ability to deploy assets to private entities such as hospitals
- d. Make sure flow chart and training includes situations of deployment—let folks know that there will be “no Starbucks”
- e. Publish flow chart—make available and get local CAO's to sign off
- f. Consider how we will deal with logistics of being the receiving end

Next Steps

The state needs to put together a task force that is not limited by disciplines so that cross-discipline input is achieved. The task force should include those who need answers and those who have the answers. (Example: Richmond City) The Task Force would be used to provide guidance in strengthening the state's plan. When working with the state plan, the task force should work toward an outcome where standardization is in the forefront of training, education, exercise, administration, and deployment. Standardization to match everyone in and out of the state will make the effort more efficient. Deploying and receiving aide procedures should be the same when possible.

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February 9, 2006