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## Preparation For Terror Attacks Is Urged

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Terrorists may never view Connecticut as a strategic target. But an emergency management expert said Tuesday that the attacks of Sept. 11 and Monday's plane crash in New York underscore the need for local public safety groups to be prepared.

John Wiltse, director of the state Office of Emergency Management, told an audience at the University of Hartford that municipal preparedness is more important than ever.

"What you do to prepare for a terrorist event will prepare you for a more likely event of mass casualty, like a hurricane and catastrophic fire," Wiltse said.

Wiltse was one of several speakers Tuesday at the college's Konover Campus Center. Representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Rep. John B. Larson, D-1st District, also addressed an audience of about 35 local fire, police and emergency management officials.

Larson introduced a bill two weeks ago that would provide \$1.5 billion nationally for local strategic planning for police and fire departments. The money would be used to identify and close gaps in homeland security.

The bill awaits approval in Congress.

Some of the local officials told the congressman extra funding would help improve communications among police, fire departments and hospitals.

Wiltse said that even mass catastrophes have a silver lining.

"There are some side benefits: unprecedented cooperation, a renewed focus, a breaking down of barriers. If we can capitalize on that, we'll be a stronger state and a stronger nation. If we can't, then shame on us," Wiltse said.

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