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National Preparedness

# Smart Practices Spotlight

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## Response Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Erie County, New York

**Summary:** *After reviewing its emergency plans following the September 11 attacks, Erie County realized that to respond effectively to a large-scale disaster, the county's departments needed to better coordinate their emergency preparedness efforts. The next step was to establish the Erie County Response Readiness Emergency Preparedness Team, made up of the leaders of all the county's key departments.*

In the aftermath of September 11, a review of Erie County's emergency preparedness and response plans led officials to conclude that county departments needed to better integrate their plans and procedures for responding to major emergencies and disasters. This led to the creation of the Erie County Response Readiness Emergency Preparedness Team and, in time, a unified command structure for county emergency response operations.

The team established multi-disciplinary planning subcommittees to cover all critical areas – public health, emergency services, infrastructure protection and law enforcement. Their initial job was to do capability assessments. The next step: strategies to address areas that needed strengthening. And the subcommittees have reached out beyond Erie County, expanding the effort from a countywide initiative to a region-wide endeavor involving eight counties in western New York State.

For example, the focus on public health issues has led to an effort to build a regional public health infrastructure that can handle chemical, biological and radiological events as well as natural disasters. As part of this initiative, Erie County has established a Regional Office of Public Health Preparedness, which is working on an eight-county regional bio-surveillance and training center, a regional medical communications and information management center, and regional medical decontamination facilities.

Erie County has also obtained the property to build a multidiscipline, multi-jurisdictional Regional Public Safety Campus, which will house an emergency operations center, a forensics laboratory, county dispatch services and training facilities. "The Public Safety Campus will provide unique opportunities for those wishing to conduct a wide variety of training, including border security, water safety and chemical hazards," said Erie County Deputy Executive Carl Calabrese.

Within the emergency services arena, subcommittee members are working to make the entire region part of a statewide 800 MHz communications network. Calabrese expects that with the help of the state, they will be able to begin construction of the system by the summer of 2003.

### Thinking Locally:

How could a multi-discipline emergency preparedness team help your community?  
Could such a team contribute to a regional initiative in your area?

To submit a 'Smart Practice' for consideration or to subscribe to Smart Practices Spotlight, send an e-mail to [SmartPractices@fema.gov](mailto:SmartPractices@fema.gov)

Smart Practices Spotlight highlights practices and ideas that members of the emergency management and responder community have found useful and effective; they are not necessarily advocated or endorsed by FEMA. For more information about this initiative, contact Deputy County Executive Carl Calabrese at [calabrec@erie.gov](mailto:calabrec@erie.gov) or (716) 858-8500.