

Briefly Speaking

Region V Newsletter

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FEMA

Power Outages Affect Millions In Region V

On Thursday, August 14, news outlets began reporting what was initially believed to be a power outage in the New York City area. Within hours areas of Canada, Connecticut, New Jersey, Michigan and Ohio were suddenly in the midst of what would prove to be the largest power blackout in U.S. history. More than 51 million citizens were without electricity during the height of the blackout which began just before 4 P.M., CST. Region V staff activated the Regional Operations Center watch and remained in contact with Michigan and Ohio authorities throughout the weekend. A liaison from the Region was dispatched to Michigan's Emergency Operations Center to interface directly with the states and monitor the situation firsthand.



Regional Director Ed Buikema (right) explains some of the items in the Region's "Get Ready" display to NBC-5 reporter Natalie Martinez. The Chicago news affiliate aired a special report on citizen readiness following the recent power blackout. Complete story on page 3

Wisconsin Fire Departments Receive DHS Grants



Regional Director Ed Buikema (left) presents a check for \$64,000 to Sturtevant, Wisconsin Public Safety Director Arthur M. Scola. Sturtevant was one of four Wisconsin towns presented with awards during a press conference on July 31st.

The grants were part of more than \$350 million awarded during the 2002 Assistance to Firefighters Grant program. Pleasant Prairie (\$155,000), Mount Pleasant (\$160,000) and Kenosha (\$172,000) were also awarded grants at the press conference.

“Providing these funds directly to local departments puts the resources and tools in the hands of our first responders who save lives and protect property” said Regional Director Buikema.

Under the 2003 Firefighters Grant program, the Department of Homeland Security expects to obligate more than 7,000 grants totaling \$750 million dollars to enhance fire and EMS service delivery nationwide.

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Ohio DFO Shifts Efforts To Northeast Floods

Last week's power blackout did little to slow down registrations for disaster assistance in northeastern Ohio, according to figures released today by federal and state officials.

"More than 11,000 people have registered for help with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) following the flooding that began July 21," said Ron Sherman, Federal Coordinating Officer. "We already have approved \$13.9 million in grants for housing and other needs and expect that figure to continue to climb."

More than 1,000 registrants have visited the Disaster Recovery Centers to meet with specialists in housing assistance and other disaster-related programs regarding their applications for assistance.

Grants approved to date include:

- 5,531 housing assistance grants totaling \$10,674,127
- 2,405 grants for other essential needs totaling \$3,257,677

"These grants do not cover all costs and losses, but they do help people get started on the road to recovery," Sherman noted. "Even if disaster aid cannot make anyone whole again, it offers significant help."

In addition to initial grants for housing repair and immediate needs, low-interest loans are available from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) for homeowners, renters, landlords and businesses. Disaster officials urge homeowners, renters, and business owners who have received a loan application from the SBA to complete the application and return it as soon as possible. Community Relations field officers have been deployed throughout the affected counties to spread the word to residents as to how they can apply for assistance. Disaster relief centers have opened in several communities to provide convenient access for citizens to meet with SBA and other officials to process applications.



Community Relations DFO staff in Kokomo, IN (from left) Clarence Chafee, Cindy Yee-Choy, Alan Dobson and Kathy Rhodes. The DFO team supported twenty-two field officers assigned to cover declared counties.

Added Counties Raise Indiana Flood Total

Vanderburgh counties to the disaster declaration this week, a total of 43 Indiana counties are eligible to receive Individual Assistance for homeowners, renters and business owners. This is a summary of recovery activities as of close of business August 21 for DR-1476:

- 5,593 individuals have applied for assistance
- \$25,481,378 approved in grants and low-interest disaster loans for more than 3,600 Hoosiers
- \$8,103,167 approved in Housing Assistance grants for temporary rental assistance and minimal home repairs
- \$2,851,310 approved in Other Needs Assistance grants for necessary expenses and serious needs caused by the disaster.
- \$14,526,900 approved in U.S. Small Business Administration low-interest loans, including 610 home loans (\$13,033,000), 29 business loans (\$1,383,600) and 14 economic injury loans (\$110,300).

So far, 2,416 people have visited joint Disaster Recovery Centers that have been open in affected areas for disaster victims to meet face-to-face with recovery specialists.

Media Focus Shifts To Citizen Readiness After Massive Power Blackout

The August 14 power outage generated heightened interest by citizens not affected by the sudden loss of electricity, as to how they could prepare for such an emergency in the future. Local media received hundreds of telephone calls from citizens, so many that one television station requested an interview with FEMA to discuss what ordinary citizens could do to lessen the impact of a prolonged power loss.

Regional Director Ed Buikema was interviewed as part of a special report by NBC-5 reporter Natalie Martinez on citizen preparedness. Director Buikema focused on the Region's "Get Ready" display, located in the lobby of Regional Headquarters. The display has replicas of over 24 items suggested for use in an emergency kit. The display is divided into three sections, office, home, and vehicle kits. Each kit contains the necessary items to help a family survive during a shelter-in-place situation or outside in their car. "The important thing is for each family to have a plan," said Buikema. "At a minimum, things like a flashlight and a two or three day supply of non-perishable food should be readily accessible."

Items such as bottled water, a flashlight, first-aid kit, and batteries are prominent in the display. Some not so obvious items are waterproof matches, medications, a transistor radio, and a pouch with copies of important documents such as marriage license and birth certificates of family members. A checklist showing all the items displayed and a list of resources with web sites is also available as are brochures and other information on the GET READY program. The display was developed by the Region V National Preparedness Division staff.



NBC-5 Reporter Natalie Martinez (right) and her cameraman position themselves in front of the "Get Ready" display in the lobby of Region V Headquarters. The news station aired a special report on citizen preparedness following the August 14 power blackout.

Annual COOP Exercise Tests Staff Readiness

An important aspect of the Region's National Preparedness Division mission is to help design and instruct agencies on Continuity of Operations Plans and procedures. A great deal of effort and time is spent by the Region COOP staff in this regard. In addition to providing for and concentrating on the needs of our stakeholders, the Region itself must ensure its preparedness to successfully continue to operate at an alternate facility. The annual COOP exercise was conducted August 11, when all Regional staff was deployed to the COOP site. The exercise was not only designed to ensure staff is familiar with the location of the site, but to orient them to the facilities and operation of computers and communications equipment. Region staff was briefed on changes at the site and employees were able to ask questions about various aspects of a remote operation. Following the exercise, region staff enjoyed a cookout and pot luck luncheon.

Did You Know?



Is a monthly feature highlighting the activities of Region V employees

RESULTS OF OUR UNSCIENTIFIC SURVEY OF THE REGION STAFF

Q. how many years military service do you have?

A PATRIOTIC BUNCH?

YOUR CO-WORKERS HAVE SERVED A COMBINED **142 YEARS** IN THE U.S. MILITARY.....THIS ASTOUNDING RECORD OF SERVICE WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY THE COMBINED EFFORTS OF ONLY 7 EMPLOYEES.

Q. how many children and grandchildren?

POPULATION CONTROL

OUR OVERALL CONTRIBUTION TO THE WORLD'S POPULATION HAS BEEN.....

58 CHILDREN

27 GRANDCHILDREN

AVERAGE IS 1.6 KIDS PER PERSON.

Q. your highest education level?

HIGHLY EDUCATED

19 PEOPLE HOLD BACHELOR'S DEGREES, 11 MASTERS INCLUDING 2 MBA'S.

Q. what is your favorite food?

TOPPINGS ANYONE?

THE FAVORITE FOOD BY A MORE THAN 2-1 MARGIN WAS PIZZA. CHICKEN AND DESSERTS WERE CLOSE BEHIND.

Q. how long was your longest FEMA deployment?

ROAD WARRIORS

WHILE MANY OF YOU WERE GONE ON DEPLOYMENTS FOR WEEKS, SEVERAL WERE DEPLOYED FOR AS LONG AS 6 MONTHS, THE LONGEST CONSECUTIVE DEPLOYMENT WAS 11 MONTHS.

Q. where was your most memorable vacation?

TAKE A TRIP ON THE WILD SIDE

WE VISITED EXOTIC LOCALES LIKE CHINA, THAILAND, COSTA RICA, FIJI, ISRAEL, SPAIN, GUAM, PHILIPPINES AND IRELAND, BUT THE MOST VISITED VACATION SPOT WAS HAWAII.

Q. how many pets do you have and what type?

SAY NO TO ALPO

NEVER LET IT BE SAID WE LOVE OUR PETS TOO MUCH. ONLY 10 DOGS, 11 CATS AND 6 ASSORTED OTHER CREATURES CAN BE FOUND IN OUR HOMES. THE OTHERS ARE LIZARDS, SNAKES, RABBITS, BUGS AND BIRDS.....TOO MUCH INFO!!

Q. how many different positions have you held in FEMA?

AROUND THE HORN

AT LEAST 8 PEOPLE HAVE HELD MULTIPLE POSITIONS IN FEMA, BUT THE TOP THREE HAVE HELD MORE THAN 10 DIFFERENT JOBS SINCE THEY STARTED WITH THE AGENCY.

Q. what kind of work did you do before coming to FEMA?

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR ME LATELY?

BEFORE COMING TO FEMA, YOUR CO-WORKERS HELD SUCH JOBS AS REAL ESTATE APPRAISER, REFERENCE BOOK EDITOR, BAR OWNER, ARCHEOLOGIST, FURNITURE RE-FINISHER AND AUTO FINANCE COLLECTOR.

Q. what is your hobby?

GET A LIFE

DESPITE THE USUAL ASSORTMENT OF READERS, EXERCISERS, AND COLLECTORS, A FEW INTERESTING HOBBIES WERE SCOTTISH DANCING AND JAZZ SINGING. ONE PERSON COLLECTS ROSEVILLE POTTERY AND ANOTHER COLLECTS CERAMIC BEARS WITH FISH IN THEIR MOUTHS.

Fire Grants Help WI First Responders from page 1



Kenosha, WI firefighter Theonita Cox uses a computer in her fire truck. The Kenosha fire department purchased computers for its fire vehicles to give first responders current information about building occupancy.



Pleasant Prairie, WI Fire Chief Paul Guilbert (left) demonstrates the new SCBA equipment that includes a “buddy” system allowing firefighters to share oxygen by connecting their masks together. Firefighters Colin Hennessey (left) and Kristin Steingraber were happy to demonstrate the new gear.



Minnesota Flood Summit Highlights Importance Of Floodplain Mitigation

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Minnesota Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management co-sponsored the Minnesota Flood Summit held August 27 in Bloomington, Minnesota.

The Summit brought together local elected and appointed officials, legislators, state agency representatives, floodplain and emergency managers, planners, design professionals, and others not traditionally involved in flood mitigation to review, discuss, and debate flood loss reduction. Highlights of the summit will be detailed in a future issue of Briefly Speaking.

Identity Theft Seminar Provides Important Tips

On Wednesday, August 20, regional staff received in-service training on identity theft, presented by Steve Kuehl of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. The session entitled “Theft, When Bad Things Happen to Your Good Name,” highlighted the growing trend of identity theft and steps individuals can take to prevent it. Mr. Kuehl also discussed what you can do if you are a victim, and your legal rights in relation to credit bureaus and clearing up bad information on your credit report. One of the fastest growing crimes in the nation, identity theft, involves credit cards, phones, utilities, banks, employment, government documents, benefits and loan fraud. Further information may be obtained at www.consumer.gov/idtheft, or by calling 1-877-ID-THEFT.

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Regional Director's Message



Edward G. Buikema

The recent power blackout affecting 51 million people nationwide also had a direct impact on the lives of many of our citizens in the Region V states of Ohio and Michigan. Subsequent efforts by local, state and federal authorities to respond to the needs of our citizens during such a crisis, underscore the importance of strong partnerships within the emergency management profession. As the blackout situation unfolded, the processes, procedures and partnerships developed between FEMA, state emergency managers and their county and local counterparts were again tested. This cooperation was especially evident during the initial 24 hours, during which effective communication is so essential to maintaining an orderly flow of information. Requests for assistance were responded to immediately and region staff were on duty in the Regional Operations Center throughout the weekend following the blackout.

While federal and state authorities investigate the cause of the massive power outage, incidents such as this underscore the need for improved critical infrastructure protection. FEMA has been at the forefront of efforts to increase the dialogue between emergency management entities and private and public utilities. The protection of our critical resources against accidental or purposeful acts is an important aspect of effective emergency management. Our hat goes off to our state and local partners and the citizens of Ohio and Michigan for their calm, organized response to the blackout crisis.

Around The Region

■ From July 12 to 26, 2003 Jim Duncan (National Preparedness Division) and his wife Fawn took six teenagers on a short-term mission trip to Jamaica. The team ran two Vacation Bible Schools at two churches, one in Santa Cruz, the other in the town of Cheltenham. During the VBS, the teens told Bible stories, coordinated games, performed puppet shows and pantomime skits. During the two weeks, almost 200 children participated in the Bible Schools.

■ Congratulations to Amanda Ratliff who will be transferred from Flood Insurance and Mitigation to the Response Operations Branch of the Response and Recovery Division. Amanda will be filling the position formerly held by Jim Stone.

■ The Good Knight Child Empowerment Network is a national program in crime and violence prevention youth mentoring. They received the President's Service Award in 1999. In support of the Presidents Homeland Security Initiative and through funding by Congress, they have developed the "Crime and Violence Prevention Youth Mentoring Program Kit." The kit is available through the link below for those interested. To register, please visit their website, www.goodknight.org



Students discuss their strategy for building a structure using Lego blocks during an Effective Communications training class held August 26-27. The Lego exercise was part of the training designed to improve team building and effective listening skills. Regional staff volunteered for the class, which was instructed by Bob Klinger, Wisconsin Emergency Management

Mitigation Message Prominent At Indiana State Fair

*Indiana State
Fair
August 6-17, 2003*



The SEMA/FEMA Mitigation booth at the Indiana State Fair continued spreading its message by promoting knowledge and understanding of mitigation; quelling flood insurance rumors; publicizing and encouraging the use of appropriate mitigation measures; and offering materials to not only homeowners and local officials, but to the educational sector of the State. The 12 day event in August saw record crowds and the mitigation staff visited with 2,490 fair patrons, which included disaster victims, local officials, teachers, Boy/Girl Scout leaders, insurance agents, students and weather buffs.

The non-stressful approach of the State Fair venue offers FEMA a tremendous opportunity to partner with State Emergency Management and Department of Natural Resources. Lowes Home Improvement Store donated bags so visitors could gather multiple publications. With the use of skilled mitigation staff, the message was disseminated in an understandable way using persuasion and credible evidence. Questions were fielded regarding mold and mildew removal, elevating / floodproofing homes, safe room construction, flood insurance misconceptions, preparedness, all weather radios and other flood related issues.

Lake Forest Visit Part Of College Terrorism Course

Students from Lake Forest College (Illinois) were shown presentations and given briefings by Regional Director Ed Buikema (*below left*) and other Regional staff during a visit to Region V on August 26. The briefings focused on the TOPOFF-2 Exercise held this past May and the structure of The Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The student's visit was part of a course called "America and the War on Terrorism" being taught by Lake Forest College professor Dr. Jim Marquardt (*bottom right photo*). The objective of the first year course is to study major domestic and foreign policy issues that have emerged since the World Trade Center disaster of 9/11. Sixteen students participated in more than four hours of briefings on terrorism readiness initiatives of DHS which included the TOPOFF-2 Exercise.

