

Briefly Speaking

Region V Newsletter

Vol. 1 Issue 5 September 2003



FEMA

Illinois Receives \$9.3 Million For EOC Improvement Project

The Department of Homeland Security announced September 25 that almost \$74 million in funds is being made available to 19 states and territories in the form of grants for improvements to and construction of emergency operations centers (EOCs) around the country. The grants, being distributed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), are designed to help improve emergency preparedness and management by ensuring that EOCs have suitable capabilities that provide flexibility, sustainability, security, survivability, and interoperability when responding to emergencies.

Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) was one of the recipients of the grants, receiving \$9,355,000. "Maintaining strong EOCs is essential for the effective direction, control, and coordination of emergency response efforts," said DHS Under Secretary Michael D. Brown. "The funds will be used on projects that range from the construction of new EOCs to providing alternate sites for continuity of operations purposes." The grants were awarded through a competitive application process and were part of \$81 million made available through FEMA for the EOC grant program. Officials from the State EOC and Illinois announced the grant after receiving confirmation of Illinois' selection.

3 Region States Awarded \$18 Million To Improve Communications

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced September 25, the 17 communities that will receive a portion of \$79.6 million in funds to help communities develop interoperable communication systems. The grant recipients will receive funds as part of a joint program between DHS and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to develop demonstration projects that will use equipment and technology to increase interoperability among the fire service, law enforcement, and emergency medical service communities. Three Region V communities, Monroe County Michigan, Ramsey County Minnesota and St. Clair County Illinois each will receive \$6 million dollars under the program.

"The grants made in this process are intended to uncover solutions that will guide future communications equipment funding so that all communities can meet an interoperability performance standard," said Department of Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge. "Providing funds that will help bring these technologies to the light of day directly support homeland security's goal to make all of America safer."

Briefly Speaking is published by DHS/FEMA Region V External Affairs, 536 S. Clark St. Chicago, IL 60605. Comments or suggestions may be sent to vincent.davis@dhs.gov

FEMA Flag Mystery Ends On Happy Note

For the past several months, a nagging mystery plagued Region V. Where was the FEMA flag? The flag, which for the past dozen years had resided comfortably on its pole in the Regional Director's office, was suddenly and inexplicably lost. It didn't just grow legs, but indeed, was actually removed from the pole and transported to the Joint Operations Center (JOC) during the May TOPOFF-2 terrorism exercise. Placed in a strategic location with the American Flag at the JOC, it hung proudly as a symbol of FEMA's important role in the DHS TOPOFF-2 scenario.

Following TOPOFF-2, an unnamed FBI agent was supposed to ensure the flag was returned to FEMA hands. The FBI agent did his part, giving the flag to an unnamed Region staffer, who in turn passed it to another person. Suddenly the trail went cold. For several months, the pole in the RD's office remained empty as speculation swirled throughout the Region about the fate of the flag which contains the soon-to-be-retired FEMA Seal. Several months later, an unnamed Regional staffer was given the charge to find the missing flag and close the case once and for all.

The FBI was called to help trace the movements of the flag, but again, the trail ran cold at the transfer point of the flag (Regional Offices). One day, a RD staff member spotted the flag while visiting another staff member regarding an unrelated matter. Laying on a shelf neatly tucked away on a stack of manuals, the FEMA flag had been liberated! Conspiracy theories were quickly dispelled and the baffling saga of the missing FEMA flag was finally solved. A subsequent investigation as to the whereabouts of the flag was launched to determine just exactly how it wound up in the hands of the wrong person.



The mystery, it seems was not a mystery after all. The FBI agent had placed the flag in the hands of a security guard at Region headquarters, who gave it to a Division Director. The director, fearing it may get lost, delivered it to the RDs offices for safekeeping. When found, the flag was unharmed and returned to its rightful place, having been less than 25 feet away from its home all the time. The moral of the story is if you're really looking for something, ask the right person and you will find it.

A scene from Baltimore's inner harbor (Below) tells the story of flooding caused by Hurricane Isabel that struck the east coast last week





**Message From
The Regional Director**

Edward G. Buikema

As we quickly approach the end of Fiscal Year 2003, we are all extremely busy closing out the year's activities. While it is important to close the books on FY-03, it is also time to plan for the future. In early October, the senior staff will meet to continue strategic planning. Our primary focus will be on the FEMA and DHS Strategic Plan models.

I strongly encourage the staff to participate in this process by submitting your ideas, suggestions and recommendations to the management team. Your input should be focused on goals and objectives you would like to see the region pursue, as well as ideas specific to your own branch or division. Lessons learned in your daily job, in exercises such as TOPOFF-2 and your experiences in recent disasters are excellent road maps for us to follow as we seek better ways to complete our mission.

The value of creativity is enormously important to our future success as we move forward into FY-04. An example of that kind of out-of-the-box thinking was evident earlier this year when the mitigation staff initiated a program to distribute materials to over 700 Illinois public libraries. Not only did the project help spread the mitigation message, but it served to spark other ideas for saving money, time and maximizing resources. During the Ohio flood disaster, Public Affairs staff teamed with Community Relations to enlist dozens of banks to display the 800 FEMA phone number on their electronic billboards.

There are numerous other instances where you have used your ingenuity to improve our region's performance. It is these kinds of ideas and input that will fuel our success as we meet the challenges of the year ahead.

Emergency Funds Authorized For Ohio & Michigan Blackout

The head of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced that President Bush has authorized the release of limited emergency funds for Ohio and Michigan to help cover some of the costs incurred in responding to last month's power outage.

Michael D. Brown, FEMA Director and Under Secretary for Emergency Preparedness and Response at Homeland Security, said the President took the action under an emergency declaration signed September 23 following a review of the agency's analysis of the state's request for federal assistance.

According to Brown, the emergency declaration authorizes FEMA to provide up to \$5 million in federal funds to reimburse the state and affected local governments in Cuyahoga County Ohio and 14 Michigan counties at 75 percent federal share for the cost of emergency measures undertaken to save lives, protect property, and insure public health and safety during the period of August 14-17.

Brown designated Cuyahoga (Ohio) County eligible for assistance following the declaration. Immediately after the declaration, Brown also designated the following 14 (Michigan) counties eligible for assistance: Calhoun, Eaton, Genesee, Hillsdale, Ingham, Kalamazoo, Lapeer, Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw and Wayne. He indicated that additional designations may be made later if requested by the states and warranted by further evaluation.

Ron Sherman of FEMA was named by Under Secretary Brown to coordinate the federal assistance.

Grant Checks Presented To Illinois Firefighters

Regional Director Edward G. Buikema visited the Hoffman Estates Fire Department on Tuesday, September 16, 2003, to announce Department of Homeland Security grants being presented to support first responders. Mr. Buikema made check presentations to four of the departments at the Hoffman Estates Fire Station. Representatives of four communities including Hoffman Estates, Elgin, Addison and Long Grove Illinois were present to receive the mock checks as part of the 2002 grant program.

The departments will use the grants to purchase firefighting vehicles, self-contained breathing apparatus, photo-imaging cameras and upgraded radio communications gear. Director Buikema praised the first responders. "On behalf of the Department of Homeland Security, we are pleased to be able to place important resources in the hands of the brave men and women who save lives and protect property," Buikema said.

(below) Hoffman Estates Fire Department will use part of their grant to purchase a new brush truck.



Hoffman Estates received \$422,000, Long Grove \$109,000, Elgin \$117,000 and Addison \$32,000. The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program will provide direct grants totaling \$750 million to fire departments across the country this year.



(Above) Illinois firefighters will obtain new self-contained breathing apparatus equipment (Below) Captain Norm Sturm of Addison Fire Protection District (left) demonstrates new thermal imaging camera for Dennis O'Sullivan, liaison for Congressman Phil Crane.



Region Participates In Save-A-Life Conference

Region staff attended the Save-a-Life Conference held at the Hilton Hotel in Chicago on September 16-17. The Conference, cosponsored by Bank One and Comcast, attracted emergency management personnel, first responders and Citizens Corps groups from throughout the country.

The Save-A-Life Foundation was founded by Carol J. Spizzirri, a mother who lost her daughter in a tragic auto accident several years ago. Ms. Spizzirri was concerned by the lack of medical expertise at the scene of her daughter's accident. Following the tragedy, she decided to devote her life to programs and projects designed to bridge the gap between ordinary citizens and first responders with regard to life saving training. The non-profit Save-A-Life foundation works with a number of organizations, schools, community groups, police and fire departments nationwide to improve and enhance emergency life saving training.

The two-day conference included exhibits, guest speakers and a panel discussion of emergency responders which included Jim Opoka, Region V National Preparedness Divisions Citizens Corps, CERT program manager. During the opening Session, Regional Director Ed Buikema presented a Hometown Hero Award to City of Chicago firefighter Sid Blustain for his lifesaving efforts over the past year. Mr. Blustain was credited with saving the life of an elderly couple trapped in a burning building as well as his many efforts in support of lifesaving organizations in the community.

Director Buikema presented the award on behalf of U.S. Fire Administration Director R. David Paulison. Director Paulison had been scheduled to attend the conference, but was unable to do so due to the impending Hurricane Isabel situation on the east coast. The Hometown Hero Award was sponsored by Bank One and awarded by Colleen Canny, Senior Vice-President and District Manager.



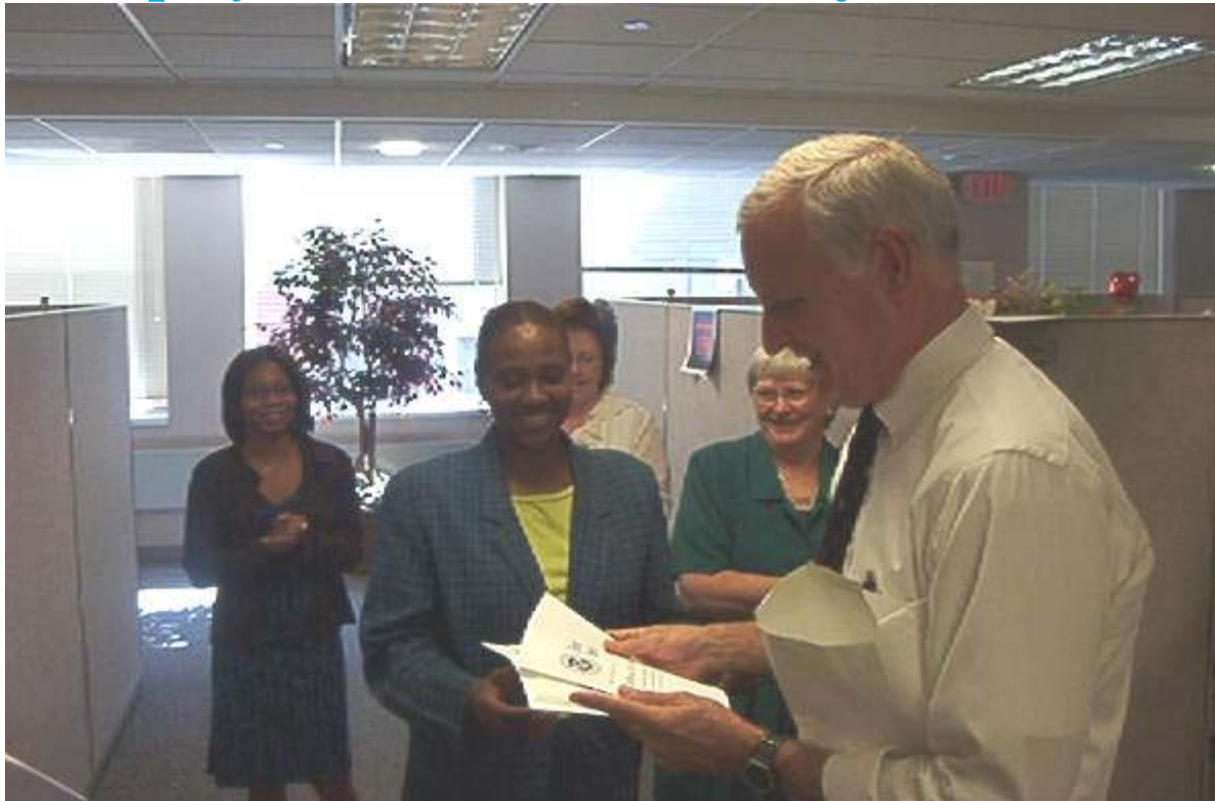
Regional Director Ed Buikema (left) listens to remarks from firefighter Sid Blustain (foreground) after he received the Hometown Hero Award. Director Buikema is accompanied by (l to r) Carol Spizzirri, Liz Degregorio and Colleen Canny.

Director Buikema praised Mr. Blustain, saying, "you are truly an example of the selfless effort put forth every day by our nation's first responder men and women." Other notables attending the conference were John Jones, Deputy Director, National Weather Service, Liz Degregorio, Director, White House Office of CERT, Mrs. Janet Huckabee, First Lady of the State of Arkansas, Carl Hawkinson, Deputy Chief of Staff for Public Safety, State of Illinois Homeland Security and Dr. Henry J. Heimlich, famed creator of the Heimlich Maneuver which was designed to save choking, drowning, and asthma victims. State Senator Walter Dudycz and Hanover Park Mayor Irv Block served as masters of ceremony for the conference.

Members of the Farragut High School ROTC (below) presented the colors at the Save A-Life Conference opening session.



Employees receive DHS Certificate/Pin



Regional Director Ed Buikema (right) distributes DHS pins and certificates to region staff. The certificates were given to each of the 177,000 employees of the Department of Homeland Security to commemorate their status as founding members. Receiving their certificates were Debra Kelly (foreground), (left to right background) Devonya Mims, Mary Beth Caruso and Cathy McNamara.

Did You Know?



Is a monthly feature highlighting the activities of Region V employees

On September 26, Rita Burke, David Dolinsky Bertha Curtis and Pat Glithero received Certificates of Appreciation from the Chicago Federal Executive Board (FEB) for their efforts during the past year. Region V was also awarded a plaque by the FEB.

The Department of Homeland Security has more than 177,000 employees, yet it is only the third largest department in the federal government. The big two are Department of Defense (1) and the Veterans Administration (2).

Lindsay Butler is leaving FEMA for a new opportunity with the Federal Aviation Administration as an Environmental Protection Specialist. We wish Lindsay much success in her new position.

Lindsay's coworkers in Federal Insurance & Mitigation treated her to cake in farewell.

