



FEMA

Briefly

Region V Newsletter

Ceremony Marks DHS Anniversary

On March 1, FEMA, and other elements of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) took part in a ceremony in Chicago to commemorate the first year of the agency. Regional Director Ed Buikema and Federal Coordinating Officer Ron Sherman joined officials from other major DHS components to meet the news media. Displays and information were available to highlight some of the accomplishments of Homeland Security since during its first year. The ceremony took place at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement offices. At 1:30 P.M., an honor guard raised the DHS flag atop the building for the first time. Following the flag raising, representatives of each DHS entity, continued interviews with the media to talk about their jobs and answer questions.

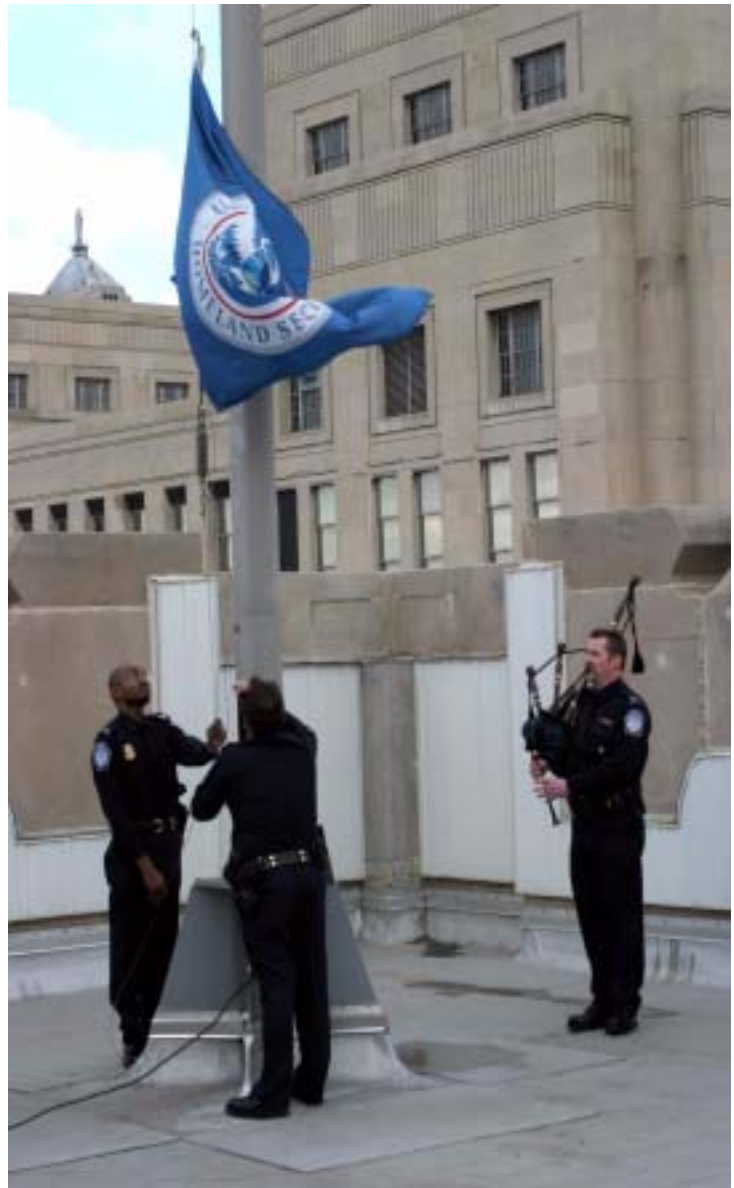
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Honor Guard raises DHS flag during Chicago ceremony.

“Steadfast Response” Bolsters COOP Readiness



Regional Director Ed Buikema (above) addresses participants in the ‘Steadfast Response’ COOP exercise.

Region staff, in coordination with the Chicago Federal Executive Board, the GSA Great Lakes Region, and other Federal and local partners hosted a Continuity of Operations Planning Tabletop exercise on February 5, entitled Steadfast Response 2004. More than 160 attendees from over 50 agencies participated as players, facilitators, support staff, and observers in the half-day exercise. COOP Program Managers from other FEMA regions also assisted in organizing the exercise.

Exercise participants were divided into five teams, based on their COOP expertise level. A plenary session was held at the end of the exercise to discuss issues raised during exercise play, share best practices, and to discuss follow-up activities. Agencies with an alternate facility were encouraged to deploy personnel in conjunction with the exercise. Materials were provided to help agencies exercise and self-assess their deployment. Steadfast Response 2004 is being refined for use as a template for similar exercises to be conducted in other major cities throughout the region and other FEMA regions around the country. “Exercises of this type are invaluable in raising the awareness of COOP needs and procedures,” said Regional Director Ed Buikema.

ICC Grant Helps Indiana Flood Victims Keep Home

After water from The Great Flood of 2003 entered and damaged the Decatur, Indiana house owned by Steve and Michelle DeLaRosa, the couple chose a simple but costly remedy. They raised the house by between 24-30 inches as a floodproofing measure, then applied for an increased-cost-of-compliance grant through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The DeLaRosas also applied for a floodproofing cost-share assistance grant from the Maumee River Basin Commission (MRBC), a regional group that includes Adams County.

On February 3, the MRBC presented a \$5,000 check to the DeLaRosas, who had flood insurance coverage, but are still awaiting payment by their insurance carrier. The house in which the DeLaRosas and their three children live is more than 100 years old. It had survived the two worst floods in county history, the 1913 calamity and the 2003 disaster that surpassed the one 90 years earlier.

To raise the house permanently, the couple first had to raise it temporarily which meant hiring an Ohio based heavy moving company. The crew jacked up the house, allowing local construction workers to place new concrete blocks to create a foundation that left the structure two feet above the level of the worst flood likely to occur during a 100-year period. The work was done last fall and early winter. Overall cost of the process, according to DeLaRosa, was around \$30,000.

An announcement from the MRBC noted that Decatur Mayor Fred Isch, Decatur Building and Zoning Superintendent Roger Gage, and MRBC Executive Director Rod Renkenberger were instrumental in assisting the DeLaRosas with the increased-cost-of-compliance grant application process. They provided technical assistance to make certain the proposed improvements met all federal, state, and local flood hazard ordinance requirements.

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Local Scouting District Starts Citizens Corps Council

Working with the State of Illinois and the City of Downers Grove, Illinois, staff succeeded in registering the Tall Grass District Boy Scouts of America as a Citizens Corps Council. The Scouts will be sponsored by the City of Downers Grove and become a regional CERT team upon completion of CERT training, making them eligible for state grant funding. Tall Grass District is believed to be the first scouting group in the nation to register as a Council/CERT team and may be adapted as a model for the national CERT program. The strong scouting relationship evolved over the past year, during which the Region co-sponsored a Disaster Drill involving over 300 scouts and first responders.

Region Plays Role in “Operation Heartland” Exercise

The 1st Army Defense Coordinating Officer Certification Exercise is scheduled for March 20-26, and includes FEMA Regions II, IV and V. The Region V exercise scenario will involve two mock earthquakes from the New Madrid Earthquake Fault and two after shocks. Region states Illinois and Indiana will participate in exercise play March 20-24. Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) Ron Sherman will head Illinois operations and Scott Wells, (Region VI) will be the FCO in Indiana. FCOs will deploy to FEMA/State(s) Disaster Field Offices in Indiana and Illinois on Monday, March 22 to initiate exercise play. The FCOs will support the First Army Exercise by performing their normal disaster functions with the Defense Coordinating Officers, participating federal support functions, REPLO staff, and selected State staff. Regional Support Team (RST), and Regional Operations Center (ROC) exercise will begin Saturday and Sunday, March 20-21, when the two mock earthquakes occur. A small Response Operations Branch Staff, and First Army Regional Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer (REPLO) will deploy to the ROC to commence Information and Planning activities.

Region Hosts Environmental Compliance Course

During the week of February 1st, an Environmental and Historic Compliance (E-253) course was held in Region V. The purpose of this unique regional offering was to familiarize the participants with a basic knowledge of how environmental laws, Executive Orders including those that apply to floodplains and wetlands, and historic preservation regulations are applied for projects funded by FEMA.

The participants included PFT's, CORE and DAE's from every program division within FEMA. They were provided with specific information outlining how the laws may affect grants to eligible applicants. The course is not designed to train environmental staff but to increase general knowledge of all FEMA staff and improve processing of grant applications and agency compliance with applicable rules and regulations.

Thirty-one students attended the course from several FEMA regions including Regions I, VI, and X. The Wisconsin Department of Emergency Management was also represented. The class consisted of three days of classroom participation and was instructed by staff from FEMA Headquarters and Regions I and V.



Environmental and Historic Compliance course attracted students from throughout the country.

Department of Homeland Security Anniversary



Regional Director Ed Buikema (left) explains items in the “Get Ready” kit to reporter John Cody (center) as FCO Ron Sherman (right) observes.



Transportation Security Administration workers display contraband seized from passengers at Midway Airport. More than 200 items represented a single weekend's seizures.

(BELOW) DHS flag flies atop U.S. Customs building with Chicago's Sears Tower in the background.

