

Capitol Region Council of Governments

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DATE: SEPTEMBER 19, 2011
TO: CHAIRMEN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEES ON ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY,
LABOR, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY
FROM: MARY GLASSMAN, CHAIRMAN, CRCOG POLICY BOARD; FIRST SELECTMAN
TOWN OF SIMSBURY
SUBJECT: TROPICAL STORM IRENE LEGISLATIVE HEARING

Chairmen and distinguished members of the committees; My name is Mary Glassman and I am here to testify in my roles as the Chairman of the Capitol Region Council of Governments and First Selectman of the Town of Simsbury. I have also shared testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities as President of CCM.

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) is a regional planning organization representing the City of Hartford and the 29 surrounding municipalities. We have served the region for over 30 years and helped them gain significant efficiencies in public safety and emergency management planning through the pooling of our federal homeland security dollars, cooperative purchasing and other regional service sharing initiatives. In addition to our 30 communities we serve 11 others for the purposes of public safety and homeland security planning and response.

CRCOG public safety staff monitored the storm very closely by participating in conference calls with the Governor's Office and the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. They also closely examined the daily power outage reports in our communities and opened the Regional Coordination Center to provide assistance to our communities. The CRCOG Executive Committee was briefed on the efforts and is in the process of conducting a survey of our communities to determine what worked well, what did not, and any creative solutions they may have employed. Since we formed our Public Safety Council in 1995 and Capitol Region Emergency Planning Committee in 2001, our region's first responders have gotten used to meeting, working and exercising together and these planning efforts proved invaluable in the actual emergency of Tropical Storm Irene.

Before I turn it over to the CRCOG operations coordinator, I would like to speak specifically in regard to the Town of Simsbury:

Overall, the Town of Simsbury was well-prepared for the storm and recovered relatively quickly compared with other towns and cities hardest hit. Although 63% of the Town went dark during the storm, most of the Town was restored within 24 hours. I will share with you what worked well for the Town of Simsbury:

Tropical Storm Irene Hearing Questions

Municipalities

- Communication
 - How was the communication between local government and utilities or other disaster relief entities?
 - **The police department had little difficulty contacting utility companies with reported damage. CL&P responded very well. AT&T was called a day after the storm about a motor vehicle accident for a vehicle that struck a pole that belonged to AT&T. They were unable to respond (told police to let the pole fall?) and CL&P came out to secure the pole and relieve officers that had to block the street. These officers were needed to handle other police calls.**
 - What worked?
 - **CL&P had a representative in the EOC later in the day on Sunday. It worked very well. What didn't? It would have been nice if CL&P sent this representative earlier in the day. No other utility company was represented in the EOC. AT & T and Comcast were not responsive and extended periods of outages with cable service were reported.**
 - How can this communication be improved?
 - **When police called AT&T we received a call center outside of New England. It would be nice when municipalities need to call utility companies they have representatives that understand the emergency.**

- Reverse 911
 - How familiar/comfortable are towns with this system/process?
 - **The police department is comfortable with CT Alert (reverse 911).**
 - Was there an effort in the week preceding the hurricane to encourage the public to sign-up for Reverse 911?

- **A test was done of the CT Alert.**
 - What is the standard for using it? A
 - **Option to notify in life threatening emergencies.**
 - Did towns use it? If not, why?
 - **Yes, the Town of Simsbury used the system to notify residents that were affected by the flooding. This was used a total of 5 times. Three for the flooding and one for the fire departments efforts to make the buildings (homes and businesses) safe. On 9/08 another Alert was sent out to residents on Riverside Road for flooding. We do need better texting capability and training.**
- Preparation
 - What was your procedure for disaster preparation before the storm occurred?
 - **The police department staffed the weekend with extra police and communication staff to handle the calls for service. The police department also prepared the EOC for Sunday morning.**

What can be done differently is to improve communications between local elected officials and utility services; to address preventive measures now such as tree trimming plans and transmission line improvements and to improve communication now such as cell and text services before the next disaster hits.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. We look forward to working with you to better protect our residents.