

Capitol Region Council of Governments

241 Main St., Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: (860) 522-2217 FAX: (860) 724-1274
Web Page: www.crcog.org

DATE: SEPTEMBER 19, 2011
TO: CHAIRMEN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEES ON ENERGY &
TECHNOLOGY, LABOR, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY
FROM: WILLIAM AUSTIN, CRCOG HOMELAND SECURITY COORDINATOR
CHERYL ASSIS, CRCOG PUBLIC SAFETY DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: TROPICAL STORM IRENE LEGISLATIVE HEARING

Chairmen and distinguished members of the committees; My name is William H. Austin, and I am the Homeland Security Coordinator for the Capitol Region Council of Governments.

Approximately six years ago with the establishment of the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security here in Connecticut, the State established five regions to better serve the citizens of our State. I represent Region 3 or the Capitol Region. Under the Regional Emergency Support Plan (or RESP) our mission is to function as multi-agency coordination center (or MACC) under the National Incident Management System (or NIMS) and coordinate and/or monitor the use of municipal mutual aid and emergency support function assets here in the Capitol Region.

Our storm activities consisted of three distinct phases:

The preparatory phase was the first phase, and much like any municipality or state agency we were busy 3-5 days before Tropical Storm Irene, alerting response units, preparing response elements such as our regional hazardous materials team, the Capitol Region Incident Management Team, Regional Incident Dispatch team, fire task forces, and preparing the Regional Coordination Center (located in Manchester) for activation. At 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, August 27th a two-hour meeting was held at the RCC to determine staffing, service availability, and activation time. The decision was to fully activate at 10:00 p.m. and begin twelve-hour shifts for the event duration.

Phase two began with the RCC activation and proved mostly uneventful during the passing of the storm itself. Approximately fourteen municipalities opened

fifteen shelters during the height of the storm. The most significant event occurred at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, August 28th, when Johnson Memorial Hospital requested a Regional Emergency Support Plan activation to evacuate 63 patients from the hospital due to the loss of electrical power. The evacuation was handled by Emergency Support Function 8 – Emergency Medical Services. During the evacuation several emergency plans that had been previously developed for major emergencies and homeland security events were used and proved to be well thought out and expertly executed. At approximately 9:00 p.m. power was restored to Johnson Memorial and the evacuation was stopped after 40 patients had been evacuated. What made this so unusual was that the Region actually handled an emergency within an emergency and proved itself very capable.

The final phase was the recovery phase of the storm. The Regional Coordination Center was re-activated and the Capitol Region Council of Governments reached out to the Chief Elected Officials and Town Administrators of our most affected communities to inquire if any assistance could be provided. The region was especially concerned with downed trees, extended power outages, request for public works assistance and the need for MRE's and water in each town. Several of these municipalities, including Andover, East Hampton, East Haddam, Hebron, and Marlborough asked for help with commodities distribution. For the period from Thursday, September 1st to Sunday, September 4th, the region operated three person commodities distribution unit after borrowing a 32 foot trailer with electric lift from Hartford Distributors. We delivered 11 tractor-trailer loads of supplies to eight municipalities during the four day period. A total of 22,272 MRE's, 756 bags of ice, and 46,704 bottles of water were delivered. In many cases, Civilian Emergency Response Teams were activated to assist with the operation.

These assets and resources assisted in the recovery phase to ease the impact of the power outages.

These assets did not exist prior to September 11, 2001 and represent a small portion of the \$340 million dollars expended in Connecticut in the last eight years to increase local and regional safety and emergency response capability.

Thank you.