

CHITTENDEN COUNTY, VERMONT
LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE #1
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Meeting notes – May 08, 2018

Present: Vice Chair Mike Collins, Global Foundries; Josh Estey, CSWD; Marshall Distel and Regina Mahony, CCRPC; Andy Squires, Richmond Rescue; Scott Whittier, National Weather Service; Cathy Neelis, VT 211; Zachary Borst, UVM EM; Bob Henneberger, AARP.

The meeting was called to order at 0910 at the National Weather Service offices at the Burlington International Airport. Mike Collins served as the Interim Chair in Al Barber's absence. There were no changes to the agenda, and no public comment re: items not on the agenda. Introductions around the table were offered, and the notes from the April 10, 2018 meeting were accepted without revisions.

Scott Whittier of the National Weather Service (NWS) proceeded with a presentation that outlined the capabilities of the NWS and described how they can be helpful in preparation for and in the event of weather-related emergencies. Scott started off the presentation with information related to the NWS mission to protect lives and property and support the enhancement of the economy by means of timely and informative weather warning forecasts and services. The Burlington NWS office covers a forecasting area for the four northern New York counties as well as the entire State of Vermont, with the exception of Bennington and Windham counties. The NWS provides emergency decision support services, weather warnings and a variety of forecasting capabilities. The Vermont office is staffed and actively managed 24/7 with a team of meteorologists and other weather and incident command professionals.

Scott described the VT Hazards NWS Weather Ready Nation Initiative, which is a program that was developed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) to improve the nation's readiness, responsiveness and overall resilience against extreme weather, water and climate events. The NWS strives to collaborate with a variety of agencies to be as informative and helpful as possible with regards to weather-related issues. To further enhance community collaboration, Scott encouraged the Chittenden County LEPC to consider becoming a Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador. WRN Ambassadors commit to working with NOAA to strengthen national resilience against extreme weather. In effect, the WRN Ambassador initiative would help to unify the efforts across varying levels of government, academia, non-profits and private industry to enhance responsiveness and encourage resilience against extreme environmental hazards. Similarly, Scott also conveyed how the NWS StormReady Program employs a related grassroots approach to help communities develop plans to handle all types of severe weather.

The NWS offers key decision support services to provide one-on-one assistance in special situations prior, during, or after a significant weather event. As the NWS has evolved to be a part of the Incident Command Structure, it has started to participate in numerous tabletop exercises to prepare for real-life weather incidents. NWS holds annual spring flood workshops and develops joint media releases with regards to weather and public safety. Stronger initiatives related to a cold-water safety program have also recently been implemented. On average, there are 12 fatalities a year in northern New

England due to cold waters. The Coast Guard and the NWS have been working closely on this initiative to create more awareness about the issue.

The NWS also provides support for outdoor public events that could potentially be affected by high-impact weather events. The NWS has reached out to municipalities to offer weather briefs and other emergency action support; however, the vast majority of events occur without any coordination with the NWS. With coordination, the NWS would work with event stakeholders and local emergency responders to develop emergency action plans. Moreover, a decision support threat matrix could also be prepared, which features an easy-to-read matrix with colorized weather elements based on specific user thresholds. NWS would appreciate enhanced collaboration with regards to emergency planning for public events. Scott urged the LEPC to reach out to municipalities to urge communities to coordinate with the NWS.

The meeting then moved on to a discussion about the three-tiered approach used to differentiate between a weather outlook, watch or warning. Most of the discussion was focused around highlighting the differences between a watch and a warning. A weather watch has all the ingredients present for a potentially serious weather development. On the other hand, a warning is when all the ingredients come together and is currently happening or imminent. There was also a discussion about tornado watches, the infrequency of them in Vermont, and the reality that NWS only issues a tornado watch when necessary.

Following this presentation from Scott, the LEPC was given a tour of the NWS operations center.

LEPC partner updates:

Bob Henneberger announced that a local Red Cross representative (Dan Lavilette) will be leaving the area for a new position at the Red Cross headquarters in D.C. His job has been advertised but will not be filled for another couple of months.

Marshall Distel provided information about the upcoming June 12 LEPC meeting that will take place at the CCRPC in Winooski. Cathedral Square Corporation (CSC) will be coming in to give a presentation about their affordable housing communities and would like to solicit information about how to effectively plan for emergencies. CSC has over 30 communities that are mainly oriented towards older populations and people with disabilities.

The meeting was then adjourned at 1045.

Respectfully submitted by Marshall Distel

Please note: LEPC meeting agendas, minutes, and other information may also be found at <http://www.ccrpcvt.org/about-us/committees/local-emergency-planning-committee/>