

CHITTENDEN COUNTY, VERMONT
LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE #1
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Meeting notes – July 10, 2018

Present: Chair Al Barber, Hinesburg Fire; Marshall Distel, CCRPC; Bob Henneberger, AARP/Red Cross; Kate Hamond, Vermont Department of Health; Peter Brown, Burlington Fire; Mike Kanarick, Burlington Electric; Josh Estey, CSWD; Cathy Hamilton, General Dynamics; Lee Krohn, Town of Shelburne; David Attig, VT Gas.

The meeting was called to order at 0910. There were no changes to the agenda, nor public comment on items not on the agenda.

After introductions were made, Mike Kanarick welcomed everyone to Burlington Electric and provided the group with an overview of his organization. Burlington Electric's 2030 Vision is to become a net zero energy city, which would mean that the energy that is being used would equate to the amount of renewable energy that is being generated. Starting in September 2014, the City of Burlington became the first city in the nation to source 100% of its electricity from renewable emergency generation. Today, Burlington uses less electricity than it did in 1989 because of robust energy efficiency programs that have been supported by BED and other organizations. For example, Vermont Gas was instrumental in terms of improving the energy efficiency of multi-family housing units by offering owners incentives to enhance thermal efficiency.

After the conversation about energy efficiency and BED's net zero vision, Mike started to discuss the events that led up to BED making national headlines with regards to an alleged Russian hacking incident. On Friday December 30, 2016 at 7:55 PM, the Washington Post released an article that was titled, "Russian Hackers penetrated US electricity grid through a utility in Vermont." In the weeks leading up to this point, there had been numerous accusations of election hacking activity, statements were being made about malicious cyber activity by national media outlets and President Obama expelled multiple Russian operatives. The North American Electric Reliability Corporation sent a Joint Analysis Report on 12/29 to BED, which contained guidance and instructions on what utilities should be doing to prevent cyber-attacks. Around the same time, the BED IT team intercepted suspicious traffic between an employee's laptop and an IP address that contained malware, which in simple terms could be described as a software intended to damage a computer.

While an employee's laptop was found to have malware, Mike stressed that the laptop was never connected to the grid, and therefore never posed as a threat to BED. The IT team secured the employee's laptop and removed it from the network with no indication of compromise. While there was no real threat to BED or the electric grid, a special form was filled out for federal officials to document the incident. However, the post-incident document found its way into the hands of a Senior Administration Official within the White House, who then subsequently embellished the story to include details of Russian hacking and leaked it to the Washington Post's White House Bureau Chief, Juliet Eilperin. The story was then published without consulting with BED.

An hour after the story was released, BED released a statement in response to this report to correct the false Washington Post story. In response to the Washington Post's article, the Burlington Free Press also released an article titled, "Russian hackers attack Burlington Electric with malware" the same evening. Dozens of outlets then began to report on the story. The next day, BED released an additional statement with more details about what happened, while downplaying false media reports. BED agreed to talk with the Washington Post after they corrected and retracted the original article.

In March 2018, VT Digger released a follow up story to try to set the record straight about this incident. BED met with VT Digger to ensure that they were very articulate about what had actually occurred. However, to BED's disappointment, VT Digger claimed that it was a BED computer issue, when in fact the blame should have been put on the Washington Post's false reporting. The phrase was eventually corrected. A discussion ensued about the committee's experience with cyber hacking, emergency response communication problems and other related issues. Lee Krohn explained that while the BED threat was a false alarm, there is a need to realize that these issues are real and can be sophisticatedly designed to hack systems.

A conversation related to the LEPC's supplemental application then began. The group discussed the need to better identify what LEPC 1 should aim to do going forward. LEPC 1 could link a series of Tier II partner presentations to table top exercises that could be facilitated at a larger scale. There is also a need for more of a regional response in the event of an emergency-related incident so that Chittenden County municipalities can act immediately rather than simply waiting for Vermont's HAZMAT Response Team to arrive. A future LEPC funding application should mention that while Chittenden County generates significant funds through the Tier II reports, there is a need to use a portion of those funds to enhance our emergency response ability within our region. LEPC 1 should partner with larger reporters to develop more support for these local response initiatives. It would also be beneficial to see a provision that allowed a reimbursement for a tabletop exercise or a training after that exercise is implemented. LEPC 1 may decide to reach out to state representatives with the intention of working to update state regulations related to LEPC funding.

Marshall will forward LEPC 1's existing funding application for AI to review. A working group may be formed within the coming months to put the finishing touches on the application for additional funding.

Partner updates were shared.

The meeting adjourned at 1125.

The next LEPC meeting will be held on September 11 at the CCRPC in Winooski.

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/>