



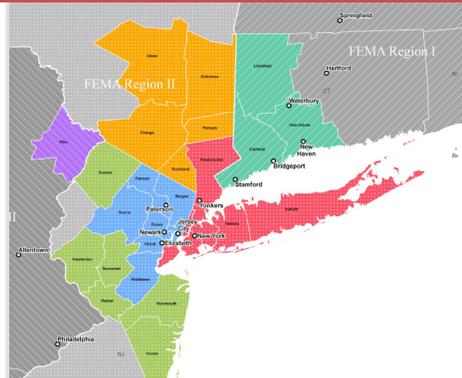
Catastrophic Response

Coordination | Communication | Unity of Effort

Working together makes us stronger

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The Regional Integration Center planners, the planning teams, and the RCPT deserve credit for their hard work in building the regional catastrophic plans. But there is a long road ahead. We must, through the training and exercises, convince our colleagues that these tools can help them---to share information and resources across borders and to scale up quickly in support of incident operations and stakeholders in the early hours of a catastrophic response. As Calvin Drayton points out in the Exec's Podium, we will succeed if we focus on the emergency manager. Success means that, across the region and the country, we finally put into practice the concepts on which ICS and NIMS were built. If we don't the next catastrophe could truly be a "deal breaker."



EXEC'S PODIUM

DEAL BREAKERS

CALVIN DRAYTON, – *First Deputy Commissioner, New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM)*



I hope your readers will take the following as "food for thought." I do not want to offend but do have a reputation for being tough...sometimes very tough...so I don't want to miss this opportunity to give you some of my tough love.

I will start by talking about what I know—about my world. I am a local public official with more than 20 years in this business of emergency management, the past 16 years with the City of New York. I've learned a few things in that time. Emergencies happen every day in New York City (as they do everywhere). But 8.4 million people are packed into my 302-square-mile world of islands and peninsulas 50 feet above the water line so my emergencies can turn into disasters, sometimes big disasters, fast. And as the First Deputy Commissioner I am on the hook to deliver. No excuses: no ifs, ands, or buts. What do I deliver? I deliver the right agencies to the right place at the right time. I am also on the hook to deliver the right stuff to the right place at the right time to help those agencies do their jobs. But even that is not enough. I can do the best job in the history of the world from an operations perspective but can still fail. How does that happen? It happens when I don't think about the people who are affected by the disaster. These issues---the ones important to the public but that we don't pay enough attention to---I call "Deal Breakers." Ignore the deal breakers and are you are going to fail.

What are the deal breakers? The first and most obvious is the public message. It doesn't matter how well you think things are going on the ground, if your message is confused or wrong or off-point, that's a deal breaker. The second is environmental health/ medical issues. These issues tend to be overlooked in the early hours of the job but they will quickly loom large. Worst case: if someone goes in alive and comes out dead because you screwed it up? That's a deal breaker.

Here's a big one: mass care. How do you deal with the people who end up in your shelters and reception centers? In New York City we have worked with many organizations, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the state and the Red Cross to build our capacity to provide mass care. And we were put to the test this past August during Hurricane Irene. The operation wasn't pretty and it wasn't perfect but we didn't fail. In many ways, though, we felt like we were on our own with mass care. Many of my colleagues in New York and New Jersey and Connecticut had a similar experience. Emergency sheltering is a basic tool in our tool box and when the call comes we need to deliver it. If we don't that's a deal breaker.

Debris management: when that ambulance can't get down that street because it's blocked by downed trees, that's a deal breaker. And finally: recovery. Not doing this right—managing the many years it could take to get the affected area back on its feet, especially with the type of job this program is focused on—will definitely be a deal breaker. The emergency manager who doesn't remember the deal breakers could have a very short career.

Finally, I want to congratulate the RIC staff and the planning teams for completing their catastrophic plans. And as you start the training and exercises phase of the RCPGP you now find yourselves at a cross-roads. I encourage you to think hard and pick the right path. It is important now to focus on the mission. Local emergency managers must have the capability to deliver when the balloon goes up. This capability can't just be "lip service"; you have to "walk the talk." You have to convince me that these plans help me to do my job better. If they do, this program and your plans will have credibility with the men and women—like me—around the region who are on the hook to deliver during disasters.

STAY TUNED

As planners and responders we are constantly learning from past events, large and small. This year, we are looking to events over the past decade to provide lessons learned and to enhance future response efforts. The New York City Office of Chief Medical Examiner (NYC OCME) and the RCPT will host the International Mass Fatality Management Conference and Workshop in New York City, **April 25-27, 2012**.

The primary objective of this conference is to bring together international and domestic experts and leaders in mass fatality management to explore past incident management, discuss lessons learned, and define best practices to enhance future responses and decision-making in complex disasters.

We expect a great deal of interest in this event, so space is limited. Participation in this event will qualify for continuing education credit in several disciplines.

Please RSVP to Emily Carroll, Regional Project Manager, at emcarroll@ocme.nyc.gov, to express your interest in attending the conference.



2012 Regional Mass Fatality Exercise Mid-Term Planning Conference: Donell Harvin (NYC OCME), Elissia Conlon (NYC OCME), Emily Carroll (RIC), Erin McLachlan (RIC), Dennis Mazono (NJ DCJ)

ALL IN

Information-sharing between incident management systems has been a challenge for many years, and for almost as long as emergency managers have heard that someone has the solution. Over the past two years the RCPT has delved deep into the existing capabilities and cut through the confusing jargon that hides the fact no one has solved the problem yet. Even so, the pieces needed for true interoperability are out there, but they're being overlooked, misunderstood, or ignored. The foundation of interoperability between incident management systems is to have common information sharing standards that can be used and shared regardless of the incident management system (DLan, ETeam, WebEOC, Etc.). The standards exist, having been developed by DHS for the past several years, and you've probably heard of them; the EDXL suite of data standards of which CAP (Common Alerting Protocol) messages are just one example.

Emergency managers across the country must say clearly, in one voice, what they need from their incident management systems, and vendors must commit to being "all in" to meet these needs. Specifically, vendors must make their systems 100% EDXL compliant, no bits and pieces of EDXL here and there, no "modified" standards. This doesn't mean that systems just need to be able to display an EDXL message they must be able to send and receive 100% EDXL compliant messages. Vendors must develop forms and reports to enter and display these same EDXL messages. These simple steps will make incident management systems truly useful and relevant to emergency managers.

The old business model doesn't work anymore; the emergency management market is saturated with tools that don't share information. If incident management systems want to stay relevant they must accept a model that includes true interoperability and shared information standards. Those that adapt these standards and commit to being "all in" with emergency managers will build cutting-edge products that enable emergency management not just to function in their day-to-day activities, but allow them to succeed in catastrophes. Those that don't adapt will simply disappear.



Lightning Bolt: Total immersion training to simulate an EOC during catastrophe

Training and Exercises: The Next Big RCPT Challenge

Emergency managers have a single core competency: interagency coordination. The RCPT has built the foundational plans and tools to get the work of coordination done, but these assets remain credenza-wear until our region's emergency manager's buy into them.

Our mission for the next couple of years will focus squarely on the training and exercises we build to convince our colleagues that these tools can help them to share information and resources across borders and to scale up quickly in support of incident operations and stakeholders in the early hours of a catastrophic response.

We are all comfortable with the command aspect of a disaster and at this point in our collective experience we understand intuitively that the success of a response rests on this foundational building block. NIMS elucidates the concept of command, but less so coordination, its twin building block. What is this thing we call coordination and how does it work?

Coordination is emergency managers working in an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to support stakeholders such as the Incident Commander, the chief executive, affected individuals and families, and the public. Emergency managers coordinate to connect silos within and outside their jurisdiction, they coordinate to manage resources and the overwhelming information burden that catastrophes bring, and they coordinate to identify and solve problems and take on missions and that no one else wants.

The RCPT now is challenged to transform mounds of paper, doctrine, tools, and passion into a training and exercises program that will transmit everything the emergency manager needs to know about coordination.

To accomplish this goal the RCPT training and exercise program is organized into four components:

- Training Emergency Managers on Catastrophic Response (EMCOR)
- Modeling Public and Responder Education Prep (PREP)
- Developing a Strategic Plan for Sustainability
- Executing a Regional Catastrophic Exercise Program (RCEP)

Our initial efforts include developing a publically accessible mobile application and a series of brief videos for each plan. The videos demonstrate how the emergency manager will use our tools and 'unpack' our plans. To develop the emergency manager's skill level and comfort within the EOC we are creating total immersion scenario driven EOC trainings called Lightning Bolts. For more information and an opportunity to participate in our planning efforts contact [Erin McLachlan](mailto:emclachlan@regionalcatplanning.org) at emclachlan@regionalcatplanning.org.



One possible representation of the VROC dashboard in an EOC