



# Catastrophic Response

Coordination | Communication | Unity of Effort

*Working together makes us stronger*

[www.regionalcatplanning.org](http://www.regionalcatplanning.org)

“When catastrophe strikes the most damaging impacts are the losses suffered by our citizens. People displaced from their homes have little hope. If neighborhoods can be recovered, hope is restored and communities can survive. Housing is the key and this issue of *Catastrophic Response* describes our important work in this area. The Urban Interim Housing Project is a good example. After all other available resources are exhausted, bringing interim housing to the areas of devastation will likely be our only alternative. This project is exploring the ability of the market to provide enough interim housing to keep our cities vibrant after disaster strikes. This challenge is not unique to the NY-NJ-CT-PA region and the importance of projects like these, for the region and for the nation, cannot be overstated.”

— Joseph Bruno, Commissioner, NYC OEM

## EXEC’S PODIUM

### WITHSTAND, RECOVER, ADAPT – TOGETHER

BY PETER BOYNTON – Connecticut Department Emergency Management & Homeland Security (DEMHS)



Catastrophic planning is important to Connecticut because potential threats and large-scale events do not respect political boundaries. It is important that we work with our neighboring states and partners from the local, state, federal, private, and NGO sectors to be ready and increase resiliency to catastrophic disasters. We also need to take the 3-pronged approach to resiliency, which is the ability to withstand, the ability to recover, and the ability to adapt in response to a catastrophic incident.

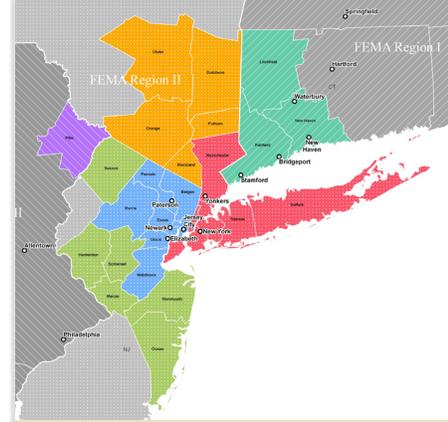
In fact, the regional collaboration that the RCPT has produced is a great lesson learned, and the RCPT and RIC work has been a development of best practices in regional catastrophic planning. In addition, systems like the RELT (which allow for a way to quickly get executives talking together in an emergency) and fusion centers are also current best practices. One of the most important things is to have redundant communication systems and multiple ways to communicate with our partners. In addition, a common situational awareness picture that can be given through access to systems such as WebEOC are very

*“ Understanding lessons learned and best practices of regional catastrophic planning are critical to our shared mission ”*

Understanding lessons learned and best practices of regional catastrophic planning are critical to our shared mission: The most important lessons learned of disasters so far are that there needs to be adequate preparation and planning for emergencies. Thus, it is of utmost importance to work with all of our partners and stakeholders, including our neighboring states, to provide a quick response to an emergency.

beneficial during a large-scale disaster.

The most exciting aspect of this project is simply that these states have gotten together and taken on these collaborative planning projects. It is critical that our federal partners recognize the value of regional collaboration and continue to give it their support.



## NEWS

Connecticut recently announced an expansion of the “See Something, Say Something” campaign. It was kicked off by Governor Rell, DEMHS, and DOT on 11/16/2010. This is a multi-year public awareness program through all forms of media that is scheduled to continue through June 2012.

The NY-NJ-CT-PA RCPT Website has been launched! Check us out at: <http://www.regionalcatplanning.org/>.



Recent regional executive-level workshop with Deputy Commissioner McKinney facilitating

## CATASTROPHIC QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

“Regardless of our thoughts at the initial stage of an emergency it will always be worse than we expect.” — Calvin Drayton, First Deputy Commissioner, NYC OEM

## GET INVOLVED

## Conferences:

On May 9-10, 2011 the NY-NJ-CT-PA RCPT Regional Logistics Program will hold *LogCon2011*, a conference designed to introduce and reinforce the concept of a *Universal Logistics Standard*. For more information, please contact Nancy Harris at [nharris@regionalcatplanning.org](mailto:nharris@regionalcatplanning.org).



RCPT Disaster Housing Recovery Team

## Workshops:

### Second Annual Disaster Housing Summit coming first week in June 2011:

This year's focus is on the financing of Disaster Housing Recovery in high-density urban areas like our RCPT region. The Disaster Housing Planning Team will workshop a draft of a Playbook for CDBG program templates for disaster housing.

### Rising Storm III Mid-Planning Conference/MSEL Writing Workshop and Reconstitution Training:

The Conference and Workshop will discuss the proposed MSELs for Rising Storm III and provide a hands-on overview on how to craft agency-specific MSELs. Participants will be writing MSELs at the workshop for use in the exercise. Reconstitution Training will provide instruction on how to write/improve a continuity reconstitution plan. Portions of this plan will be tested during Rising Storm III.

NYC **March 30**  
Newark **March 31**

If interested, contact FEMA at:  
(212) 680-3600.

## Owning the Problem

Hurricane Katrina revealed housing recovery to be a great weakness in our national capability. Now nearly 6 years later this problem of housing recovery remains. And with our complex, dense, and aging urban infrastructure it is a critical vulnerability for our region. People who can't get back into homes and neighborhoods after a disaster will leave and most will not come back.

We know that this complex and difficult problem will not solve itself. But few want to own it. As federal agencies point to the states, the states in turn point to local governments. Yet the problem continues to go unsolved. The fact is that only government can do this and we will only be successful if all levels of government—federal, state, and local—fully commit to the mission. The Regional Catastrophic Planning Team has taken an ownership stake through the Disaster Housing Recovery Program.

### Regional Disaster Housing Program

Housing creation is a technically challenging process with a multitude of obstacles. We cannot hope to be effective without planning. We have created a planning community that, through our biweekly Regional Disaster Housing Planning Team meetings and our annual Disaster Housing Summit, convenes emergency managers, and

construction, and design, and planning experts to identify these obstacles and to develop solutions.

The Regional Disaster Housing Plan is designed to activate and control the range of operations and programs required to recover housing following a catastrophe. It guides decision-making in the critical days and weeks following a disaster and includes step-by-step procedures to identify, assess, and rebuild damaged and destroyed housing. Its objective is to simultaneously implement a range of operations and programs, each designed to overcome one or more of these pre-identified obstacles. It also includes a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Playbook with tools and templates designed to expedite this critical funding process.

We are building a solution. More importantly, we are building awareness of and commitment to this problem. At the end of the day we are state and local emergency managers. But this is a national problem that requires national leadership. We are working with committed people at every level of government. But we don't today see a national commitment to solving this problem. Although understandable given the problems with housing, this problem will not solve itself. It will not go away.

## The Housing Recovery Gap

Emergency sheltering is one of the most important tools in the emergency management toolbox. But shelters are viable for a very short time. After the skies clear, shelter residents will leave but those whose homes have been destroyed will come back. Where do they go on the long road back to permanent housing? This issue, interim housing, is a significant gap in the timeline of housing recovery.

Interim Housing gets people back into their own neighborhoods. Mobile homes and travel trailers will not work in our urban towns and neighborhoods and there are today no other options available. The Urban Interim Housing Project, a partnership between New York City OEM and the Regional Catastrophic Planning Team, is working to develop a prototype multi-storey, multi-family housing unit for our region that can also work for urban areas nationwide.

### What we have done...

We first convened an international design competition that attracted enormous interest from hundreds of design teams around the world. Using the best entries as the standard, we asked the housing industry to describe a

logistics supply chain that could build, deliver, and install a high volume of interim housing units.

After a catastrophic event these units would be required at an unprecedented speed. Only by leveraging the full capacity of the private sector can we hope to meet the demand. We created a performance specification to do that. It contains stringent requirements for safety, environmental quality, and durability, but is designed to be flexible so that any housing factory can quickly retool to supply them. Several manufacturers have developed final technical documents based on the performance specification.

In partnership with the New York City Department of City Planning we developed an Urban Site Design Playbook that will allow us to configure interim housing units into viable and vibrant urban neighborhoods (i.e., not trailer parks). Our next step is to build and install a number of prototype units and to test them under real-world conditions. Through the Urban Interim Housing Prototype Unit we hope to create a regional solution to a national problem.

## STAY TUNED

**Regional Infrastructure Protection Plan (RIPP) Updates** in the upcoming issue of *Catastrophic Response*. Don't miss:

- **Electrical Sector Restoration:** The electrical sector focus of the RIPP primarily tackles issues of private sector involvement.
- **Scenario Modeling and Facilitated Discussions:** Learn how and why research with the National Laboratories and a Stakeholder Workshop drove collaboration and a shared understanding of demands in a catastrophic incident.
- **External Critical Needs:** The specific demands on the electricity sector have been thoroughly explored. We identified areas needing government support in a catastrophe, while ensuring information security and building long-term partnerships.