

April REM Meeting Notes

Ashley Feryan – Introductions

Sarah Somers – Grayson County Office of Emergency Management – Statewide Mutual Aid Law

- Most of work in jurisdictions that do not know what Emergency Management is or what we do. Especially the city attorneys.
- Discussion of Texas Government Codes 418 and 421
 - If you haven't read these things, you are standing on quicksand because you are operating without a full understanding of your legal authority to do your job.
- The entire framework is set up to support the local community's ability to make decisions at their level.
- Three "fixes" within the mutual aid law
 - Texas law was more restrictive than the Stafford Act
 - Not conducive to local management of emergencies
 - Removed the requirement to have regional plans at the COG level
 - Redefined what the definition of what Emergency Management and homeland security activity is
- The mutual aid law states that you could rely on the state mutual aid law OR you can write your own
 - This gives local jurisdictions the flexibility to define support on their terms.
 - The most contentious part of the discussion was the duration of support before jurisdictions can expect reimbursement
 - 12 hrs was the answer due to the accepted practice of using this duration as the standard operational period
 - 418.004 Section 11 "Mutual Aid"
- One of the key weaknesses to the current law is the lack of attention to volunteer fire departments
 - Many volunteer fire departments hurt themselves by not doing the administrative work
 - Another problem is that it is very difficult to define a volunteer fire department
- Challenged the group to READ the executive guide and the EM related laws in it
- If you don't want to go through the hassle of trying to decipher the patchwork of mutual aid agreements in your jurisdiction, you can get a court order to rescind all current mutual aid agreements and announce the adoption of the statewide mutual aid law. You can start over from there
- You need to define when the 12 hr duration begins. At arrival? At the time of dispatch?

Tom Hunt – Biowatch

- Biowatch program is sensitive (FOUO)
- There is a lot of information on the internet that can inform the public about the Biowatch program
- Some information is not disseminated to the public:
 - List of jurisdictions
 - Biowatch Equipment
 - Biological agents monitored
 - Collector locations

- BioWatch detection timeline
 - Specific laboratory results
- The BioWatch program is a nationwide air monitoring system that detects the presence of select biological agents in the air
 - Used in collaboration with local and state officials with the goal of preventing a biological attack
 - Locally operated but federally managed
- Ultimately, BioWatch is another tool to be used in biological threat defence
- The major benefit of the program is to quickly detect a biological attack and get affected people to medical treatment in time to be effective
 - Without early detection, it will often be too late to effectively treat patients by the time they finally present themselves to a hospital
- Five major bio agents are monitored
 - Anthrax
 - Tularemia
 - Plague
 - Glanders/ melioidosis
 - Smallpox
- BioWatch advisory committee meets quarterly
 - All sectors of government as well as a wide spectrum of disciplines
 - 31 jurisdictions (five in Texas)
 - 38 sites in the Metroplex
 - 21 in Dallas County
 - 17 in Tarrant
 - There may be changes in the monitoring network due to population shifts
- Routine Operations
 - Air monitoring
 - Filter removal
 - Laboratory Transport
 - Filter Sample Analysis
 - Data Interpretation and Reporting
- BioWatch in the Jurisdictions
 - Field Operations
 - Laboratory Operations
 - Preparedness
 - BioWatch Program Planning Guidance
 - Communication
 - Environmental Assessment
 - Exercises and Technical Assistance
 - Jurisdictional Coordination
 - Consequence management
- Data Interpretation and Reporting
 - Laboratory reviews, interprets, and reports data
 - Consults with CDC and DHS (optional)

- Technical Laboratory Call
- Issuance of a BioWatch Actionable Result (BAR) Determination
 - Genetic material consistent with an agent has been detected
 - The collector location identifies part of affected area
 - The result is actionable
 - It does not mean that there has been a terrorist attack or that there is a risk to the public
- Post-BAR assessment
 - Assess available information
 - Determine risk to public health
 - Determine probability of intentional release
 - Conference call
 - Jurisdictions will make decisions about what to do
 - Activate EM plans and/or return to routine operations
- Advises the group to contact Rafael Reyes if they want to be involved
- Thomas Hunt
 - 512-202-4060
 - thomas.m.hunt@associates.hq.dhs.gov
- Candice
 - April EPPC meeting has been council
 - Pub Ed – guidebooks printed
 - Spanish in final production
 - Vendor has been selected for KnoWhat2Do website
 - Training and Exercises
 - MidEx –
 - Rhodium in
 - Training - April 17-18
 - April 24-25 EST
 - Regional Response Summit
 - July ???
 - Many supplies left over from BigX for temporary issue
 - CCP April 13 9-11
 - Saferoom program
 - 250K allocated
 - New personnel
 - Samantha Picket
 - Jody Carpenter-Nolly
 - Elaina Pain?
 - SHSP projects have been submitted to the state
 - REPAC May 4th
 - UASI invited
 - Bomb Prevention Team from DC will be presenting
 - Three table tops will be part of a proposed technical visit
 - UASI meeting - April 21st

- Grant guidance should come one to two weeks after the passage of the continuing resolution
 - Looking for contractors for THIRA, state preparedness report, and implementation plan
 - Resource requirements need to be added as well as adjustments from changes to the core capabilities
- Dave McGurty
 - Possible updates to 418.108
 - SB 1897
 - Adds a provision that allows local jurisdictions to declare a local state of emergency if a disaster has occurred or is **imminent**
 - The key issue is that jurisdictions can declare the disaster prior to occurrence
 - Removes deadlines for budgets, ad valorem taxes, etc if the jurisdiction is dealing with an emergency