

Emergency Preparedness Questions
August 3, 2010

1. What is the rationale for having the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at the new City Hall next to the Police Department?

In general, I am opposed to having an EOC within a Police Department (PD) facility, mostly due to the fact that most emergency events/incidents are not police-related and also the constraints placed on the police regarding the security of people and documents/evidence. For example, an extended public works event could interfere with the mission of a PD if the EOC was not appropriately secured and responders vetted.

However, during a recent meeting with Mr. Deutsch, Mr. Fitzwater and Chief Perez, I had a chance to view the City Hall architectural plans and the dedicated space for a training room/EOC. At that meeting, the vision for the future of that space was more clearly explained. Staff is working on a grant to provide funding for a significant amount of the cost of a dispatch center. That money is tied into the plans for a regional EOC. The space of the EOC can also be used for a training center. At this point, I am comfortable with the plan and vision.

2. Has any Emergency Preparedness Operation entity reviewed Bowie's EOC plans? If so, who?

Yes. The EOC plan is contained within the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). The EOP contains the EOC plan framework. It delineates particular duties and responsibilities. This plan was distributed to staff, Bowie Volunteer Fire Department (BVFD), Prince George's County Office of Emergency Management (OEM), City of Laurel, local emergency management consultants, and the Public Safety Committee (PSC) among others. The plan is fluid and staff is amenable to suggestions at any time for changes and additions.

3. What are the dimensions of the EOC at the new City Hall?

The area where the EOC is planned is 700 square feet.

4. Would it not be better to have the EOC at the old City Hall and have a satellite facility at the new City Hall?

The overall answer is contained in the answer to Question #1. Additionally, any event that requires an EOC being opened and an Incident Command (I/C) being established requires that staff members normally dedicated to other duties be placed in appropriate I/C positions at the EOC. Physically, it makes more sense to operate all duties at the new City Hall. The old City Hall could certainly be used as a backup location, shelter headquarters, Citizen Emergency Response Team (CERT) staging area, logistics area, etc.

5. If the old City Hall were used, would it not be possible to incorporate the City's cable operation for Public Service Announcements (PSAs) directed at the viewing public.

The City's studio will stay in the old City Hall. We will have the ability to generate announcements from the new City Hall. Comcast will still be located in the old City Hall after our move. We have MOUs and agreements regarding our ability to access and even override Comcast operations during an extreme emergency. Putting announcements on the government channel is done using a web-based application and does not require the poster to be physically located at the Kenhill Drive facility.

6. Does the City have a current Evacuation Plan? Can Council be informed and participate in the Evacuation Plan's design?

The City follows the County's designation of major evacuation routes. These routes are found in the EOP. They were also distributed to every single household in the County a few years back. It is important to remember that evacuations are incident specific. The best method for staying informed during an event or emergency is to have available multiple mass media sources as well as emergency notification services such as Alert Bowie.

7. What tabletop exercises are planned/where/when? Can Council be advised in the planning stages?

Four of the twelve budget objectives for the City's Emergency Management in FY11 are specific to tabletop and functional exercises. Council will be updated as progress is made in the planning of these exercises.

8. Can Council have a tour of the Laurel EOC?

Arrangements are being made to tour the Laurel EOC and other appropriate EOCs in the area.

9. Can Council be trained in the National Incident Management System (NIMS)/Incident Command Courses (ICS) for elected officials?

On or about June 28, 2010, Council received an email detailing the recommended introductory NIMS and ICS courses. I have attached that information along with this document. Further, I have commitments from several qualified sources who will conduct in-person training for Council if requested/desired.

10. Does the City have MOUs with area municipalities? Which ones?

The City is a member of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG). As such, we are covered by the National Capital Region Mutual Aid Agreement (NCR-MAA) which guides the implementation of mutual aid between all members. The BVFD and County Fire Department have a mutual aid agreement with Anne Arundel County. The City PD has a mutual aid agreement with the County.

11. What is the City's immediate plan for notification of emergency situations to the citizens? What resources are planned for use?

The City has primary control over several resources for emergency notifications. The most effective and quickest method is through the use of Alert Bowie, our text/email messaging system. In addition, announcements are posted on the City website, on the government channel, and on our electric and static community message boards. Recorded messages are placed on the phone system for all who call the main City Hall number. Press releases are also issued to area media outlets. Future plans include use of "robocalls" to push recorded emergency information to households. With the exception of our message boards, these messages can be posted or disseminated from any location.

The City's Communications Coordinator sits on the MWCOG Regional Emergency Support Function 15 (RESF 15) Committee (Media Relations and Communication Public Outreach). When there is a regional event, committee members are briefed on the incident and then decide upon the key messages to share, so that the information is clear and consistent throughout the region.

I sit on the MWCOG Emergency Managers Committee and represent the City's interests and distribute information as it pertains to the overall response to regional events.

The most effective way for our citizens to receive emergency information is to have multiple access methods to mass media.

12. Who is the Incident Commander during an emergency in the City's protocol for Emergency Preparedness?

The City Manager is the Incident Commander (I/C) for all events. A quick study of ICS would show that the *Operations Commander* (O/C) for an event would be a person assigned by the I/C who had the best background knowledge and ability to lead the operations response during an event.

If the City Manager is not available, the Assistant City Manager is the I/C. By City Charter, the Assistant City Manager is delegated all powers of the City Manager if the City Manager cannot perform his duties.

The EOP delineates the other persons in the chain of command.

Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS) Training Overview

There are four basic/introductory on-line courses recommended to give interested parties a start in understanding NIMS and ICS. The last course is specifically geared towards elected/senior officials. They are:

1. IS-100.a Introduction to Incident Command System, ICS-100.
This course describes the history, features and principles, and organizational structure of the Incident Command System. It also explains the relationship between the ICS and NIMS. Primary audience is persons involved with emergency planning, response or recovery efforts.
2. IS-700.a NIMS An Introduction. This course introduces and overviews the National Incident Management System. Primary audience is persons involved with emergency management responsibilities including prevention, preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation.
3. IS-800.b National Response Framework, An Introduction. Gives an overview of the National Response Framework. The primary audience includes senior elected and appointed leaders, including mayors and city officials, who have a responsibility to provide for effective response.

The above three courses can all be found at www.training.fema.gov. Click on **Independent Study**.

4. G402/ICS 402. ICS for Executive/Senior Officials. This course is NIMS compliant, but not required for NIMS certification. The on-line class gives an overview of ICS, command features, coordination and ICS preparedness. This course can be found at www.training.fema.gov/stcourses/crsdesc_spec.asp.