

Emergency Preparedness Committee of the City of Takoma Park Report to the City of Takoma Park Council, June 2009

This is an interim written report in lieu of a formal presentation to the City Council of the City of Takoma Park, covering the period from October 2008 to June 2009. What did the Emergency preparedness Committee do and what problems will need discussion with the City of Takoma Park Council?

Membership: The committee has had full membership and even had the luxury of a committee volunteer member who contributed significantly to the activities of the Committee. Since an application for membership is pending the committee asks the Council to act on it.

Outreach to Different Population Groups: Most of our outreach efforts have been directed to residents and families who live in single house homes. No outreach efforts have been directed specifically to residents in apartments, although they represent 60% of the population. The EPC has met with the City's Department of Housing and Community Development. The parties agreed to conduct a first step by providing an information package for landlords, which will be distributed at the time landlords undergo instructions for re-licensing. This is the very first step. The committee intends to propose an initiative for self-examination of all apartment facilities regulated by the City.

Operational Manual: The major effort during the past half year was to bring the Emergency Operational Manual up to date. This was complicated, because many of the arrangement underlying the original manual had to be re-developed and re-designed. One example is the establishment of a Volunteer Center in an emergency situation, which required negotiation with Montgomery County Volunteer Center, review of Takoma Park's facilities etc.

It was also the committee's goal to simplify the manual and create cross-references and key words, so everyone can easily find the needed information. The committee also tried to establish a mechanism for yearly review of the manual and re-approval of the procedures and responsibilities. It was furthermore our goal to coordinate the manual with Montgomery County's manual. All these efforts have advanced, but are still incomplete, in part waiting for the signing of MOU's.

MOU: Currently the city is expected to sign a memorandum of understanding with the University of Maryland to participate under a grant to integrate Takoma Park's EOP plan under the grant leadership of Gaithersburg which will furnish payments required to Dewberry as funded by the Grant, for the work Dewberry performs on any jurisdiction's EOP plan. It is assumed that the grant will also cover work of the City's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).

Outreach – Takoma Park Newsletter: The second major effort of the committee was outreach to the community. The outreach took several forms: (a.) The committee developed a plan for a series of articles for the Takoma Park Newsletter covering topics of emergency preparedness, such as “Emergency Supplies”, “How You Can Prepare for the Pandemic Flu”, “The Family Emergency Plan”, “Preparedness for Apartment Dwellers”, “Tips for Pet Owners”, “Emergency Car Kit”, “Preparedness for Seniors and People with Disabilities”, “Communication in Emergencies” and others. Articles were also written for neighborhood newsletters.

Cable Program: The committee also prepared and executed one episode for a “Snapshots” segment on City TV on “The Nine Essential Items for an Emergency Kit”. Further episodes are planned. One episode will be in cooperation with the Humane Society and experts on animal rescue operations on the topic, “Care of Pets in Emergency Situations”.

Fairs: Outreach at fairs is and was another activity of the Emergency Preparedness Committee in its effort to reach out and inform the public. One such fair event was the Jazz Fest on June 14, where about 80 individuals stopped by the small EPC-table. Future outreach is planned for the Takoma Park Street Festival and the Takoma Park Folk Festival.

Plans: The EPC had discussions with the City administration on including questions on emergency preparedness in the planned resident survey. This seems to be important to give the committee direction on how to most effectively distribute information and obtain buy-in by the residents in emergency preparedness.

Emergency Power and Emergency Communication: The committee reviewed with the Police Department and Public Works the physical readiness for emergencies, including availability of emergency power and availability of emergency communication.

The City of Takoma Park Council – Plans and Proposals:

- (1.) The committee is preparing an initiative regarding self testing for emergency preparedness of apartment complexes in cooperation with owners and managers of these complexes.
- (2.) The committee proposes for the City of Takoma Park to enter a Memorandum of Understanding with the Montgomery County

Volunteer Center to recruit and train volunteers from the City of Takoma Park, and to direct and staff an emergency volunteer center in Takoma Park in case of a local (confined to the area of the City) or County-wide emergency.

- (3.) **Neighborhood Ready Program:** Takoma Park participated in the testing phase of this program. Members of the committee have attended preparatory sessions with the Montgomery County Volunteer Center to prepare the second phase of a “Neighborhood-Ready” program since the County wants to start the second phase of the program in September 2009. The program is aimed to activate and stimulate neighborhoods to interact with and help each other in emergencies.
- (4.) **Trained Volunteers.** The committee intends to recruit city residents to be trained in several of volunteer categories such as the “Medical Reserve Corps”, “Emergency Action Team” and CERT. Furthermore, training will be sought with the American Red Cross in Shelter Management.

The committee members:

Ronald Riccucci, Co-Chair
James Christ
Lawrence Hawkins
William Hentosh
Thomas Horne
Robert Jones
Jenny Kurtinitis
Anne Ludlow
Robert Wedemeier

Reported by Wolfgang J. Mergner, **Co-chair**