

RESOLUTION 2009-6. 1

THIS RESOLUTION, approved and adopted by Westtown Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania, on this 6 day of April 2009 hereinafter set forth.

WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Services Code, 35 Pa. C.S. section 7501 mandates that all Commonwealth municipalities provide emergency management in order to plan for, respond to and recover from major emergencies or disasters within their communities; and


WHEREAS, the National Incident Management System has created the standards by which emergency management is to be provided by all levels of government; and

WHEREAS, Act 93 of 2008 amends Title 35 to create a system of intrastate mutual aid between participating political subdivisions within this Commonwealth, whereby each participating political subdivision recognizes that emergencies transcend the boundaries of a political subdivision and that intergovernmental coordination is essential for the protection of lives and property and for the best use of available public and private assets; and

WHEREAS, Westtown Township strives to meet the challenges of protecting citizens during times of major emergencies or disaster;

BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the undersigned members of the/Board of Supervisors, do hereby approve for Westtown Township to actively participate as a member of the West Chester Area Regional Emergency Management Group.

By:



Elected Official



Elected Official

ATTEST



Township Manager

Elected Official

West Chester Area Regional Emergency Management Group

Partners in Incident Planning, Response and Recovery

Summary

By Pennsylvania statute, an Emergency Management Coordinator is responsible for the administration and operation of an organization that is designed to plan for, respond to, and recover from major emergencies and disasters within a municipality. Since taking on the responsibility of being Emergency Management Coordinators, we have participated in countless hours of training at the county, state and federal level in order to prepare ourselves. As a result, many of us have achieved an Advanced Certification in Emergency Management from PEMA and a few of us have even completed the requirements for a Professional Certification. Regardless of what we were able to accomplish as individuals however, we do realize that providing effective Emergency Management is not a task we can do alone.

For our Emergency Management Operations we all depend on those people who either by virtue of a position or an interest in being involved, were selected to fill positions within our incident command structure. With this system we face a number of problems. What if we do not have enough people to staff all the necessary positions? What if the incident goes on for an extended period of time? If we only have one person for each position, what would we do if that person was not available? Of those positions that have been filled, who has taken the time to get the training necessary in order to understand their role? Do we have adequate space to create a full Emergency Operations Center and do we possess the equipment that it requires to manage the incident properly? Many of the answers to these questions are not very positive and all of this leads to some serious concerns in regard to our truly being able to provide comprehensive and effective emergency management during times of crisis in our communities.

HSPD-5 issued in 2003 by President Bush, directed the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop the National Incident Management System (NIMS), so that there would be consistency in how emergency management was provided regardless of what level of government was involved. In 2004, Governor Edward Rendell issued a proclamation mandating the use of NIMS for emergency management throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This system involves annual compliance requirements in such areas as training standards, planning, exercise development, communications, resource management and command structure. Under NIMS, not only must we as Emergency Management Coordinators have extensive training in the field, but everyone who is involved in the decision making process during the response to a major emergency or disaster must meet the minimum standards for training in emergency management. While NIMS provides a great guideline, it has been very difficult for us to meet all the requirements individually.

As Emergency Management Coordinators in the West Chester Area, we have met and discussed these critical issues. We have agreed that a method to comply more completely with NIMS standards and to more effectively protect the citizens within our individual communities would be for us to call upon each other for assistance in managing major incidents. While the elected or appointed officials and municipal coordinators will retain authority to manage incidents that occur within their jurisdiction, by forming the West Chester Area Regional

Emergency Management Group, we would agree to establish a team of individuals who can be called upon to respond and either provide assistance to those acting in positions of responsibility or to fill positions that are vacant, as needed. This method will provide us with people when we need them the most that have the training and expertise to work within any of the components of the Incident Command System.

Establishment of a Regional Emergency Management Group is not a new concept. Several such organizations already exist in Chester County. This concept is endorsed by the Chester County Emergency Management Agency and encouraged in PA Act 93 of 2008. Chester County itself is in the process of establishing Incident Support Teams that can be utilized County-wide. These teams are designed to assist municipalities in the management of major incidents by providing people who are highly trained and experienced in the areas of Law Enforcement, Fire and Rescue Services, Emergency Medical Services, Technical Specialties and Emergency Management. This is yet another layer of support that can be called upon.

As we are contiguous, we must commit to work together as partners in Emergency Management, not only when disaster strikes, but during the planning process as well. Working together collectively will provide us with a team of personnel who have the training and experience necessary to assist with the Incident Command Structure so that the incident can be managed effectively. Working together collectively will allow us to operate more efficiently by reducing the redundancy involved in information gathering, resource management and documentation while planning for emergencies. Working together collectively will allow us to fill in the gaps that exist in our emergency management operations when disaster strikes. Working together collectively will allow us to have the depth of personnel necessary to deal with those incidents that may go on for days, or even longer.

We hope that this concept grows in our area to eventually include all municipalities that are within the West Chester Area School District. Since much in the way of sheltering and mass medical care planning is based around our school district, it makes sense to use this as our base. We ask that our elected officials give support to this effort by resolving to actively participate in the West Chester Area Regional Emergency Management Group. As providing for the safety of citizens in our communities rests upon our elected officials, we believe that to form a Regional Emergency Management Group is the best way for us to help them accomplish that goal.

We appreciate your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Municipal Partners

Lloyd Roach - Birmingham Township
Eric Ruggeri - East Bradford Township
Jon Brill - West Chester Borough
Andrea Testa - West Goshen Township
Donald Verdiani - Westtown Township

Non - Municipal Partner

Michael Bicking - West Chester University of Pa.