



## EPI Subcommittee May 5, 2008 Meeting Report



The 2008 EPI Subcommittee Working Group Meeting for DOE/NNSA and contractor personnel interested in emergency public information (EPI) was sponsored by NA-41 and met prior to the 2008 EMI SIG Annual Meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to provide a forum to discuss topics of concern and to create an ongoing path forward for exchange of information and management of issues related to emergency public information. Approximately (insert attendance here) people attended the meeting representing DOE/NNSA Headquarters, site offices, and contractors with EPI responsibilities.

### **Presentations**

Phillip Van Saun, Emergency Manager at the University of California San Diego, presented information on emergency public information, emergency notification, and joint information center lessons-learned during the University's response to the wild fires and bomb hoax which occurred last year. Mr. Van Saun also reviewed the tools that leaders need to survive in potentially disastrous situations. Such tools largely include pre-emptive planning to anticipate, plan, and prepare for the predictable surprises organizations may encounter.

Dr. Lawrence Pettit, President Emeritus of Indiana University Pennsylvania, presented information from the perspective of a CEO on the role of public information officers in planning of risk assessment and prevention, emergency response, and incident aftermath. Referring to his experiences as a University President, Dr. Pettit stressed the importance of agreed upon internal and external communication channels, the designation of a single public information officer and the coordination of participating agencies and organizations in the response effort.

Dr. Brian Flynn, Associate Director of the Uniformed Services University Health Sciences, reviewed information on key factors in understanding the psychosocial factors and priorities in crisis communication. Dr. Flynn focused on communication beyond the written and spoken word with an emphasis on the importance of images, symbols, and rituals during and after a crisis. Additionally, Dr. Flynn illustrated the behavioral linkages of communication in response to a threat. In considering messaging strategies, Dr. Flynn advocates information as an intervention.

Dr. Coombs, Associate Professor of Crisis Communication Studies at Eastern Illinois University, addressed pre-crisis and crisis communication with an emphasis on families and the media. The success of a crisis communication effort is in large part based on what is done before the crisis. For families, the pre-crisis focus is on building efficacy of outreach. For the media, there is a need to create familiarity with what you do during a crisis and why. Dr. Coombs also presented information on possible application of "Web 2.0," or real-time communication technologies such as blogs, podcasts, and Real Simple Syndication (RSS).

Darrell Lankford provided insight into how the news release development process can be simplified and streamlined using emergency management tools already in existence. The facility/sites Emergency Preparedness Hazards Assessment (EPHA) and the Emergency Action Levels (EALs) contain useful information that can be used to develop pre-formatted high quality news releases.



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### Chair Election

John Carter, Director of Community Affairs for the SC Brookhaven Site Office, was elected the EPI Subcommittee Chair. As Chair, John will be the point of contact for future EPI Subcommittee meetings and will assist in providing direction for future events per member input.

### Meeting Recommendations

Meeting participants voiced the following as a group before the conclusion of the meeting:

- Networking within and outside the community is imperative. There should be a focus on lessons-learned and more open discussion among members at future meetings.
- A tabletop with a communications scenario focusing on the public affairs impact related to an emergency may be developed, in addition to the development of break out sessions.
- In order to gain a broader perspective, speakers at future meetings should include emergency managers from across the complex, local politicians and state and local PIOs. A panel discussion with local stakeholders may also be presented.
- Future topics of interest at meetings may include:
  - Attrition issues
  - Growing pains with the influx of a young workforce
  - Changes in the DOE/NNSA complex and how it will affect EPI
  - Discussion of HQ expectations for PIOs before an emergency
  - Comparison of DOE and NNSA PIO draft plans
  - Communications technology and trends

### Path Forward

- There is a need for more public affairs representation within the group, in addition to more HQ involvement.
- The importance of product development should be reinforced.
- Members are urged to promulgate involvement among PIOs across the complex. An advertisement will be sent out via the listserv to PIOs across the complex. This may circulate more interest among the community and increase networking ability. The EPI Subcommittees' purpose, objectives, and open membership should be reiterated.
- An additional listserv with emergency managers and non-HQ personnel may be developed for better outreach and networking.
- To better accommodate members and increase participation, *Go to Meeting* will be utilized in future quarterly meetings.

Participants agreed to provide to John Carter any further recommendations along with indications of their intended level of commitment or support. He in turn will represent the group's interests to the EMI SIG.