

## **Big City Partnership-Providence, Rhode Island**

### **Summary**

Providence originally started their PPP focused on the security of the Port of Providence. Partners are businesses such as ProvPort, Johnson & Wales University, Private Security firms, LEPC members and the surrounding community. This effort has since expanded to the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce and NEDRIX.

### **Background**

A major snowstorm ravaged New England in December 2007. The storm hit Providence, R.I., especially hard, creating extensive evacuation delays and leaving residents stranded for hours. Following this event, Providence Mayor David Cicilline, the Providence Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and state organizations recognized the need to enhance emergency management capabilities and restore public trust in the city by demonstrating their commitment to improving emergency preparedness and showing that a similar event would not paralyze the city. (edited - taken from EM Magazine)

### **Goals and Objectives**

In February 2008, a new Director of PEMA was hired to build emergency preparedness capabilities for the city. Shortly after his appointment, the Director developed three key priorities to make quick improvements to the city's emergency management programs:

- Develop a network of partners through the renewal of old relationships and by building new relationships with organizations, residents and local leaders.
- Design and conduct a hurricane response exercise no later than June 2008.
- Develop a community outreach program utilizing technological advancements to recruit and train volunteers to assist in disaster response and establish new disaster shelters around the city. (edited - taken from EM Magazine)

### **Description**

Forming Cohesiveness. At the heart of PEMA's emergency management program was the establishment of the Providence EOC, which provides a central location for the public safety community, volunteers and the private sector to organize a response to any incident affecting Providence residents and businesses, the Providence Port or the surrounding the Narragansett Bay area. The "Ocean State," as Rhode Island is known, is home to several small ports and a lot of maritime activity, both commercial and recreational, which make the bay area an important domain for state and local officials to protect.

The state-of-the-art EOC provides interoperable communications and information sharing

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capabilities needed for emergency management (for all geographic and functional domains), a location for community organizing and training, as well as central command for conducting exercises to increase preparedness.

When the Director arrived at PEMA, the existing EOC was an unfinished floor of an old bank. The initial layout and grant planning was under way. The old EOC structure had to be upgraded to ensure compliance with National Incident Management System for EOC operations, and PEMA needed to add connectivity to enable information sharing among multiple stakeholders. While PEMA had emergency management capabilities for the city, it had limited ability to manage an incident affecting the port area. PEMA needed to equip the EOC to enable both land and sea operations. This required a shared vision for common public safety and security operations. The EOC would need to support communications and other data networks that would allow shared awareness during an emergency whether in the city or the bay. To address this, PEMA began building relationships and laying the groundwork to integrate existing as well as new capabilities.

The Port Security Communication Network (PSCN) was an established, state-initiated surveillance system in the southern Narragansett Bay area. This 800 MHz system was developed and used by the Department of Environmental Management and served as the primary network for port security and surveillance communications. To benefit from all the system could provide, new policies were developed and all emergency first responders purchased radios on this network to ensure effective and interoperable communications.

Additionally Providence integrated the PSCN surveillance sensor feeds of 17 cameras with additional cameras, including a mobile camera mounted on a Providence Fire Department heavy rescue vehicle. Radars and data fusion assets provide a common operating picture (COP) for the city and Narragansett Bay. Part of this program was a partnership with Raytheon Corp. through a cooperative research and development agreement between Raytheon and the state

In pursuit of a common platform to use when responding to an incident, PEMA, with the assistance of DHS Port Security Grant Program funding, sought to establish additional surveillance capabilities in the northern bay and main port area. PEMA wanted to develop a system that provided a holistic, integrated design that would allow for future expansion. Gaynor contracted with Raytheon to integrate existing cameras and deploy additional cameras and radars to provide new coverage of Narragansett Bay via a project named the Port Area Waterside Security System project, a platform housed in the EOC.

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The city's wireless surveillance, data feeds, and the Early Warning Notifications System - - composed of emergency warning sirens -- were also integrated into the system. These improvements were funded through additional DHS grants.

Prior to the initiative's completion, there were multiple state and city department-owned cameras throughout the area, all of which operated on different video management systems and none of which were connected. A common backbone for sharing of voice, video and data was required. The existing system of fiber and wireless network connectivity was owned by multiple state, city, university and private partners. Gaynor and Raytheon worked with all of these partners to share and develop optimal network capabilities and create one common backbone for the EOC and emergency operations. The PSCN and PAWSS were merged into one system and called Rhode Island Common Operating Picture (RICOP). (edited - taken from EM Magazine)

### **Requirements for Success**

The project's success was directly attributed to relationships between state government, local government, private industry and the nonprofit sector. "If I had to pick three keys to success for this project, I would say they were partnerships, agreements and funding," Gaynor said. "The partnerships and agreements build upon each other, and of course, piecing together the funding is key to any project." (edited - taken from EM Magazine)

### **Resources**

Providence has the following resources available through its partnership to help prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters and web resources.

### **Training and Exercises**

Providence hosts and participates in joint training and exercises with the public and private sectors. PEMA is an active participant in training opportunities across the metropolitan region. For example, we just completed a TTX with Brown University focused on a campus housing fire.

### **Communication Tools**

## **Big City Partnership-Providence, Rhode Island**

Providence uses the following methods of communication with your public/private partners—email alerts; text messages; in-person meetings; website; media outreach; and public service announcements.

### **Links**

<http://www.emergencymgmt.com/disaster/Providence-Public-Private-Partnerships.html>

<http://twitter.com/PEMA591>

<http://www.readyprov.com/>

<http://72hours.org/providence/>

<http://www.nedrix.com/ri.php>

<http://theklaxon.com/> (see bottom of page for PEMA tag)

### **Contact Information**



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