

SAFETY AND JUSTICE ROUNDTABLE
Meeting minutes

April 23, 2008
Greene County Office of Emergency Management

MEMBERS PRESENT: Robert Spence, Jean Twitty, Steve Ijames, Ron Baird, John Holstein, Nate Quinn, Jill Elsey-Stoner, Yolanda Lorge, George Templeton, John Crow, Jim Cook, Stephanie Montgomery, Jim Huntsinger, Bernie McCarthy,

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bob Cirtin, Matt O'Reilly, Mark Skrade, Bradley Stokes,

ALSO PRESENT: Ryan Nicholls, Bobby Linton, Jenny Edwards, Mike Brothers, Tim Smith, Collin Quigley

1) PRESENTATION BY RYAN NICHOLS, DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Police departments, fire departments and public works departments all respond to things every day on a routine basis. But sometimes a 911 or emergency call results in a bigger situation and multiple agencies come together to respond. That's where Emergency Management comes in — a tornado, ice storm, earthquake, very large fires, chemical spills, etc.

They try to prioritize what needs to be done in a large-scale public safety event. They do not take over. The key word for them is "coordinate." OEM coordinates all the things that various other agencies do from its Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

They activated the EOC to the largest scale ever during Jan. 2007 ice storm. It was a good learning event because it ramped up over 62 hours time. Normally most events happen pretty quickly, like a tornado. They had about 70 people operating in some capacity during the two weeks that followed.

Their role is to bring anyone and everyone who has anything to do with a disaster into the OEC and coordinate all of it: Fire Department, Springfield PD, State Emergency Management Office, National Guard, Public Works, CU, etc.

Example: During the 07 ice storm, CU was inundated with power outages. They are sitting at the "pod" with public works in the OEC. At the same time, fire was having trouble getting to fires because of downed trees on the streets and in yards. They had chain saws on their trucks to cut through it all. PW heard about this and said they had the crews and equipment to clear trees if CU and FD would tell them the routes where they were headed. Using the communication technology at the EOC, they plotted it out and worked together to get it done.

Says they are the "sidebar" to law enforcement agencies. Law enforcement is really in charge during an anthrax terrorist event, for example, but OEM

provides the expertise and resources to handle the chemicals and tell the public what it needs to know.

Cites the 911 Commission Report, which said we suffered from a “lack of imagination.” OEM is here to imagine what might happen. For example, earthquakes and solar storms – they could happen and OEM has to be ready.

Really they are addressing all particular problems that will occur as a result of possible disasters and situations, not necessarily every disaster itself. SPD is one of the closest and most important agencies they work with. SPD was already in the EOC during the Jan. 2008 tornadoes before they even made the first call to activate.

SEMO refers to Highway Patrol as their “cavalry” as a first line of defense and information gathering; it’s the same with OEM and SPD and GCSD.

OEM has technology to trade information with those in the field in real time. Smart boards, cameras on police cars and traffic intersection cameras (not red-light cameras).

EOC is a “one stop shop” for finding more available resources from state and fed and elsewhere for the people in the field as needed, hopefully in a very short amount of time.

The EOC “playbook” has five sections. One is law enforcement. Others are planning, admin, finance and communications. All of these people are supporting the operations in real time.

Question: what is a solar storm? A: Sun is a nuclear furnace that emits explosions all the time. Over the next few years the cycle of explosions is predicted to be stronger, which means energy from the solar blasts can knock out communication, satellites and possibly even electrical grids on Earth.

Question about revenue. A: Greene County pays operations and housing. City of Springfield picks up the rest. Comes out to about 50-50 split. Annual grants from state total about \$20,000, federal annual grants total about \$100,000. They’re all on different fiscal years. OEM serves City and incorporated Greene. Not really serving other municipalities, but assist them because they are smaller.

Question about staff. A: Six full-time and one part-time, plus two grant employees who do strictly education.

All agencies are on the 800 trunk radio system – all the same frequency locally.

Currently looking some alternative ways to reach citizens in an emergency besides just the emergency sirens. Cites the systems that Drury and Evangel have in place to communicate with faculty and students via text message and e-mail blasts.

2) PRESENTATION BY BOBBY LINTON, DIRECTOR OF PRE-TRIAL SERVICES FOR GREENE COUNTY

As people come in they need to look at each individual case and look at what social programs and aspects apply to them.

They are looking at ties to the community, they gather info from the defendants and verify it. They talk to family, employers, friends, etc.

Also do a nationwide and local criminal background check.

Give a report to the judge to supplement what prosecution and defense are giving him.

Also contains an assessment that looks at risk factors such as: substance abuse history, failure to appear in court history.

Also contains mitigating factors such as conditions for release like abuse programs through Sigma House, which increases their chance of coming to court and doing the right things.

They have two pretrial services officers. Have about 170 people under supervision, most of them they are just maintaining contact with them not under intense supervision, so they will talk once a week on the phone, for example. It's proven out that if they stay in contact they will have a much greater chance of doing the right thing.

Look for two things in pretrial report: Will they show up in court and are they a danger to the community? If they are a danger then different conditions apply. Finds that most people don't flee the area but simply don't show up. They are at home or at a relative's house.

Some problems they run into:

- Missouri system was not built for a pretrial service agency. Time tables not necessarily built for these assessments to take place.
- Public defenders have huge case loads. Takes 17 days from the time the judge hears the report to the time they see the people in court.
- Simply don't have enough people in pre-trial services. Two people in their office, compared to 22,000 booked in GC jail each year. So they only see people who cannot make bail. "We know that if we had additional staff members we could be doing a better job than we are now."

They often do transportation. They will take people directly to Sigma House, which is often the only way they will get started.

They don't have any clerical staff, but sometimes use interns from local universities.

Question about percentage failure to appear 11.4 – where? That's people who don't show up in court. Bogs system down because everyone else shows up and the defendant does not. Is there a national benchmark? A: Some are available, and thinks 11.4 is probably not a high rate in comparison.

Question about who goes to find them if they don't show. A: They go to the file and make calls and try to find them and get them to come.

Should bail bondsmen go get these people? That would be nice but the reality is that not everyone has the money to make bail.

Huge need for increase in staff at Public Defender's office. 17 day wait is because they cannot get to the case until then.

Greene County Commission hires his position. Been doing this for four years, spent 12 years doing it in the federal system. He was called upon to start the system in Greene County and feels they have reached a maximum efficiency.

Q: What are the factors in failure to appear? A: Substance abuse is by far the highest. Past failure to appear and absconding parole are the next on the list.

Q: Always in the office? A: Sometimes they are not there. They are doing home visits and taking to Sigma House. Will probably take four over this Friday and bring four back. Noted that a clerical position is badly needed because these two are doing so much themselves, includes transport. Linton says they also do a "courtesy to the court" in picking up from other agencies as well.

Q: About 40 percent of time the court doesn't follow their recommendations. A: It is frustrating, but there has been a "culture of bail" here. Thinks it is a must for judges to attend a good program on pretrial release. "The whole thing has to work as a team."

3) TOUR OF OEM AND EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

Upstairs there is a media room which includes podium and two TVs behind. Rear of the room has plenty of space for cameras as well as outlets to connect for direct sound from the mic.

Next to that is the "briefing room" where elected officials can be brought up to speed on what's happening and shown images and information that are about to be shown to the public and media. Place where the game plan is finalized before going out to media.

EOC is located in the basement of the OEM building, which is a 100 year old building that was originally a candy factory. Building has its own electric generators in case of power loss but they have never had to use them.

There's a control room with more than a dozen displays so someone can just watch and track information from TV, cable and the Web. They can then feed the most pertinent information into the adjacent EOC where reps from all the local agencies are working together.

A radio room has four people working it. They monitor radar and work with NWS and storm spotters to decide whether to and when to "push the button" and turn on the storm sirens.

Many upgrades done here over the last couple of years, and 95 percent of the money for that has come from Homeland Security grants. DHS is big on regionalization, and they have been designated the regional hub for southwest Missouri.

Main room includes many tables that all have phones, Internet access via Ethernet cables and electricity for laptops. Agencies are grouped together according to their roles and duties. TVs and smartboard allow for tracking information in real time with people in the field.

Separate rooms for PIO and a phone bank that takes calls from an emergency line. During first 10 days of Jan. 07 ice storm they had roughly 8,200 call that ran from a woman who wanted comfort food to power going out at a hospital.

Adjourned.