Evacuations and Sheltering Work Group Meeting
Friday, February 9, 2007
1:00-3:30 PM
FEMA Headquarters, 500 C Street, NW, Washington, DC

IN ATTENDANCE

Paul Schwartz (Co-Lead, FEMA), Jim Paturas (Yale New Haven Health System); Jim McCullum and Greg Davis (HHS); Brian Belcher (TSA); LTC Dan Valente (DOD/OSD); Keith Sykes (DOD/JS); Roger Bonnert and Donna O'Berry (DOT); Sondra Mendelson (Writing Team); Laura McClure (HSC); Larry Rowlett and Tom Sparks (TSA); Jay Marts (FEMA); Sohrab Rezvan (ARC); Janice Miller (FEMA); Cheri Roe (DHS/ONCR); Tom Gilboy (EMI); Mick Feeser (VA); John Shey (FEMA/Public Affairs); Frank Jones and Nicole Long (HSI)

MINUTES

The meeting opened with an overview of the progress of the Work Group to date and the goals for today's meeting from the Co-Lead.

The Co-Lead announced that the NRP/NIMS Steering Committee has approved the Evacuations and Sheltering Work Group to create an Incident Annex that is due to the Writing Team on Friday, February 16. The issue resolution papers will also be due to the Writing Team that day. The goal for today's meeting is to review the current draft of the annex and allow the Work Group members to comment and make recommendations. Over the next week, the group will focus on making updates to the issue resolutions papers and the annex. The Co-Lead will forward these documents to the Writing Team. Lastly, the Co-Lead indicated that the group is on target to meet the February 16 deadline with a solid first draft.

The Co-Lead then asked the participants present at FEMA Headquarters and on the telephone to introduce themselves.

A representative from the Companion Animals Work Group presented that group's current findings concerning animal-related issues in the NRP, which include companion animals, service animals, captive animals (laboratory/zoo animals), agricultural (food) animals, and wildlife. The representative urged the group to keep the potential implications for each of these categories of animals on evacuations in mind as they discussed the draft annex; the representative also stated, however, that companion animals and service animals would most likely be the categories that had specific evacuation requirements. The representative also welcomed the opportunity to stay for the meeting and provide comments on the draft annex.

The group then proceeded to examine the current draft version of the annex (Version 8):

- The Co-Lead indicated that the most important contribution of Work Group members at this point in the process was to provide specific language and points of information. Though general concepts may be helpful, these specific recommendations are easier to incorporate and ensure that the interests of the agencies represented are adequately and accurately included.

- The Co-Lead reviewed the general structure of the document; the Work Group provided no concerns over the document organization at this time.
- Work Group members expressed a desire to provide "line-in and line-out" comments on the annex between the meeting and the February 16 deadline. The Co-Lead assured the Work Group that this would be possible. However, he requested that all comments and recommendations from the Work Group be provided no later than close of business on Tuesday, February 13.
- Work Group members discussed whether the comments they provided should represent their agency position or their own personal position as an SME. The Co-Lead indicated that both types of comments would be accepted but that member should indicate whether recommendations were agency positions or personal opinions. He stated that all comments would be given the same level of consideration and this distinction was only for informational purposes in case the Writing Team or Steering Committee had questions regarding the content of the annex.
- The Companion Animals Work Group representative provided information to the group as to the current activities required for the five categories of animals, mentioned previously, in emergencies. The Work Group discussed this information, and where these activities would most appropriately fit into the annex structure.
- A Work Group member indicated that the "Policies" section, as currently provided, truly provided information on the authorities. Therefore, the Work Group members moved to rename this section "Authorities" section and create a new policies section, which would include specific agency policies on overall evacuation issues.
- The Work Group members also discussed the differences between events with notice (i.e., warning, for example, hurricanes or other weather-related events) and events with no notice (for example, terrorist incidents, earthquakes, industrial accidents). They indicated that this distinction was important enough to require a planning assumption, specific group members agreed to provide appropriate language to develop this concept by the February 13 deadline.
- Work Group members indicated as well that they would like to add a new part to the "Responsibilities" section to address specifically the role of State and local authorities for evacuations. The Work Group members agreed to this recommendation and specific members agreed to provide language to add to this section of the document.
- A Work Group member recommended adding a "Structures" section to the Operational Concept section of the annex, explaining that this could include diagrams to provide a template for how evacuation operations might be structured. This member agreed to provide language and diagram concepts for this new section.
- Work Group members expressed concern with the language in some sections of the current annex. They felt that this language was misleading and indicated that the Federal government had a primary decision-making role in evacuation operations and not a role which supported the State and local governments.
    - A counterproposal was offered whereby the annex language would caveat that all Federal actions were in support of State and local requirements as was stated at the very beginning of the annex. The Work Group member believed that this approach covered this requirement. After discussion, the Work Group decided to incorporate language to indicate the Federal government's supporting role throughout the annex.

    - Another Work Group member urged the Work Group to remember that it is not only State and local governments but also tribal authorities that must be considered. A recommendation was made to change the language of "State and local" authorities to "State, local, and tribal" authorities. This recommendation was accepted by the Work Group members.
- A Work Group member expressed concern about the changes occurring with the transfer of transportation contracts from DOT to FEMA. The Work Group members agreed that additional language to explain in more detail this issue and to ensure that the information provided remained accurate throughout the document's lifecycle should be included. Specific members agreed to provide language to further clarify this point in the annex.
- A Work Group member suggested that a list of definitions should be added to the annex. There was general agreement among the Work Group that this would be helpful and should be included. Work Group members agreed to contribute to their ideas.
- A discussion of the most effective way to incorporate Special Needs considerations in the document ensued. The Work Group determined areas where the requirements of Special Needs populations could be included and agreed to provide language and recommendations to further incorporate these issues. The Work Group members also stated that, pending the decisions and resolutions from the Special Needs Work Group, changes might be made in future version of the document.
- After concluding that topic, the Work Group members discussed the need to add language and considerations on the most appropriate ways to bridge capability gaps for pet transportation. One member provided information about his experiences in trying to contract for specialized vehicles during the response to Hurricane Katrina. He indicated that many vehicles did not meet the standards and specifications for pet transportation. In fact, there are very few of these vehicles available in the United States. In other cases, trucking firms did not want to assume liability for transporting pets.
- Lastly, a Work Group member recommended that the "Concept of Operations: Actions" section should be re-structured to include the categories of preparedness, response (both pre- and post-event), and recovery
    - There was discussion among the Work Group members as to whether the Re-entry operations for evacuations were really "recovery" and whether this was the more proper terminology to use.
    - There was general agreement that this structural change could be made. Work Group members agreed to provide recommendations of how to divide the currently-listed actions into these new categories as well as provide additional actions to provide a more adequate set of guidelines.

The Co-Lead reminded the group that all comments and recommendations were to be submitted in the form of specific language changes and should be completed and turned in to the Homeland Security Institute staff by COB on Tuesday, February 13. He also reminded the group that any changes to the issue resolution papers, which had previously been submitted needed to be submitted by that date as well. He thanked the group members present and calling in for their work and the meeting was adjourned.