

## **IMPORTANCE OF 'REGIONAL COOPERATION' HIGHLIGHTED AT EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT GROUP SYMPOSIUM, NOVEMBER 13-14**

It is a daily part of our post 9-11 world. Not a day goes by that homeland security and the response to threats at home and abroad aren't topics of discussion.

An essential part of homeland security is emergency response — the ability of local, state, and federal agencies to react as a unified team in a time of crisis. Cooperation that transcends municipal and jurisdictional lines could mean the difference between success and failure in an emergency situation.

**On November 13 & 14 2003, the Eastern Montgomery County Regional Emergency Management Group hosted its second "Emergency Disaster Incident Training Symposium" (EDITS) at Williamson's, located at Easton and Blair Mill roads, Horsham. The 2003 theme was "One Mission — One Team."**

Speakers during the EDITS symposium included Captain Drew Tracy of the Montgomery County Maryland Police Department, who was a tactical operations commander during the Beltways Sniper Investigation; Pennsylvania State Police Major Lyle Szupinka, who was involved in the recovery efforts on September 11, 2001 when Flight 93 crashed in Somerset County, Pennsylvania; and Federal Emergency Management Agency Federal Coordinating Officer Scott Wells, who helped coordinate recovery efforts during the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster in February.

Additional speakers talked about a variety of topics related to the "One Mission — One Team" theme. *U.S. News & World Report* journalist David Whitman, discussed "learning to live with the media;" and Robert Murgallis of the National Fire Academy, focused on critical decision-making. Traffic consultant John O'Loughlin talked about the difficulties emergency responders face dealing with steadily increasing traffic while Pennsylvania Emergency Management Association Director David Sanko highlighted issues for today's emergency management agencies.

During the EDITS event, U.S. Representative Curt Weldon of Pennsylvania's 7<sup>th</sup> District, received the Eastern Montgomery County Emergency Management Group's "Eagle Award" for his outstanding support for first responders. The Eagle Award is the highest recognition given by the organization. Weldon, also a speaker at the conference stated in his remarks: "Since the terrorist attacks on our country, America has made tremendous progress in providing our first responders with the resources and guidance they will need to respond to 21st century threats. Organizations like the Eastern Montgomery County Regional Emergency Management Group are clearly committed to avoiding the complacency that puts our citizens at risk. Thanks to your efforts, the residents of Montgomery County should feel comfortable knowing that true professionals are ready to respond during a time of need."

Participants at EDITS also had the opportunity to visit exhibits displayed by more than a dozen vendors.

Sponsors for EDITS 2003 included Montgomery County Department of Public Safety, PECO - An Exelon Company, Montgomery County Consortium of Communities, Montgomery County Community College, Temple University Ambler, McNeil Healthcare, St. Joseph's University - Public Safety & Environmental Protection Institute.

The Eastern Montgomery County Regional Emergency Management Group is a partnership between emergency management officials from 12 townships and boroughs, whose jurisdictions comprise 33 percent of the county's total population. Additional partners include the Willow Grove Naval Air Base, Abington Memorial Hospital, Holy Redeemer Hospital, Abington School District, the American Red Cross, PECO Energy, and McNeil Healthcare. The organization has made a commitment to work together on all emergency management issues and incidents.

For more information on EDITS 2003, the Eastern Montgomery County Regional Emergency Management Group, contact Ed Momorella at 267-536-1087 or emomorella@abington.org.

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