

Hurricane Sandy - Minnesota Response Community responds to the East Coast to assist.

In October and November of 2012 personnel from the State of Minnesota All-Hazard Type 3 Incident Management Team (IMT) which is made up of multiple disciplines (fire, EMS, law enforcement, emergency managers, finance, etc.) along with other State and local emergency management personnel deployed to the East Coast. The personnel were deployed to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the State of New York. Based on previous EMAC deployments in 2011 and the ability of personnel from Minnesota to work effectively and be flexible during these deployments, these other states reached out to Minnesota for assistance. The personnel were deployed through the EMAC (Emergency Management Assistance Compact) to provide EMAC A-team support and State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) support to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the State of New York. The EMAC system is coordinated by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety – Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

The first team deployed on Saturday/Sunday October 26th and 27th just in advance of Hurricane Sandy making landfall and the last teams deployed came home on Thanksgiving Day. The first team deployed was a team of five people representing emergency management, EMS, communications, and the fire service. They were first deployed to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to support the State EOC. The team was deployed there for three days and fortunately for the Commonwealth not a lot of damage occurred in Massachusetts. As a result of the damage and resources needs, the team was re-deployed to the State of New York to support the State EOC operations in Albany, New York.

In both locations the team worked with state and local officials to support the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activity. The State EOC in Massachusetts and in New York State are located in underground bunkers and have fully state of the art facilities and technology to support the response and recovery to a natural or man-made disaster event. While the teams were in Massachusetts and New York they worked in support of State EOC operations in the areas of logistics, planning, air operations, finance, and EMAC operations areas. Each deployment also creates opportunities for us to strengthen our emergency management training and plans in our local areas. A few key lessons learned are:

- Electricity – power continues to be a key factor for individual, organizational, and government operations
- Fuel – do you get your fuel from a gas station? What happen when there is no electricity and they can not pump fuel? Do you have a contingency plan?
- Teams worked both daytime and overnight shifts – be clear with personnel that this may occur on future deployments
- Important to maintain situational awareness for incoming personnel about what is “normal” and any concerns for specific areas
- Briefings in an EOC are very important – short but detailed

- Maps for outside agencies are critical – knowledge of landmarks, areas and common terminology
- Technology is important – computers, printers, cell phones, specific software packages are important. However, it is important to think about paper forms, resource and logistics tracking spreadsheets, etc if/when technology options are not available
- Incident Action Plans are important – if developed it should be used by everyone
- Flexibility is key – being open to mission assignments is valuable
- Little things make a difference – help out wherever, including things like emptying trash
- Need to have enough food and water for everyone throughout the day and night
- Important to have team members complete ICS 214a forms

The deployment continued in New York State with several other teams replacing the initial Minnesota team members. Each team continued to support the State of New York. Unique to this deployment in comparison to previous deployments were a couple of areas:

- The MN All-Hazard Type 3 IMT staff was the primary resources for staffing to fill the team positions. Staffing was provided by the following agencies: MN Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Excelsior Fire District, Hennepin County Emergency Management, HCMC EMS, Allina Health, Anoka County Emergency Management, Benton County Public Health, Brooklyn Park Fire, Itasca County Sheriff's Office, Isanti Fire District, Eden Prairie Fire Department, Blaine Police Department, Richfield Fire Department, Waite Park Public Works, Centennial Fire District, New Brighton Public Safety, and Ramsey County Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Many public and private partnerships existed in this deployment with many of the EMS assets deployed being private assets.
- State emergency management officials and local emergency management officials were integrated in the teams in order to provide the best experience and resources for accomplishing the support needs.

Written by:

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