

MARCH 20, 2012

TO: HALIFAX SELECTBOARD

FROM: LESSONS LEARNED FROM IRENE TASK FORCE

FINAL REPORT

The Lessons Learned From Irene Task Force (LLTF) met twice, January 20th and February 16th, 2012. The participants at each meeting varied slightly, with the following individuals making just one, or both, meetings:

Stephanie Aldrich, Maggie Bartenhagen, Earl Holtz, John LaFlamme, Linda Lyon, Christina Moore, Brad Rafus, Everett Wilson

The following list of suggestions is accompanied by recommended responsible party or parties. If there is more than one party listed next to a given suggestion, the first party listed would assume primary responsibility, with assistance from the second &/or third party listed.

EOC NEEDS

Emergency Management Director (EMD):

The LLTF strongly recommends development of a job description for the EMD. The State has a template for EMDs and some surrounding Towns also have job descriptions for this position that could be used to assist the creation of one for Halifax. This position could then be advertised widely to notify and attract multiple qualified candidates. **Selectboard, Volunteers with Emergency Management experience**

The Vermont League of Cities & Towns has not categorically identified a potential conflict of interest in having the EMD be a Selectboard member. However, the LLTF recommends the Selectboard seriously consider having this position be held by someone not also occupying a seat on the Selectboard. **Selectboard**

All-Hazards Plan & Toolbox: (Plan as a comprehensive overview, Toolbox as a ready-to-use "executive summary" with key information readily available)

Prepare an effective, written, All-Hazards Plan and accompanying "Toolbox" and train and drill to this Plan. All contact information (people, telephone numbers, etc.) must be in the All-Hazards Plan documentation. Adapt and amend Plan, as needed. **EMD**

Prepare and place in readily-accessible form (3-ring binder, etc.) a Toolbox of information to be used by EOC officials during an incident. This may include, but may not be limited to:

1. Pre-identifying the resources that might be needed (e.g.: bulldozers, electricians, sources of material, etc.)
2. Establishing multiple-year contracts for needed resources.
3. Creating a "standing orders" situation with suppliers.
4. Listing contacts and resources (both people and material). Keep it current.
5. Build in redundancies ("deep bench" alternatives).

EMD

All-Hazard Plan should include resources, procedures, rules at the County, State and FEMA level, for bridge repair/replacement. Plan and Toolbox should contain glossary of terms for ease of use and understanding. Plan and possibly Toolbox should include the best routes out of Town, and communication information re: neighboring Towns (who is contact? How best to contact?, etc.). Plan and/or Toolbox should include list of resources (for office supplies & other material), including how to access, pay for supplies, etc. Plan should state that the Town shall hold one or more public information meeting(s) as soon as it is feasible after an incident. **EMD**

Windham Regional Commission has resources that Halifax may be able to tap into. This could include help with incident preparation and developing an All-Hazards Plan. **EMD, WRC Commissioners**

Location:

Emergency Operations Center (EOC): Safe location with respect to flooding and other potential hazards; accessibility; adequate parking. The school (in addition to, or instead of, Town Hall) could be a good location for an EOC if school were not in session. However, if students were in school, extra precautions for security would need to be developed. **Selectboard, School Board & School Principal**

Physically separate Town operations (fire, road, etc.) from EOC location so that respective functions do not interfere with each other. **Emergency Management Director (EMD), Selectboard**

Shelter:

The Town needs a protocol for establishing when the school will be used as a shelter and who would run it. The residents need to know how to find out

(website, phone number) if there is shelter available. Would there be a different location designated for short vs. long-term shelter? Regarding using the school or town office as emergency shelter, the response plan needs to be comprehensive. Whitingham has showers and Red Cross presence, perhaps making it a better location for (short? long-term?) emergency shelter. The Town needs a secure place to store shelter supplies (e.g.: a site protected from weather and mice). Perhaps consider a dedicated distribution center or storage area for these materials/supplies. **Selectboard, EMD, School Board/Principal**

Good Communication:

Radio; computer; phones (including satellite telephone, particularly if cell reception is poor or unavailable) fax, photocopier (plan for redundancy in systems) Need to have 2-way radios that can operate from difficult locations (e.g., intersection of Deer Park Rd. and Green River Rd.). This is a task that has been started, emphasis is on identifying solutions and implementation. During an emergency response, how can Halifax best use EMS and Fire personnel who have radios? Town should establish "precincts" in isolated or difficult-to-access locations during emergencies, with point-people in those areas identified and their duties/responsibilities outlined (training needed?). **Selectboard, EMS, Road Supervisor**

Integrate Town Administrative and financial functions into EOC during incident time period. **EMD**

Effective work space:

Clean; quiet (especially for phone communications); bathrooms; effective climate control; multiple work rooms; secure storage (including files); appropriate and adequate furniture and accessories (e.g.: chairs, tables trash cans, etc.); basic office supplies. **Selectboard**

Access to school key in the event of an emergency: Perhaps the EMD, Deputy EMD, Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief, EMS Chief and Deputy EMS Chief. Some or all of these people need to have knowledge of resources (emergency supplies, paper/computers, petty cash, etc.) located on Town Hall/School property and where they are located. **Selectboard**

Incident Command System and National Incident Management System:

Identify and record what should "trigger" the opening of the Emergency Operations Center. Consider all manner of emergencies and develop "triggers" for each. Perhaps this should be established as a Town "statute". **EMD, Selectboard**

Identify (but keep this information secure) the "special needs" people in Town who may require specific assistance in an incident. This information is important to have internally and available to chain-of-command when disasters occur. We would provide this information to KCF 415. **EMD**

Recommend that Incident chain-of-command is trained in and uses Disaster LAN (local area network) during an incident, as well as ongoing training on ICS, including courses beyond ICS 100. The training should include practical ICS exercises. **EMD, Selectboard**

Accountability & Other:

Once "state of emergency" is declared by the Selectboard (utilizing above "trigger" mechanism), the chain-of-command must be established and made clear. This "chain" would identify which individuals have budget and executive power during the declared incident. **Selectboard, EMD**

Person or Persons designated by Selectboard in chain-of-command must make decisions (based on facts and input), communicate incoming information and the decisions they make to others who need to know, and document any decisions made and the reasoning behind them. Transparency is important and necessary for establishing "after action" reviews following an incident. **Selectboard, EMD**

Build in redundancy re: the above. **EMD**

Recommend that a "Communications Officer" and a Procurement Officer (who can authorize expenditures) be named and assigned during an incident. **EMD**

Halifax needs to institute an appropriate system (volunteer coordinator?) to assign, work with and track volunteers. This would be a function of the Planning Section in ICS. **EMD**

Town needs to have updated maps that identify the locations of homes and also the homes where people might need assistance (e.g.: the elderly or disabled). It might be useful to identify residences for permanent vs. seasonal people as well. **Town Clerk, EMD**

Town needs updated & comprehensive maps of all bridges and culverts. Windham Regional Commission may have some resources, including GIS capabilities for such data. **EMD, Road Commissioner**

It is recommended that the Town website be updated regularly with incident information, and that more than one person is able to do this. **EMD, Town Internet Committee, Town Clerk**