

The National Response Plan An Update

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[Welcome / Introduction]

Amy Sebring: On behalf of Avagene Moore and myself, welcome to the EIIP Virtual Forum! Avagene is on remote today, joining us from an airport in New York City!

Today's topic is the current status of the National Response Plan. Many of you have been involved in the draft review and comment phase, and the good news is we are nearing the end of the process.

It is my pleasure to introduce Barbara Yagerman, Associate Director, Operations and Response, with the Operations Integration Staff, Department of Homeland Security. Barbara is responsible for working on the development, interagency coordination, and implementation of the National Response Plan. Previously, she served as a Senior Program Specialist with the Response Division Planning Section of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). During her tenure in the FEMA Response Division she was responsible for issues relating to the Federal Response Plan terrorism, bio-terrorism and catastrophic disaster response planning. She served as FEMA representative on the DHS-White House National Response Plan (NRP), and other senior level counter-terrorism and natural disaster emergency management planning efforts.

Barbara, welcome to the Virtual Forum, and I now turn the floor over to you to start us off please.

[Presentation]

Barbara Yagerman: Thank you Amy. The purpose of this update is to discuss the basic content of the NRP, the development process, and implementation strategy, but first let me give you a brief description of current status.

The Base Plan is complete and was approved by the Homeland Security Council Deputies Committee on August 31. As of today, we are putting finishing touches on the Annexes, and expect the NRP with Annexes to be ready for review/ approval by the Homeland Security Council Deputies Committee.

Now, as many of you may already be aware, the development of a National Response Plan is mandated in the Homeland Security Act of 2002 and Homeland Security Presidential Directive #5 (HSPD-5), including a single comprehensive national approach, coordination structures/mechanisms, direction for incorporation/ concurrent implementation of existing plans, and a consistent approach to reporting incidents, providing assessments and making recommendations to the President, DHS Secretary and HSC.

The NRP will supersede the Federal Response Plan (FRP), Domestic Terrorism Concept of Operations Plan (CONPLAN), Federal Radiological Emergency Response Plan (FRERP) and the Interim National Response Plan (INRP). Many of the familiar concepts and mechanisms associated with these plans will be carried over to the NRP, such as the Emergency Support Function (ESF) process of the FRP, and the elements introduced in the INRP, such as the Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC), Interagency Incident Management Group (IIMG), Principal Federal Official (PFO), Joint Field Office (JFO).

The NRP, as the core plan, is designed to link to an array of national-level hazard-specific contingency plans, such as the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP). These plans can be implemented independently during localized incidents, or concurrently with the NRP during Incidents of National Significance.

The NRP includes the Base Plan and supporting annexes and appendices. The Base Plan outlines the coordinating structures and the processes for the national incident management. The Base Plan includes the concept of operations, roles & responsibilities, specific incident management activities and plan management and maintenance.

Emergency Support Function Annexes group capabilities and resources into functions most likely needed during an incident. The ESF Annexes describe the responsibilities of primary and support agencies that are involved providing support to a State or other Federal agencies during Incidents of National Significance.

Support Annexes provide the procedures and administrative requirements common to most incidents, such as Public Affairs, Financial Management, and Worker Safety and Health.

Incident Annexes describe the procedures and roles and responsibilities for specific contingencies, such as bioterrorism, radiological response, catastrophic incidents, etc. In many cases, these annexes are typically supported by more detailed supporting plans.

The Appendices contain other relevant information including terms, definitions etc. Also included is a compendium providing a complete listing and summary of national interagency plans, which serve as support plans to the NRP.

The NRP establishes the national framework for assessing domestic incidents to determine the appropriate level of Federal involvement, and for coordinating interagency incident management efforts for events considered "Incidents of National Significance." The definition of Incidents of National Significance is directly based on the criteria established in HSPD-5:

- 1) when another Federal department or agency has requested DHS assistance;
- 2) when State/local capabilities are overwhelmed and Federal assistance is requested;
- 3) when an incident substantially involves more than one Federal department/agency;

4) when the Secretary has been directed by the President to assume incident management responsibilities.

A basic premise of the NRP is that incidents are handled at the lowest level possible. DHS becomes involved through the routine reporting and monitoring of threats and incidents, and/or when notified of an incident or potential incident of the severity, magnitude, complexity and/or threat to homeland security that it is considered an Incident of National Significance. DHS establishes multi-agency structures at the headquarters, regional and field level to coordinate efforts and provide support to the on-scene incident command structures. Other Federal agencies carry out their incident management and emergency response authorities within this overarching framework.

The NRP has been developed through an interagency process designed to incorporate input from a wide range of stakeholders. The plan was drafted by an interagency Writing Team based on 1) guiding principles established by the Homeland Security Council, 2) input from various stakeholder groups, and 3) feedback from multiple rounds of review. Throughout the process, the Homeland Security Council continued to provide guidance and served as the multi-agency body for review and approval.

The NRP reflects 3 rounds of stakeholder review on the Base Plan and 2 rounds of review on the annexes – totaling over 8000 individual comments. Through 3 rounds of review, there were 4260 total comments on the Base Plan. More than 70% of these were accepted and incorporated into the plan. Of the remainder, 17% were rejected, primarily due to being outside the scope of the plan or contrary to the guiding principles, 6% were noted and required no changes; and 6% were forwarded for action elsewhere – for example, some issues raised were NIMS issues and were sent to the NIMS Integration Center. Stakeholder feedback was the most critical component of the development process and substantially determined the final content of the plan.

I will now wrap up my presentation with the timeline of upcoming activities that I mentioned earlier. We are planning a coordinated roll out effort to make sure that everyone can become familiar with the elements and implications of the plan. The "Roll out Effort" will include series of seminars in 5 cities to be announced shortly after approval of the plan is formally announced. We also have plans for ongoing education, training and exercises. Initial awareness level training will be posted on the web when the NRP is released.

Thank you. That concludes my remarks. I will turn the floor back over to our moderator to take your questions.

[Audience Questions & Answers]

Question:

Ed Kostiuik: Barbara, First off I applauded you and others with DHS/FEMA on providing us, in Emergency Management with guidelines on deploying our assets and resources to incidents. I have closely followed and requested changes (some of which has been approved) to the NRP over the past few months. Final remark I have sold it across our state since you are aware that Oklahoma has had its share of disasters and overwhelmingly it will be supported from the local EM to the State level. My question is: How are other Government and non-government entities accepting the NRP? I understand HSPD-5 "forces" them to comply but are they overall volunteering to accept its standards? As an IC I am concerned about calling in out of state resources and finding out others do not accept its concept!

Barbara Yagerman: We received more than 8000 total comments and recommendation. My sense is that the emergency management, responder, and private sector communities support the concepts and are anxious to participate.

Question:

Bill Nicholson: What are the similarities and differences between the Base Plan and the Final Draft that came out recently? And how will rural Volunteer EMS and Fire Departments that do not have funding be able to comply?

Barbara Yagerman: When the NRP is approved it will be posted on the DHS Web site. There are differences in the final approved NRP and the draft that you may have seen. The implementation of the plan should enhance local capabilities, but should not put any additional burden on those resources. HSPD-5 mandates compliance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The NRP is based on the concept of support, cooperation and mechanisms for partnership and working together. There is no mandate for compliance with the NRP. State and local governments are "encouraged" to work within the concept of operations.

Amy Sebring: (Mandatory compliance for NIMS is for federal agencies; local agency compliance is "voluntary.")

Question:

Mike VanZummeren: From what I understand the NRP relates more to those who manage disasters. With that said, what role do you see the air medical transport community playing in relation to the NRP?

Barbara Yagerman: The role would be much the same as it was under the FRP, or any of the other Federal plans incorporated into the NRP.

Question:

Ed Kostiuik: Without putting you on the spot, can you provide us with a more definitive timeline for release? Any chance of the 5 cities so we can book flights?

Barbara Yagerman: I wish I could provide a definitive timeline; I would say we are within a few weeks of final approval and announcement. As for the cities, I defer to Secretary Ridge to make that announcement.

Question:

Bill Nicholson: When you say there will be no additional burden to local rural volunteer entities, do you mean that the NRP and NIMS can be adopted and complied with without the need for additional training in ICS, putting together Mutual Aid Agreements, modifying SOPs, and so on? Aren't these significant unfunded burdens for small rural response entities? Local compliance is "voluntary," but the stick of no federal FIRE Grants or EMPG funds is very real.

Barbara Yagerman: You are correct, of course, the NIMS does require training, exercise, certification. I was referring to the NRP requirements. The NRP is built on existing systems and provides greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of Federal departments and agencies in support of, and in coordination with, State, local, tribal and private sector partners.

Question:

Audra Kunf: What effect, if any, will the NRP consolidation of Federal plans have on planning efforts at the local level? Especially smaller jurisdictions which are compiling (frantically) the new Haz Mit plan, with all the additional info (background, technical, historical, etc.) required? These plans are turning into encyclopedias, and federal requirements for all this additional paper keeps growing.

Barbara Yagerman: Our goal was to preserve and mirror the existing structure of state emergency operations plans to the degree that we could. There are three new ESFs, some modifications to a few of the ESFs. The new structures in the plan – the HSOC, the Joint Field Office, the Interagency Incident Management Group, primarily impact the Federal partners.

Question:

Ray Pena: Will the latest version (what's the date?) of the NRP and annexes be used/referenced for TOPOFF 3 in April?

Barbara Yagerman: It would seem reasonable, but since I am not involved in the T3 planning, I cannot say.

Question:

Barry Hoerz: Will the "voluntary" cooperation of rural units be dependent on FEMA grant availability?

Barbara Yagerman: I am not the right person to answer that. Perhaps you could get Gil Jamieson, who now heads the NIMS Integration Center to talk about the grant process.

Amy Sebring: I think the question is, is the NRP related to federal grants? Correct me if I am wrong Barbara, but my understanding is that the NRP is not directly related to the grant process.

Barbara Yagerman: As far as I know, there are no Federal grants associated with the NRP.

Barry Hoerz: Yes, Amy, that's what I meant.

Barbara Yagerman: The only grants that I know of are the EMPG, and I believe that there is enough flexibility in those funds to permit NRP related planning activities.

Question:

Isabel McCurdy: Barbara, was there consultation with Canada Public Safety during the plan process?

Barbara Yagerman: We worked extensively with the Department of State. DHS Deputy Secretary Loy just recently went to Canada to meet with the Canadian emergency management leadership. NRP implementation and implication for cross-border coordination was definitely on the agenda.

Question:

Jonathan Dunfee: Are there any planned exercises in the near future to show/test the final NRP in action? It was mentioned earlier that TOPOFF may not use NRP.

Barbara Yagerman: We are working with ODP and EMI on training and exercise issues. There will be an online independent study available as soon as the plan is released; the course number is IS 800.

Amy Sebring: To clarify, I think Barbara meant that she assumes TOPOFF 3 will, but cannot speak to that?

Barbara Yagerman: That is correct Amy. It may be that the planning is too far along.

Question:

Amy Sebring: Are any roles defined for the private sector and non-governmental organizations in this plan Barbara? At least liaison perhaps?

Barbara Yagerman: Yes. We define the roles in the base plan and also have annexes on both private sector and donations management.

Question:

Bill Nicholson: Why were the NRP and NIMS not adopted pursuant to the requirements of the Administrative Procedures Act as rules, as was the NCP? The APA has notice and comment, and public hearing requirements, as well as evaluation of least intrusive options and lowest economic impacts.

Barbara Yagerman: The plan was developed in close coordination with the White House, the interagency team, and state and local stakeholders. We worked closely with DHS and White House attorneys throughout the process, and we adhered to all requirements that they stipulated were appropriate.

Comment:

Ed Kostiuk: Amy asked me to provide the link to the latest NRP version: http://all-hands.net/pn/modules/Downloads/store_folder/ICS/NRP_final_Draft_June-30-04.pdf

Barbara Yagerman: The official NRP will be posted on DHS.gov as soon as it is released. The last official version of the plan to be circulated was August 24. The August 24 version was a draft and has had changes since.

Question:

Amy Sebring: Barbara, the federal agencies are currently operating under the Interim NRP. I assume there will be an after-action report (AAR) for the recent hurricane events. My question is do you expect any impact on the final NRP?

Barbara Yagerman: The final NRP includes an implementation schedule that mandates a one-year review and revision based on real world and exercise experience. Since they are still operating under the INRP, I do not think these events would represent a true test for the NRP.

Comment:

Ed Kostiuk: I asked about AAR for the recent hurricanes, and have been promised they will be addressed under www.llis.gov and both the NIMS and NRP Lessons Learned will be addressed (according to DHS officials).

Barbara Yagerman: That is part of the standard process for all events.

[Closing]

Amy Sebring: That's all we have time for today. Thank you very much Barbara for taking the time to share this valuable information with us today. Please stand by while we make some quick announcements.

We have a new partner to announce, the State of Vermont Emergency Management, POC is Robert Weinert, Emergency Management Coordinator, and their URL is <http://www.dps.state.vt.us/vem/>. If your organization is interested in becoming an EIIP Partner, please see the link on our home page, "Partnership for You."

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Thanks to everyone for participating today; great questions and comments. We stand adjourned but before you go, please help me show our appreciation to Barbara for a fine job.