A Bittersweet Farewell

A melancholy, albeit appreciative tone has been resonating within those whom have heard of Melissa Rodrigo’s departure from the Cuyahoga County Emergency Management Agency (CCEMA).

Over the past few years Melissa has devoted herself to a life of public service in our County as the Manager of CCEMA. During this relatively brief period of time her accomplishments have been many and her dedication unwavering.

Although it is with heavy hearts that we say goodbye to Melissa, the sadness is tempered by our gratitude for all of her efforts along with our optimism for her new beginning and continued success.

Practice Makes Perfect for SWAT

The Ameritrust complex in downtown Cleveland was under siege from February 1-5, as approximately 30 members from eight SWAT teams throughout the County participated in a Weapons of Mass Destruction, Tactical Operations training course inside the empty structure.

Conducted by trainers from Louisiana State University, National Center for Biomedical Research and Training, Academy of Counter Terrorist Education, the course prepares tactical law enforcement teams to perform their functional roles during tactical operations involving terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and hazardous materials environments.

The tactical portion of the training emphasized the application of appropriate CBRNE (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and High-Yield Explosives) considerations during tactical operations, while conducting Close Quarter Battle (CQB) in a CBRNE environment.

The classroom training provided participants with instruction on the current trends in WMD terrorism, recognizing and identifying WMD related equipment and materials, monitoring and detecting WMD materials, use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and conducting decontamination operations.

Utilizing Homeland Security funding, over $100,000 of training was provided at no cost to the participating teams or their departments.
Repatri-what?: Repatriation defined and what it means for our County

When the lives of US citizens living abroad are threatened by the circumstances of the foreign country they are residing in, the need to secure their swift and safe passage home becomes crucial. Whether the result of a widespread disaster or the political unrest of a region, through the process of repatriation US citizens are evacuated from volatile foreign lands and safely returned to the United States.

Cleveland Hopkins International Airport was recently identified as a repatriate airport. Currently, it is the only airport in Ohio with this designation. Therefore, to address the possibility of our area’s participation in the repatriation program, work has been underway to develop a Cleveland-Cuyahoga Repatriation Plan. In the event eligible repatriates are routed to Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, this plan will serve as the framework to provide the relocated citizens with the temporary assistance necessary for their transition and reestablishment in the U.S.

The development of the Cleveland-Cuyahoga Repatriation Plan has been a collaborative effort among many stakeholders. Namely, the City of Cleveland Division of Public Safety/Department of Homeland Security, the Cuyahoga County Emergency Management Agency, the Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, the Cuyahoga County Employment and Family Services, the American Red Cross, and the Greater Cleveland RTA.

The groups mentioned above have been working together for the past 8 months and are currently in the process of making the final adjustments to the Plan. Once the Cleveland-Cuyahoga Repatriation Plan is completed, it will be submitted to the State of Ohio for approval.

Type 1 Hazmat Team Readies for Action

For over a year the four Hazmat Teams in the County have been collectively developing a joint Cuyahoga County Type 1 Hazmat/WMD Team. Once completed, the team will be comprised of selected Hazmat/WMD technicians from the Cleveland Division of Fire, the West Shore Hazmat Team, the Chagrin /Southeast Hazmat Team, and the Southwest Emergency Response Team.

The mission of the Cuyahoga County Type 1 Hazmat/WMD Response Team is to merge specially identified and trained personnel with specific material assets of the existing municipal hazmat teams into one highly trained, well equipped team. While the four regional response teams will continue to exist and respond primarily to local incidents, the Type 1 Team will be utilized for responding to outside county or state hazardous material incidents requiring a Type 1 capability.

Applications have been reviewed to identify the personnel to staff the positions within the two platoons of the Type 1 Team. The Team has predicated a go-live date within the year.
Towards the close of January personnel from Amtrak’s Office of Emergency Preparedness were in town to conduct a week-long training opportunity. The Public Safety personnel throughout the County who attended received valuable training on passenger train emergency response.

Although the training presented a great deal of pertinent information on the routine and emergency procedures regarding Amtrak trains and operations, the primary focus was car-entry and evacuation of passengers and crewmembers.

As rail passenger cars and locomotives are engineered to withstand extreme stress under all types of conditions; the training was of particular importance in that it outlined the locations on trains conducive for the fastest forcible entry and extrication. Important insight into the precautions applicable to railroad equipment, stations, and yards was offered to the participants as well.

The training was conducted at the Cleveland Fire Academy and was sponsored by the Cuyahoga County LEPC (Local Emergency Planning Committee) at no cost to the participants.

16 County LEPC Exercise Focuses on HAZMAT

On March 18 Cuyahoga County’s emergency operations center (EOC) came to life as CCEMA staff worked with various public safety personnel and members from the American Red Cross in a 16 County Hazardous Material Functional Exercise. Roughly 650 people across the state participated, including local agency partners and volunteers. This exercise is held annually to test the Local Emergency Planning Committee’s (LEPC) HAZMAT Plan.

Under the attentive gaze of evaluators from the State and around the County, the exercise participants labored together to address an ever-changing, and escalating scenario.

As time progressed, the scenario’s plot thickened to eventually involve a train derailment, chlorine leak, and fire—all positioned against the backdrop of a severe ice storm.

Utilizing the CAMEO Suite (Computer-Aided Management of Emergency Operations), the participants were able to perform an array of tasks quickly and with minimal effort. As they navigated their way through the seemingly perfect storm of hazards, participants were able to use CAMEO (with the help of its sister software MARPLOT and ALOHA) to generate plume models to estimate the effects of the chlorine leak and fire, predict impacted populations, and map evacuation routes. All of this valuable information was quietly generated as other participants communicated with on-scene command and coordinated the necessary resources.

After the exercise concluded, a comprehensive after action evaluation ensued. During this discussion, the evaluators offered their positive remarks along with criticism and recommendations. Moreover, the participants were encouraged to share the challenges they experienced as a result of the roles they were assigned.

The exercise was viewed as a success by the evaluators as CCEMA has recently received concurrence from the State that the Cuyahoga County LEPC HAZMAT Plan is considered viable. The State’s approval is paramount in that it allows for the LEPC’s continued eligibility for grant money.
Tactical Medics Operate

In January of this year, 8 tactical medics from multiple SWAT teams attended a 2 week long training at the International School of Tactical Medicine (ISTM) in Palm Springs, California. For those of us who are unfamiliar with the job description of tactical medics; simply put they are a specialized, highly-trained group whose mission is to administer medical assistance during tactical operations.

The ISTM faculty is comprised of tactically trained physicians and law-enforcement professionals who provide a comprehensive didactic, tactical medicine curriculum through hands on training, firearms instruction, and personalized attention.

The mission of the ISTM is to teach the fundamentals of tactical operations in conjunction with the integration and application of operational medicine. To that end, “Officer Survival” is the fundamental goal of the ISTM.

Using over $40,000.00 of UASI grant money, this training was provided at no cost to the respective departments of the tactical medics who attended.

Upcoming Trainings and Events

To find out details or to register for any of trainings, please visit: http://ja.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/training-calendar.aspx. Also, as trainings and events are continuously scheduled, it would be advantageous to routinely visit the website to establish the most current listing of upcoming events.