

MARYLAND'S ROADMAP FOR IMPROVED PREPAREDNESS

In November 2007 Governor O'Malley requested that James Lee Witt Associates (JLWA) conduct an independent assessment of the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and Maryland's overall level of preparedness. The purpose of this assessment was to identify opportunities for improvement and provide specific recommendations to improve Maryland's safety and preparedness. Given the importance of public safety, rather than simply providing a final report, the administration requested that JLWA identify issues on an on-going basis throughout their efforts so that they could be acted upon immediately. The report that is released today represents an overall summary of JLWA's findings throughout their efforts to work with Maryland and the "roadmap" presented below highlights some of the actions the administration has already taken as a result of JLWA's findings and recommendations.

ORGANIZATION

- **The Governor established the new Director of MEMA as a direct report on a daily basis and will introduce legislation to formally institute the change.** The Governor intends to work with the General Assembly to amend the Annotated Code of Maryland to provide that the Director of MEMA directly reports to the Governor. The issue of establishing MEMA as an independent agency will be explored for future consideration. MEMA will issue a memorandum to local jurisdictions clarifying MEMA's status as a direct report and the roles and responsibilities of both state and local entities during an emergency.
- **Working with local partners to make MEMA a more responsive agency and stronger partner to local government.** MEMA has initiated a large number of internal changes and reforms to make the Agency more responsive to local government. The MEMA Director has instituted monthly "any issues" directors' conference calls with Maryland's 26 local emergency managers, and the MEMA "Coordinator" newsletter. Since taking on his position, the new Director of MEMA has personally met with each emergency manager across the state in their own jurisdiction to assess any local concerns and establish better communications.

CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS/GOVERNMENT

- **Established backup State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) locations.** The State returned to sound practices such as establishing Maryland's first physical backup locations for the State EOC and conducting training and familiarization, deploying materials (maps, records, etc) and will utilize the backup EOCs in State drills, including Governor and Cabinet-level exercises.
- **Reviewed and revised the State's Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP).** MEMA launched a government-wide revision of the State's Continuity of Operations (COOP) plan and is assessing creating an Information Technology Disaster Recovery Plan, including acquisition of an off-site backup and redundant systems.

- **Overhauling the State’s system to assist local jurisdictions in providing and requesting mutual aid.** Resources available for use during emergencies are given a “typing” according to National Incident Management System (NIMS) requirements and stored in Maryland’s WebEOC system. MEMA has launched an overhaul of the resource management system with a goal of improving to an almost real-time resource management system, and a more robust typing system. The new system will have a formal auditing system to ensure accuracy of both state and local resources.
- **Reform of internal EOC operations consistent with the best national standards.** The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) has been reorganized to be compliant with the National Incident Management System (NIMS), training has been increased and cross-training for redundancy implemented, and MEMA is working with JLWA on a follow-on analysis to further improve internal SEOC operations.

PLANNING

- **MEMA re-established a Planning division.** MEMA has returned to sound practices, establishing an emergency planning division, collecting updated versions of all local Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) and is creating a “preparedness cycle” or schedule for regular review and revision of local emergency plans, the State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP), long term recovery plans, and many others.
- **Top-to-bottom review of the State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP).** MEMA has been conducting a top-to-bottom assessment of the base State EOP based on the JLWA recommendations, which include a detailed section-by-section analysis of the SEOP that the State is using as a valuable roadmap to revise the plan. The revised plan will be promulgated by the Governor in 2009.
- **Improved internal and external strategic planning.** The State is releasing a strategic plan for homeland security and emergency management today. MEMA is in the process of reevaluating and rewriting its own strategic vision and plan in-line with the agency’s homeland security and broader emergency management responsibilities. There is a planned bi-annual or better review cycle for the strategic plan.
- **Improved coordination with local government and improved capability to deal with large-scale incidents.** MEMA has initiated a series of actions to improve the State’s ability to deal with a catastrophic event, including identifying and signing MOUs with a series of facilities to serve as “large capacity shelters” in the event local shelters are overwhelmed or Maryland must accommodate a large-scale evacuation from a neighboring city such as Washington, DC. Working in partnership with locals, MEMA and local emergency management had engaged in statewide evacuation and shelter planning and created tools such as the shelter “checklist.”

- **Increased attention in the planning process for the elderly and other vulnerable populations.** MEMA has organized the agencies that advocate for the elderly and individuals vulnerable and in need of special consideration during emergencies develop a strategic set of priorities that will guide revision of the SEOP.

TRAINING & EXERCISES

- **MEMA has expanded the role of its Exercise/Training Branch to include the capability to provide additional statewide training and exercises to state and local stakeholders.** MEMA developed Maryland’s first statewide exercise schedule and is currently working on a new strategic exercise and training plan. MEMA will build out additional capabilities to provide technical assistance on drills and exercises for local government and additional opportunities for local elected leadership to participate in preparedness exercises.

FUSION CENTER AND CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION

- **The Maryland State Police has assumed directorship of the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC) and has reorganized the Intelligence Analysis Section to lead the implementation of new products such as the statewide threat assessment.** MSP is working now to develop a standardized Suspicious Activity Report (SAR) for collecting and reporting local law enforcement intelligence information, increasing efforts to share information with private sector partners through sector-specific outreach, and identifying solutions to consolidate intelligence data and information into a single system and network it to officers in the field.
- **Increased analytical staffing has been provided to the MCAC.** The Analytical Staffing in the Intelligence Analysis Section of the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Section has increased by 12 analysts as a result of personnel from the Maryland State Police, Homeland Security and Intelligence Division being reassigned to the MCAC.
- **MSP has created Regional Information Centers in Eastern Shore and in Western and Southern Maryland.** MSP created three Regional Information Centers (RICs) on the Eastern Shore and in Western and Southern Maryland to build out a “hub and spoke” model for statewide intelligence efforts to improve the timeliness, accuracy and relevance of information sharing with local law enforcement and provide better regionally based analysis of cross border issues (including gangs, drugs, weapons, etc).
- **Acting on the JLWA recommendations, the State’s Critical Infrastructure Program has been co-located with the MCAC and additional personnel and resources have been added.**
- **Regular meetings and joint strategic planning is now being conducted between the directors of the Maryland Joint Operations Center (MJOC), MEMA’s 24-Hour Watch Center, and the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC).**