



# LEMA LEDGER

Quarterly Newsletter of the Lancaster County Emergency Management Agency

JANUARY 2011 — "ALWAYS BE READY!"

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

- For emergency management updates, keep an eye on our website at [www.lemaco.lancaster.pa.us](http://www.lemaco.lancaster.pa.us)
- Local Emergency Planning Committee meetings are held at the Lancaster County Public Safety Training Center. All meetings start at 1 pm. Meeting schedule is as follows:
  - February 3, 2011
  - April 7, 2011
  - June 2, 2011
  - August 4, 2011
  - October 6, 2011

## QUARTERLY TRAINING

March 24, 2011—7pm—930 pm.  
The topic for this session will be Three Mile Island (TMI) in anticipation for the bi-annual exercise scheduled in April of 2011.

### Other Quarterly Sessions

May 19, 2011

August 25, 2011

November 17, 2011

*Quarterly Training Sessions start promptly at 7pm and are held at the Lancaster County Public Safety Training Center unless otherwise noted. Training topics are subject to change.*

# HAPPY NEW YEAR!

## *Preparedness Exercises fill First Quarter of 2011*



Limerick Nuclear Power Station—Montgomery County PA. Photo courtesy of Wikipedia.

The Lancaster Emergency Management Agency career and volunteer staff will be extremely busy during the first quarter of 2011 preparing for numerous local and regional exercises.

March 1, 2011 is the annual State-wide Weather Exercise where educational and special needs facilities will practice their preparedness plans for a severe weather scenario. LEMA Staffer Dave Boucher has been working with numerous entities to ensure their severe weather plans are current, accurate, realistic and reliable.

On March 9, 2011, LEMA Staff will participate in an exercise centered around the Lim-

erick Nuclear Power Plant located in Limerick Township, Montgomery County Pennsylvania., located just northwest of Philadelphia.

Lancaster County is within the 50-mile ingestion zone of the plant and the exercise will test coordination for a significant release of nuclear fallout.

On April 12, 2011, the bi-annual Three Mile Island (TMI) exercise will commence late in the afternoon through the evening. This exercise will test the operations of the County Emergency Operation Center (EOC), as well as local EOC's in the 10-mile Emergency Planning Zone (EPZ) around TMI.

Also as part of the bi-annual TMI test, during the evening of Wednesday April 13, 2011, additional elements will be evaluated including Reception Center, Mass Care Center and Emergency Worker Decontamination operations.

LEMA Radiological Planner Ashley Morrison is working closely with, and providing training to the affected municipalities and response entities to ensure their plans and operational skills are current.

Also during the early part of 2011, many projects and reports are due to the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). LEMA Deputy Director Phil Colvin continues to facilitate the National Incident Management System (NIMS) compliance data among the 60 county municipalities as well as participate on the National NIMS Working Group.

LEMA Hazardous Materials Administrator Eric Bachman is developing the annual Hazardous Materials Assessment that identifies the hazardous materials threats and preparedness capabilities of the county emergency services. This is an annual state requirement.

## MARYLAND SUSPICIOUS PACKAGES



Photo of one of the envelopes. Photo courtesy of PEMA.

On January 6, 2011, the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC) reported two devices activated at state government buildings in Annapolis and Linthicum, Maryland. One fizzled and one flamed. Another looked like a book-mailer. When the "pull tabs" were pulled, a flash ensued with an odor being released and a "powder-like" substance was released.

The first device, addressed to the Governor,

activated in the Jeffrey building mailroom in Annapolis. The second device addressed to the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) activated at the headquarters in Linthicum. The Jeffrey building hosts the offices of the Maryland Secretary of State and the Governor's Office of Homeland Security.

All Maryland State Agencies mail rooms were temporarily locked down. Maryland Emergency Management

Agency (MEMA) coordinated with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) component and an interagency conference call was conducted. The DHS National Operations Center will continue to monitor the investigation and provide further updates as warranted. PEMA provided the incident information to PA State Police who coordinated with Capitol Police in Harrisburg.

*"Although LEMA will no longer administer the program, EMA staff can be consulted for any questions related to your agency response cost recovery efforts."*

## BILLING PROGRAM DISCONTINUED

As of January 1, 2011, the Lancaster County Emergency Management Agency no longer administers the Joint Response Cost Recovery Program (JRCRP). The program was started in 2003 as a means to collect and consolidate response costs from emergency service agencies to submit a single invoice to the responsible party of a hazardous materials release.

Many reasons factored into the decision including increased legal costs to negotiate and reconcile out-standing invoices. In some cases the costs to recover response costs were more than the original invoice total.

Haz Mat 2 will assume responsibility for seeking response cost recovery for their operations. However, they do not have the resources to collect and consolidate external

agency costs. Therefore other entities that seek response cost recovery will have to direct bill the responsible party.

Although LEMA will no longer administer the program, the fee schedule will continue to be posted on our web-site for external agency reference. Additionally, EMA staff can be consulted for any questions related to your agency response cost recovery efforts.



Ice formations on the Susquehanna River near Marietta Borough January 2011. Photo by Steve Bailey.

## STAFF CHANGES AT WEATHER OFFICE

The National Weather Service (NWS) State College office recently announced several staff changes. Pete Jung has been appointed as the Warning and Coordination Meteorologist. Jung will be our point of contact for any events suspect of tornadic

activity. Additionally, Charles Ross has been appointed to the post of Senior Service Hydrologist and will be our consultant for flooding issues. Both of these individuals bring many years of service and experience to their positions.

Did You Know?....that the State College Office of the NWS first opened in May 1993 and the first radar system was installed in October 1993. In December of 2005, the office moved to its current location in the Penn State University Innovation Park.

# WINTER PREPAREDNESS

While officially we are only a few weeks into the winter season, we have already experienced unseasonal low temperatures and modest snow events. Hopefully this winter season will not be as robust as last years record snow-fall as LEMA (special thanks to LEMA Administrative Assistant Cheryl Black for taking the brunt of this project) and many local municipalities are still working to reconcile last years snow disaster Federal reimbursements.

In many cases significant winter weather events can be forecasted and time may be available to prepare certain contingencies. However, preparedness efforts should start well before the season starts and well before any projected events are impending. As with any aspect, the earlier you prepare, the better prepared you'll be.

So as we tend to our daily duties and responsibilities we must still engage in and promote preparedness for potential events that may occur. As we are in the Winter Season, it is essential to prepare contingencies for home, work and travel. Provided in this segment are winter preparedness tips.

Preparing a disaster supply kit is essential and ensuring its readiness early rather than later will reduce your having to wait in lines at the store or perhaps forget essential supplies.

When preparing you home, consider the following: **Prepare for possible isolation in your home** by having sufficient heating fuel; regular fuel sources may be cut off. For example, store a good supply of dry, seasoned wood for your fireplace or wood-burning stove. **Winterize your home** to extend the life of your fuel supply by insulating walls and attics, caulking and weather-stripping doors

and windows, and installing storm windows or covering windows with plastic.

**Winterize your house, barn, shed or any other structure that may provide shelter** for your family, neighbors, livestock or equipment. Clear rain gutters; repair roof leaks and cut away tree branches that could fall on a house or other structure during a storm.

**Insulate pipes** with insulation or newspapers and plastic and allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing.

**Keep fire extinguishers on hand**, and make sure everyone in your house knows how to use them. House fires pose an additional risk, as more people turn to alternate heating sources without taking the necessary safety precautions.

**Learn how to shut off water valves** (in case a pipe bursts).

**Know ahead of time what you should do to help elderly or disabled friends, neighbors or employees.**

**Hire a contractor to check the structural ability of the roof** to sustain unusually heavy weight from the accumulation of snow - or water, if drains on flat roofs do not work.

Prepare your car for extreme weather situations. Some things to consider include: **Check or have a mechanic check the following items on your car:**

**Antifreeze levels** - ensure they are sufficient to avoid freezing.

**Battery and ignition system** - should be in top condition and battery terminals should be clean.

**Brakes** - check for wear and fluid levels.

**Exhaust system** - check for leaks and crimped pipes and repair or replace as necessary. *Carbon monoxide is deadly and*

*and usually gives no warning.*

**Fuel and air filters** - replace and keep water out of the system by using additives and maintaining a full tank of gas.

**Heater and defroster** - ensure they work properly.

**Lights and flashing hazard lights** - check for serviceability.

**Oil** - check for level and weight. Heavier oils congeal more at low temperatures and do not lubricate as well.

**Thermostat** - ensure it works properly.

**Windshield wiper equipment** - repair any problems and maintain proper washer fluid level.

**Install good winter tires.** Make sure the tires have adequate tread. All-weather radials are usually adequate for most winter conditions. However, some jurisdictions require that to drive on their roads, vehicles must be equipped with chains or snow tires with studs.

**Maintain at least a half tank of gas** during the winter season. **Place a winter emergency kit in each car** that includes: a shovel, windshield scraper and small broom; flashlight; battery powered radio; extra batteries; water; snack food; matches; extra hats, socks and mittens; first aid kit with pocket knife; necessary medications; blanket(s); tow chain or rope; road salt and sand; booster cables; emergency flares and a fluorescent distress flag.

For more information on winter weather preparedness long onto;

[http://www.fema.gov/hazard/winter/wi\\_before.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/hazard/winter/wi_before.shtm) or <http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/winter.shtm>

## VOLUNTEER STAFF CHANGES

*“Without the hundreds of dedicated volunteers, the preparedness of the county would significantly be compromised.”*

The Lancaster County Emergency Management Agency heavily relies on volunteer staff to support on-scene and Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activities. Without the hundreds of dedicated volunteers, the preparedness of the county would significantly be compromised.

Recently, two long-time volunteer staff members have tendered their resig-

nations. Ed Wickenheiser, former Director of WGAL TV8 served many years as the media representative on the Local Emergency Planning Committee. He also served as a Public Information Officer for LEMA.

Tom Huber recently resigned as emergency management coordinator of East Petersburg Borough. Tom also was treasurer of

Haz Mat 2, a position he held for 21 years. He also resigned that post which will be effective as soon as the team appoints a new treasurer, but no later than June 1, 2011.

We thank both gentlemen for their selfless dedication and service to the citizens of Lancaster County and wish them the best as they move to a new chapter in their lives.

## HAZ MAT PLAN REVISIONS



**The LEPC is charged with preparing for hazardous material releases from fixed facilities. In Lancaster County, 163 sites use, store or manufacture at least one Extremely Hazardous Substance (EHS).**

The Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) of Lancaster County recently approved significant changes to the Hazardous Material Off-Site Emergency Response Plan (HMOSERP) template.

The changes will include expanding the local resource list, providing additional site-specific information and attaching Incident Command System (ICS) forms. All facets are meant to improve the usefulness of the plan and facilitate efficient incident management practices.

A catalyst for the enhancements was through feedback received from students that participated in the EMA developed and facilitated

program “First Due Chemical Intelligence” (FDCI).

The FDCI program was rolled out in 2009 to provide an overview (primarily to fire departments) of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986 and how it can influence fire department pre-incident preparedness. The program also outlines the chemical reporting criteria and illustrates the purpose, capabilities and limitations of the HMOSERP’s.

Not all facilities that use, store or manufacture hazardous materials are required to have such a plan. Only those with materials deemed as an Extremely Hazardous Sub-

stance (EHS). Of the more than 300 facilities that report the use of hazardous materials in the county, 163 are host to at least one EHS ranking Lancaster County in the top five counties in the state with the most number of EHS sites.

All plans are under revision and it is anticipated that all plans will be converted to the new template by the end of Summer 2011. Because of these changes, the FDCI program is not being offered until it, too, is revised to reflect the plan changes. Future issues of the LEMA Ledger will provide updates to the plans and FDCI status.

# Chemical Suicides on the Rise

In recent months, the United States has observed an increase in persons ending their lives by means of chemical suicide. This method entails mixing chemicals in a confined space and the resulting vapors created overcome the person. This methodology presents many hazards to responders. While in some cases the person posted a sign advising that hazardous materials were used, it cannot be assumed for all instances.

Chemical suicide is gaining popularity in the United States and mimics the method initiated heavily in Japan. Since 2008, Japan has documented more than 500 cases of chemical suicide. Also known as "Detergent Suicide" common household agents can be mixed together causing a reaction that the person succumbs to its effects. Many Japanese websites provide step-by-step instructions including precise concentrations to ensure the process is effective.

For those that want to end their lives, this method is attractive as the reactive by-products are readily absorbed in the lungs and it only takes a few breaths to lose consciousness and ultimately death.

One of the by-products is highly toxic Hydrogen Sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S). A characteristic of this gas is its rotten egg odor. According to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), H<sub>2</sub>S is Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH) at 100 parts per million (ppm). Additional NIOSH's published Recommended Exposure Ceiling Level is 10 ppm. That means that a person should not be exposed to more than 10 ppm at any given time.

Eastern Pennsylvania has seen an increase in chemical suicides. On March 17, 2010 in Bucks County, chemical suicide was used inside a car parked inside a detached garage. Most recently, on October 11, 2010 in Chester County, a successful chemical suicide was carried out also in a car. In this case, the car was parked in a secluded area. Both instances used chemicals to produce H<sub>2</sub>S.

Chemical suicides can utilize any combination of products and will not always result in the formation of H<sub>2</sub>S. On March 14, 2009 in Columbia Borough (Lancaster County) a resident attempted chemical suicide in his apartment bathroom using agents that created a chlorine vapor cloud. Local emergency services were summoned including response from both Haz Mat 2 (based in Lancaster County) and York County's Haz Mat Team. Air monitoring of the apartment showed a concentration of 10 ppm, which is the published IDLH for chlorine.

Emergency service personnel are daily called to odor investigations and in many cases a nonchalant demeanor is exhibited during response. However, the potential ramifications of a chemical suicide situation cannot be overstated. All investigations of odors should be handled cautiously. In the case of H<sub>2</sub>S, the sense of smell becomes rapidly fatigued and cannot be relied upon as a means to detect its presence. Another hazard that H<sub>2</sub>S presents is that it is also flammable at concentrations as low as 4% in air. H<sub>2</sub>S is also heavier than air so its vapors will be low to the ground.

Chester County's Haz Mat Team provided a case study of their incident. As part of their program they offered operational considerations. They included the following:

- Size-up—It is imperative to conduct a full circle size-up.
- Look for warning signs, but don't assume that no sign means no hazard. Other indicators include odors, a bucket on the front seat, or the glove compartment used as a sink to mix chemicals. A bubbling reaction occurring in the bucket or glove compartment.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Wear appropriate personal protective equipment including self-contained breathing apparatus.
- Check exposures. Particularly in a building scenario, check for other occupants or collateral victims.
- Determine responsiveness of the victim. If breathing remove the victim (with the responder wearing the PPE noted above). Use caution when treating the victim as he/she may be off-gassing. Move victim away from vehicle, administer oxygen, remove clothing and double bag it, and notify the hospital (so they can protect their emergency room and staff)
- If not breathing, wait for additional resources.

Avoid tunnel vision and beware that chemical suicide by-products are not limited to H<sub>2</sub>S or chlorine vapor. Anything can be produced. In fact in a western U.S. state, a person successfully formulated Hydrogen Cyanide. Hydrogen cyanide is also flammable and is characterized by an almond-like odor.

Air monitoring at incidents is essential and responders should ensure they understand the capabilities and limitations of their monitors as well as adhere to prudent maintenance. Scheduled calibration and appropriate sensor replacement is important as is interpreting the monitor values.

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*The Lancaster County Emergency Management Agency maintains emergency plans for facilities that use or produce hazardous materials, dam failures, nuclear facilities, and for other types of disasters both man-made or natural.*

*The office also coordinates and directs actions that take place during large scale emergency situations. This coordination is performed at the Emergency Operations Center located within our facility. These activities are done in close cooperation with the County Commissioners, County Administrator, local Emergency Management Agencies (municipalities within the county), and emergency service organizations throughout the county.*

## Lancaster County Board of Commissioners

Scott Martin, Chairman

Dennis P. Stuckey, Vice-Chairman

Craig Lehman

## NEW INDEPENDENT STUDY COURSES

### Emergency Management Institute Releases New Programs

The Emergency Management Institute (EMI) located in Emmitsburg Maryland recently released several new on-line independent study programs. All of the on-line programs are free and most offer a certificate for successful completion. Some of the programs are:

**IS-20.11—Diversity Awareness;** This program defines what is meant by diversity and describes how diversity benefits us individually and collectively. It also describes cultural influences and interactions with others as well as actions you can take to optimize diversity.

**IS-106.11 Workplace Violence Training;** This course provides an awareness of violence in the workplace, how to recognize the warning signs, and what actions to take to prevent or minimize violence. It lists the types of workplace violence and action steps taken in response to workplace violence and ways to prevent workplace violence.

**IS-552—The Role of Public Works in**

**Emergency Management ;** This course provides an introduction to the role of Public Works departments in community emergency management. The training is intended to help communities improve their emergency management efforts regarding the functions of public works agencies prior to, during, and after disasters. The target audience for this program are Public works professionals, urban planners, local government officials, and elected officials

The independent study programs can be found at;

<http://training.fema.gov/IS/crslist.asp> .

All of the programs are free, and most provide a certificate for successful completion. Other programs related to the Incident Command System (ICS) and the National Incident Management System (NIMS) are also offered. In October of 2010, EMI released updated versions of IS-100.b (Introduction to the Incident Command System) and IS-200.b—ICS for

Single Resource and Initial Action Incidents. There is also an update to IS-800.b - National Response Framework, An Introduction.

If you have completed earlier versions of IS-100, IS-200 and IS-800, it is not necessary to retake the program. However, it would be beneficial to take the updates to maintain currency on their changes.

Many of the on-line programs are eligible for college credit through Frederick Community College (FCC). FCC reviews and determines which courses meet academic standards. FCC is fully accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and offers several emergency academic programs.

To apply for college credit, you must successfully complete a course that is eligible for college credit and submit an application and a low per credit fee. To get started visit: [www.em-study.com](http://www.em-study.com)