

NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Minutes of the

EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Tuesday and Wednesday, March 2-3, 2004
Building 35, Fraire Barracks, State Operations Center
Roughrider Room, State Capitol
Bismarck, North Dakota

Representative Todd Porter, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Members present: Representatives Todd Porter, William R. Devlin, James Kerzman, Joe Kroeber, Bob Martinson, Mary K. Nester, Clara Sue Price, Gerald Uglem; Senators Robert S. Erbele, Ralph L. Kilzer, Tim Mathern

Members absent: Representatives Keith Kempenich, Andrew Maragos, Jon O. Nelson; Senator Michael Polovitz

Others present: Douglas Friez, Eric Johnson, Wayne Baron, Susan Reinertson; Division of Emergency Management, Bismarck

Julie Goplin, State Department of Health, Bismarck

Russ Timmreck, Wes Hendrickson; State Radio

Communications, Bismarck

Chip Thomas, North Dakota Healthcare Association, Bismarck

Bob Nutsch, Information Technology Department, Bismarck

David Peske, North Dakota Medical Association, Bismarck

Terry Traynor, North Dakota Association of Counties, Bismarck

Mary Senger, Burleigh EM/NDEMA, Bismarck

Denise Hendrickson, Richland EM/NDEMA, Wahpeton

Jerry ReKow, Nick of Time/NDEMA, Ellendale

Adam Powers, Nick of Time, Bismarck

Mike Dannenfelzer, Bismarck/Burleigh 911, Bismarck

It was moved by Senator Erbele, seconded by Representative Kroeber, and carried on a voice vote that the minutes of the December 4, 2003, meeting be approved as distributed.

STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PREPAREDNESS

Chairman Porter called on Mr. Douglas Friez, Division of Emergency Management, for comments regarding the consolidation of State Radio Communications with the Division of Emergency Management, the state's homeland security strategy, and the use and distribution of federal homeland security funds. Mr. Friez distributed written materials, copies of which are on file in the Legislative Council office.

Mr. Friez said the consolidation of State Radio Communications with the Division of Emergency Management provides a statewide system for effective communications and for the prevention, preparation for and response to, and recovery from manmade or natural disasters. He said the consolidation includes 55 full-time and temporary staff that may be needed during disaster response and recovery. He said the Division of Emergency Management had 21 full-time employees and State Radio had 29 full-time employees. He said five full-time employees have been added after approval by the Budget Section and the Emergency Commission. He said those positions have been funded through Homeland Security funds.

Mr. Friez said the Division of Emergency Management, after the consolidation with State Radio, is responsible for providing statewide public safety communications; providing emergency planning, training, and program assistance to political subdivisions, tribal governments, and the state; preparing and maintaining a state emergency operations plan; and coordinating public, private, and individual homeland security efforts.

Mr. Friez said the purpose of the state homeland security strategic plan is to provide a collaborative plan for continuing a comprehensive homeland security program to address prevention, response, recovery, and preparedness activities. He said the vision of the strategy is to have a state that is safe and secure from natural, manmade, and technological emergencies and in which citizens, governments, and business have the resources and knowledge to respond and prevent threats and reduce risks to mitigate the impacts of a disaster. He said the state will provide resources for improved homeland security prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery, and strategic placement of the resources in planning, training, exercising, and equipment will broaden the scope of jurisdictional readiness and public awareness.

Mr. Friez said the state's strategy contains several goals and objectives. He said those goals include:

1. Attaining radio communication interoperability among federal, state, local, and tribal first responders.

2. Developing a prevention, response, and recovery capability to ensure accurate deployment of resources.
3. Fostering the sharing of law enforcement sensitive information.
4. Upgrading state terrorism and weapons of mass destruction response capability.
5. Developing a tiered response capability to ensure statewide terrorism and weapons of mass destruction incident response.
6. Improving the ability of the state to prevent, respond, and recover from acts of terrorism or of weapons of mass destruction through refinement of the state emergency operations plan, state multihazard mitigation plan, jurisdictional emergency operations plans, and jurisdictional multihazard mitigation plans.
7. Assuring continuation of essential government functions in the state.
8. Training first responders and community leaders to recognize, prevent, and respond to a terrorism or weapons of mass destruction incident.
9. Institutionalizing command system training in the state.
10. Expanding and supporting homeland security training into established academic institutions.
11. Evaluating the competency of plans, training, and equipment and personnel resources through a progressive exercise program.
12. Providing adequate professional and support staff to monitor, implement, and evaluate homeland security programs at a state and local level.
13. Furthering the integration of North Dakota's homeland security strategy.
14. Hardening critical infrastructure sites at a state and local level.
15. Improving the collection, analysis, and dissemination of homeland security intelligence.

In response to a question from Senator Mathern, Mr. Friez said to enhance intelligence gathering, an information analysis fusion cell has been developed with secure communications. In addition, he said, the Division of Emergency Management has partnerships with the National Guard, the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, and the Highway Patrol through which information is shared. He said the division also works with local law enforcement and a task force established by the United States Attorney in North Dakota.

Mr. Friez said radio communication interoperability is needed for day-to-day emergency management as well as responding to disasters or large emergencies. He said homeland security funding can be used over several years to pay for the conversion to a digital system. With respect to training of first responders, he said, the North Dakota League of Cities and the

North Dakota Association of Counties have been working together to provide training to local officials. He said rather than hire additional employees or consultants, the Division of Emergency Management has confidence that the organizations representing political subdivisions are able to deliver training and exercises. He said the biochemical organic radiological disaster educational response system project at the University of North Dakota and the emergency management program at North Dakota State University can enhance homeland security training in the state.

Mr. Friez said the total homeland security grant for fiscal year 2004 will be \$19,536,000. Of that amount, he said, \$14,828,000 will be used for homeland security, \$4,400,000 will be used for law enforcement, and \$308,000 will be used for the Citizen Corps. Of the \$14,828,000, he said, 20 percent (\$2,965,600) will be the state allocation. He said local jurisdictions will receive \$11,862,400. He said the local allocation will be distributed 60 percent by population and 40 percent by assessment.

Mr. Friez said the state allocation will be used for the state public safety communications infrastructure, the criminal justice information system, planning and administration for the Division of Emergency Management, geographic information system (GIS) mapping, and the State Operations Center. In addition, he said, state funding will be used for communications agency conversion and state target hardening at the Capitol.

Mr. Friez said state law enforcement agencies will receive 20 percent of the \$4,400,000 law enforcement funding. He said those agencies include the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, Highway Patrol, and Division of Emergency Management. He said the North Dakota League of Cities will receive \$308,000 through the Citizen Corps grant. He said the homeland security funding must be linked to the local spending plans and the state strategy.

In response to a question from Representative Porter, Mr. Friez said county and city emergency managers have been working well together to develop strategies for the use of homeland security funds. Because the Division of Emergency Management wants only one voice from each county, he said, local emergency managers have been asked to work together to develop a strategy before making requests to the Division of Emergency Management. He said he met with the functional coordinators at state agencies to get feedback and a list of specific needs for use of the 20 percent state allocation. He said the \$100,000 that will be spent on the GIS mapping effort is the result of a lack of centralized coordination points. Although some local efforts may be duplicated, he said, the project will reduce future duplication and much of the base work that has been conducted at the local level may continue to be used for other purposes.

In response to a question from Representative Porter, Mr. Russ Timmreck, State Radio Communications, said counties have been using different criteria in developing base GIS maps. He said a standardized base map is needed because the current maps using varying criteria often do not integrate properly at county lines. He said as various map layers are developed, the information can be shared on a hub. He said some counties have no mapping and this project will develop accurate mapping for state, county, and township roads. He said he has been communicating with other interested parties and working to develop a standard foundation to save costs in the future.

In response to a question from Representative Kerzman, Mr. Friez said he has been working with county commissioners to emphasize the importance of the position of local emergency managers. He said county commissioners have the ultimate responsibility for determining compensation of local emergency managers.

In response to a question from Representative Kroeber, Mr. Timmreck said the GIS base map project will not likely be completed for two years.

In response to a question from Representative Porter, Mr. Timmreck said the requests for proposals for the program will establish the base guidelines that local jurisdictions can follow. He said that criteria will soon be available so that mapping at the local level can continue using the criteria that will be used by the state.

Chairman Porter called on Mr. Wes Hendrickson, State Radio Communications, for comments regarding reverse 911 systems. Mr. Hendrickson said reverse 911 systems have been developed for public safety agencies and emergency groups to assist in emergency notification in the event of natural disasters, hazardous material releases, and severe weather and to assist in evacuations and safe returns. He said some of the drawbacks of reverse 911 systems include saturation of phone systems and the actual effectiveness of the systems. He said reverse 911 systems can work well for specific areas but are not practical on a statewide basis. He said a system provides excellent redundancy and rapid list capabilities. He said he has not been able to find any information regarding the effective use of a reverse 911 system in an emergency. He said the cost of a reverse 911 system for counties that are served by State Radio would be approximately \$50,000 for the first two years and \$15,000 per year after the first two years. He said presentations will be scheduled soon to get information from providers regarding the actual costs and capability of a system. He said the availability of funding will also be addressed.

STATE RADIO CONSOLIDATION

Chairman Porter called on Mr. Timmreck for comments regarding the consolidation of the Division

of Emergency Management and State Radio. Mr. Timmreck said because there is always apprehension when a merger takes place, the Division of Emergency Management and State Radio employees participated in transition workshops to build trust and confidence. He said no employee resigned as a result of the merger.

In response to a question from Representative Kerzman, Mr. Friez said some of the people that were opposed to the initial decision were upset because they believed the Governor should have consulted them in making the decision. He said most people have gotten beyond that and are on board with the transition. He said the merger has provided opportunities for employees in the two divisions to perform other duties.

In response to a question from Representative Kerzman, Mr. Timmreck said State Radio will be able to answer analog calls after the transition to a digital system. He said because there are many areas of overlapping coverage, if a tower becomes inoperable, coverage will likely be available through other towers. He said towers will be added if necessary to match or exceed the current coverage.

In response to a question from Senator Mathern, Mr. Timmreck said the Division of Emergency Management shares information and attempts to assist private groups when feasible. He said there is a process underway in which all communications towers in the state are being identified. He said he would consider proposals from individuals or private companies to share towers if any such proposal were submitted.

In response to a question from Representative Nester, Mr. Timmreck said the analog radio system is beyond its life expectancy and some parts cannot be replaced with new parts.

Chairman Porter recessed the meeting at 3:30 p.m. and members of the committee were provided a tour of the State Operations Center and State Radio Communications.

Chairman Porter reconvened the meeting at 8:30 a.m. on March 3, 2004, in the Roughrider Room in the State Capitol.

BIOTERRORISM AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Chairman Porter called on Mr. Chip Thomas, North Dakota Healthcare Association, for comments regarding bioterrorism and emergency response issues addressed by hospitals. Mr. Thomas said the Healthcare Association has implemented a process to develop a regional and statewide plan for hospitals to respond to large events. He said there are significant differences between health and medical emergencies. He said the September 11, 2001, event in New York City resulted in a great reliance on hospitals when many of the services should have been provided elsewhere. He said federal funding has been available to

help define roles and hospitals are required to have response plans in place. He said hospitals regularly conduct exercises with other emergency responders.

Mr. Thomas said the Healthcare Association has partnered with the State Department of Health to assess the capacity of each hospital to respond to an event in a geographical area. He said the information is kept in a data base that may be accessed in the event of an emergency. Because many people do not expect a large scale emergency or disaster to occur here, he said, preparation is critical. He said another challenge is distance and developing a plan to accommodate distance and weather is difficult. He said representatives of the North Dakota Healthcare Association meet regularly with national trade groups to share information. A challenge facing hospitals, he said, is system development. He said different systems must be integrated which require significant training of employees and others with whom hospitals must work.

Mr. Thomas said hospitals need secure and uninterrupted forms of communication. Therefore, he said, exploration of an independent system that could work with the state network is underway. He said implementation and maintenance of independent systems would be costly. However, he said, such a system could be part of a multipurpose network with alternative uses such as distance education.

Mr. Thomas said another area that must be addressed is incident command structure development and training. In addition, he said, an educated and trained workforce is necessary. Although training in universal precautions is provided annually, he said, the training must be enhanced to include measures for employee safety. He said hospitals are also purchasing site-located supplies for use in emergencies or disasters. He said procedures are also being developed for access and use of these supplies.

Mr. Thomas said the Healthcare Association has a good working relationship with the State Department of Health. He said each hospital has a planning representative and four regions in the state are developing plans based on the four major population centers. He said smaller community hospitals will play a secondary role. He said hospitals are taking a businesslike approach to the challenges and will be capable of meeting the challenges.

In response to a question from Representative Price, Mr. Thomas said regional plans will develop lists of needed supplies and warehousing options. He said the plans will address issues that are not normally considered by many people, including laundering of linens for hospitals. He said the plans must also address cross-border issues because hospitals in the eastern part of the state serve areas in western Minnesota.

In response to a question from Representative Porter, Mr. Thomas said he does not see any problem with the authority of the State Health Officer and local

health officers with respect to emergency response, such as imposing quarantines. He said it is important that all parties know their responsibilities and the responsibilities of others. He said authority must be vested in an entity that is able to make decisions. He said federal grants allocated for hospitals have been devoted to planning, development, training, and exercises. He said a consultant was hired for a needs assessment and for a communications study. He said there have not been large expenditures by hospitals with respect to equipment costs necessary for emergency response.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE - GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM APPLICATIONS

Chairman Porter called on Mr. Bob Nutsch, Information Technology Department, for comments regarding GIS applications applicable to emergency management. Mr. Nutsch delivered a PowerPoint presentation. Copies of Mr. Nutsch's slides are on file in the Legislative Council office. Mr. Nutsch said GIS is a system composed of people, data, hardware, software, and applications. He said GIS is a way to visually connect people to a data base and to analyze data. He said maps are a common GIS byproduct.

Mr. Nutsch said GIS data can come from a multiple number of sources and data layers from multiple sources can be integrated to form a single map that can be displayed on a user's machine or on the Internet. He said the user can select layers that are applicable to a project.

Mr. Nutsch said GIS is a foundation for emergency management in that all phases of emergency management require data from a variety of sources. He said GIS provides a method through which critical information may be centralized and visually displayed. With respect to emergency planning, he said, GIS can be used to pinpoint hazards and evaluate consequences of potential emergencies or disasters. In addition, he said, GIS can be used to mitigate hazards by defining hazardous areas. He said GIS can be used to combine topography, vegetation type, and weather to define a fire hazard or identify a flood zone. With respect to emergency preparedness, he said, GIS can be used to provide answers such as defining evacuation routes, locating the nearest hospitals that have available beds, or identifying residences that may be affected by an event so that those residences can be notified. He said GIS is an important tool in emergency response because GIS can provide one of the main components for a dispatch system. In addition, he said, emergency response units can be selected and routed through primary or alternative routes and advanced vehicle locating could be used to track the location of emergency units. With respect to disaster recovery, he said, GIS can be used to assess damage and assign priorities. In addition, he

said, long-term recovery plans and budgeting needs can be displayed and tracked with GIS.

Mr. Nutsch said state agencies in North Dakota have used GIS since the early 1990s. To increase efficiency and lower costs, he said, the Legislative Assembly provided funding to build a state GIS hub. He said the hub is a data base and web infrastructure hosted by the Information Technology Department for storing and sharing state agency GIS data. He said the hub is used primarily by state agencies that contribute the data. However, he said, other levels of government in the state and the public use the hub. He said data sets on the hub include applications related to communications, emergency services, geology, political boundaries, state and federal lands, places and cultural points, transportation, water resources, and aerial photography. He said the GIS hub can assist in emergency management because it is a central supply of data and allows for searching and viewing data. He said the data can be streamed over the Internet or downloaded. He said the GIS hub provides a framework for future GIS applications and can host and distribute new data required for emergency management, such as the roads centerlines project from the Division of Emergency Management.

In response to a question from Senator Mathern, Mr. Nutsch said standards for GIS data sets are being considered. He said a federal geographic data committee develops standards because uniformity is needed.

In response to a question from Representative Kerzman, Mr. Nutsch said Phase II of the 911 project requires infrastructure to be in place such as road signs. He said the GIS hub is a place to store information to build for the future. He said the Information Technology Department is working with groups such as the North Dakota Association of Counties to provide help.

In response to a question from Representative Kroeber, Mr. Nutsch said although floodplain data is not available on the GIS hub, that information is on a priority list. He said determination of floodplains is somewhat of a political issue.

In response to a question from Representative Porter, Mr. Nutsch said using homeland security funding for the Division of Emergency Management mapping project is an excellent opportunity for the state. Although there will be some duplication of efforts, he said, the existing data can be used if the data meets the necessary standards.

Representative Porter said he is concerned that the standards not be set so high that would require work to be duplicated unnecessarily.

Mr. Nutsch said the data for multicounty interaction must be more accurate than some of the data already collected. However, he said, the less accurate data in use has not been wasted.

In response to a question from Representative Kerzman, Mr. Nutsch said the use of GIS data by

terrorists is often debated. He said some items are frequently blurred on photographs to protect certain information. However, he said, information like the location of a dam is generally available on a highway map or other maps. He said some secure data is not put on the web but may be available in the hub data base for use by specified agencies. He said each agency generally determines the security level necessary for the information the agency makes available for the hub.

In response to a question from Representative Porter, Mr. Nutsch said the state GIS Technical Committee was established by executive order. He said groups not represented on the committee, such as the North Dakota Association of Counties and the North Dakota League of Cities as well as private groups, are frequently consulted on issues.

SYNDROMIC SURVEILLANCE

Chairman Porter called on Ms. Julie Goplin, State Department of Health, for comments regarding detection of unusual levels of disease. Ms. Goplin submitted written documents, copies of which are on file in the Legislative Council office. Ms. Goplin said syndromic surveillance is the collection and analysis of prediagnosis information that leads to an estimation of the health status of the community. She said it is an investigational approach where State Department of Health staff, assisted by automated data acquisition and generation of statistical alarms, monitor disease indicators in real-time or near real-time to detect outbreaks of diseases earlier than would otherwise be possible with traditional public health methods. She said goals of syndromic surveillance include early detection of outbreaks, both intentional and natural; characterization of size, spread, and tempo of an outbreak; monitoring disease trends; and reassurance. She said four hospitals have signed an agreement to work with the State Department of Health in the syndromic process.

Ms. Goplin said syndromic surveillance does not replace traditional surveillance, but is designed to detect medium to large outbreaks of disease. She said the participating hospitals have software that allows the emergency rooms to transmit data daily to the State Department of Health where disease symptoms are grouped. If a certain threshold is met, she said, an investigation may be initiated. In addition to the four locations that are conducting syndromic surveillance, she said, the department is considering funding for eight other locations.

In response to a question from Senator Mathern, Ms. Goplin said the syndromic surveillance systems do not monitor mental illness indicators. However, she said, with the purchase of additional software modules, mental illness indicators could be monitored in the future.

In response to a question from Senator Kilzer, Ms. Goplin said the syndromic surveillance program

has been funded 100 percent by a bioterrorism grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In response to a question from Representative Price, Ms. Goplin said the hospitals participating in the program have gained functionality with the software. She said the transfer of data to the State Department of Health takes approximately two minutes. She said the department has conducted a survey regarding resources needed by hospitals and has developed a budget plan for reimbursements for hospitals that will need additional funding.

In response to a question from Representative Kroeber, Ms. Goplin said because she only works with trends regarding infectious diseases, she is not familiar with trends indicating an increase in asthma cases. However, she said, additional monitoring, such as asthma monitoring, may be done in the future.

In response to a question from Representative Price, Ms. Goplin said state medical officers are available to assist local physicians in diagnosing unusual illnesses. In addition, she said, different regions of the state have bioterrorism teams with a designated physician available to look at unusual cases.

In response to a question from Representative Porter, Ms. Goplin said the hospitals participating in the syndromic surveillance programs use data that is imported from existing data bases. Therefore, she said, there is no duplication in entries. She said if a hospital does not have an electronic system, the

software for the syndromic surveillance system can be used as any electronic data base for the hospital. She said the State Department of Health has a plan to expand the use of the syndromic surveillance systems to walk in and satellite clinics because many individuals do not go to an emergency room with symptoms similar to flu symptoms.

Chairman Porter said the committee will meet in Fargo on June 7 and 8. He said the agenda will likely include presentations regarding homeland security spending at the local level, a review of the emergency management system in the Fargo area, and a review of the public health infrastructure in Cass County and surrounding counties.

In response to a question from Senator Mathern, Chairman Porter said a representative from the North Dakota Association of Counties will be asked to address the committee regarding Phases I and II of the wireless project. In addition, he said, the committee may seek information from communications vendors regarding multiple use of communications towers.

There being no further business, Chairman Porter adjourned the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

John Bjornson
Committee Counsel