

Indiana Department of Homeland Security District Planning Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

As part of the effort to provide multiple venues for briefing elected officials, Strategic Development Group, Inc. (SDG) intended to provide briefings for county commissioners at the six regional meetings sponsored by the Indiana Association of County Commissioners (IACC) in the summer of 2008. These briefings were designed to address the organization, structure and purpose of the Indiana Homeland Security (IDHS) Districts and the role of county commissioners on the District Planning Oversight Committees.

Two briefings were provided at the Southeast and Southwest regional meetings in the last week of June. However, due to the untimely death of Bill Haan, director of IACC and to the catastrophic flooding events, the other four regional meetings were cancelled. With the cooperation of the IACC and the approval of IDHS, a series of conference calls were conducted on September 30th and October 2nd to provide an additional opportunity for commissioners to be briefed who were unable to attend the regional meetings. All 92 counties were recruited for the conference calls. Including the conference calls and meetings, representatives participated from 43 counties which included 45 commissioners, 14 other county officials, 5 EMA directors, and 27 others including staff from IACC and representatives of private firms. Additionally, 10 more counties can be considered fully briefed as they are members of IDHS District 3, which has functioned as the pilot district and has already been briefed.

Conference Calls

IDHS and SDG covered the following topics at the briefings:

- The fundamental responsibility of commissioners and mayors to ensure a safe and healthy community for their residents
- The advantageous of planning and organizing for collaborative response to disasters on a regional basis
- The roles of the DPOC, DPC, and DTF in each district
- The necessity for oversight by chief elected officials
- The similarity in both oversight and organization between the Indiana Homeland Security Districts and the existing Regional Workforce Boards

Participation

The conference calls were extremely successful in reaching a broad range of counties. Ultimately, 38 counties – of Indiana's 92 – participated in the conference calls. Participants in the calls were primarily county commissioners. In some cases a staff person or EMA personnel sat in for their commissioners and planned to keep notes to brief the commissioners themselves. Each call included a question and answer session.

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IDHS District Planning Program FAQs

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A. District Formation

- *What will be the name of the county level districts, the heading we go under as an organization?*

The counties are grouped into Homeland Security Districts.

- *How many districts are there? Which district is my county in?*

There are 10 Homeland Security Districts. Please refer to the IDHS District Planning Map.

- *We have not received any information on this. Who is our contact for IDHS?*

The EMA director for the county should be keeping you informed of developments with the IDHS districts. County commissioners' roles will become increasingly important in the coming months as state funding becomes involved, thus stipulating the oversight of elected officials.

Each district has an assigned District Coordinator at IDHS who works with local EMA directors. District Coordinators act as a liaison between the counties and the state.

They help counties with exercises and provide any technical assistance they may require.

The table below includes the contact information for District Coordinators.

	Coordinator	Phone	Email
1	Jennifer Payne	317-519-6721	jpayne@dhs.in.gov
2	Deb Fulk	317-517-4082	dfulk@dhs.in.gov
3	Bernie White	317-753-3723	bwhite@dhs.in.gov
4	Reggie Shireman	317-695-1540	rshireman@dhs.in.gov
5	Bryan Wolfe	317-605-2212	bwolfe@dhs.in.gov
6	Chris Burris	317-727-4431	cburris@dhs.in.gov
7	Jerry Sears	317-695-3557	jsears@dhs.in.gov
8	Shannan Hinton	317-605-6377	shinton@dhs.in.gov
9	Vacant		
10	Terry Hight	317-694-8828	thight@dhs.in.gov

B. Organization

- *Isn't this primarily a function of EMA directors? How are elected officials involved?*

Funding for districts will be available at the state level. The allocation of public funding requires executive oversight from elected officials. County commissioners and mayors or town board presidents will provide that oversight as members of the District Planning Oversight Committee (DPOC). The overall strategic vision and the allocation of funds for the district are among the duties of the DPOC.

EMA directors participate on the level of the District Planning Council (DPC) to manage operations and coordination of the district, while District Task Forces (DTF) are comprised of actual responders who will support local emergency response agencies with technical assistance, specialized equipment and personnel.

- *There are 10 IDHS districts. How many people would there be on the DPOCs and DPCs, and who would these people be?*

The number of people on the boards will vary based on the number of counties in each district. The DPOCs will have two representatives from each county: the president of the county commissioners and the mayor of the largest city or the town board president from the largest town.

DPCs consist of three representatives from each county: the EMA director and one appointee by each member of the DPOC. Under certain circumstances the DPC can be expanded.

Refer to the Indiana District Planning Council Guidance for detailed information about the make-up of DPOCs, DPCs, and DTFs.

C. Assessment

- *What efforts will be made to assess the capabilities of the current counties and structures that already exist? Some counties are already on board with homeland security and some are barely meeting the minimum bar for emergency management.*

A statewide Readiness Assessment will be conducted by IDHS with the assistance of Strategic Development Group, Inc. (SDG). The purpose of this assessment is to identify gaps in planning and organization in each district. The assessment will be distributed to emergency response and recovery stakeholders in each county including elected officials. The assessment will lay the foundation for work plans customized for each district.

D. Funding

- *How does funding work?*

Funding will be on a district level. There will be district assets, like if the entire

district wants to purchase a mobile hazard control unit for the entire district to use. You need an organization that can receive those funds and provide an agent for them, the fiscal agent of the district. Many of the districts already have fiscal agents because they have received grant money for District Administrative Coordinators. Your county EMA director should know your district's fiscal agent and administrator.

Is the fiscal agent an independent contractor?

No, this person is usually a county auditor. For example, in District 7, the Clay County Auditor acts as the fiscal agent. This does not mean that Clay County can direct the district funding at their discretion or that they have any more say in how the money is spent.

- *What staff and programs are being funded?*

The state has already funded a District Administrative Coordinator in each district to help with the organization process. Each district also has a District Coordinator who is a state employee. Additionally districts need to stay informed about changing grant opportunities for both training and equipment.

- *Usually our budget is approved by the County Council. Will they be controlling funding received through IDHS Districts?*

No. This is directed by the DPOC.

E. Legal

- *Two to three years ago we had 8-9 counties that tried to establish mutual aid agreements, but we ran into so many legal problems from one county to another that it never got off the ground. What if one of our*

*responders gets hurt in another county?
What if equipment gets damaged?*

IDHS has written a mutual aid template agreement that addresses much of this including how mutual aid is activated, who bears responsibilities and liabilities and in what circumstances. The template has been heavily researched based on mutual aid agreements existing in other communities.

Mutual aid is always a negotiation between the two communities. There are 3 tiers of response: if you have a mutual aid agreement with a nearby community (whether in your district or not) that is the first tier and is not abrogated by the IDHS responses. The first response should come from the communities closest to yours regardless of district boundaries and is not necessarily a district response. The second response would be called by the district administrators and would be a district-wide response. The third tier of response consists of assistance from one district to another district or other state.

When a responder is sent out of a jurisdiction into another jurisdiction, you will probably want to ensure that the same liability rules of your jurisdiction apply as if they were within their jurisdiction. If the community that activates is forced to be liable and responsible for every single responder that comes in, then when you activate the system you'll also be liable for everyone. Standard practice has been for the community that sends their responders in to cover them and treat them as if they were responding within their usual jurisdiction. These rules will be worked out district-by-district and can be negotiated by county commissioners.

- *Is this in state statute right now or something coming up in the next legislative session?*

One of the primary goals of the IDHS district initiative is to ensure that the organization of each district remains flexible. It would be much more rigid and less responsive to local needs and adjustable to local control if it were under state statute. The idea is not to impose this from the top down, but to build up from the bottom, allowing DPCs to set their own priorities and choose what types of funding to pursue and what programs responders will pursue. The current structure of the IDHS district initiative allows for more local organization and control.

Although IDHS districts are not dictated by state statute, they are supported by it; state statute does say the director of homeland security and governor can take action to organize disaster response including doing things like forming the districts.

Sometimes there might be strings attached to the money by the state or federal government who are giving the money. That does not mean you cannot let the professionals at IDHS know if those strings are not what you need. The district structure provides an organized way of communicating local needs to the state.

- *Will steps be taken to make sure that when funding is given it is on a need-driven basis and that smaller counties [by population] also have a chance at funding?*

All of the decision making will be occurring at the local level. Although some funding will be made available on a county by county basis, most IDHS funding will be given out to the districts and spent at the discretion of the DPOC, within the limits of

any stipulations placed upon the initial grant.

- *If there is a dispute between counties, how does it get resolved? Does the state get involved?*

In regard to disputes among counties regarding Homeland Security District issues, certainly IDHS or the state would be able to step in and arbitrate. However, the DPOC and DPC will each be comprised of a formal membership with bylaws and voting procedures. Issues or questions regarding district initiatives or policies will be decided by voting.

F. Existing Emergency Response Plans

- *I was under the impression we were already taking steps to do this. Is this really new?*

Many counties have preexisting mutual aid agreements with their neighboring counties. The district initiative is essentially an expansion and formal organization of such agreements. It does not supersede preexisting mutual aid agreements, which will remain in place.

In addition to preexisting mutual aid agreements, some districts have really taken the lead and developed a lot of resources, and some have already deployed responders to outside of their district. Just as they have taken that lead and developed a well-organized taskforce, we want to organize public health, elected officials, and others to have them more involved and formally accounted for, especially given the necessity of executive and legislative oversight by local elected officials in managing the public monies that will soon be made available by the state. We need elected officials to make decisions about major budget issues like large expenses and assets that not every

county can afford individually like mobile hazards and decontamination units, etc.

- *Have the EMA directors or the directors of the counties been informed of this plan, because a number of years ago we were required to do a county emergency plan doing exactly what it seems like we are trying to do now on a district level. We have that in place. If we were to take that, and ask other counties if they also finished such an emergency plan at that time, what would we do with that at the district council?*

Every community will have existing mutual aid agreements and the IDHS districts are not intended to supersede these agreements. These are tier 1 for activation. What if you activate these agreements and it's not enough? That's when you activate the district wide response (tier 2). If that's still not enough tier 3 involves bringing people in from other districts, the governor calls a statewide state of emergency and there may even be aid coming in from out-of-state.

These existing plans will also help form the basis for the organization of the IDHS District plans and should be utilized.

G. Schedule

- *Will you be visiting each county to facilitate this process?*

We will be visiting each district and holding summit meetings. These meetings have not yet been scheduled, but please keep your eyes open for communications from IDHS and SDG to ensure you receive them.

- *What's the next step?*

It will be the statewide Readiness Assessment and the district summits. The assessment will likely be distributed to EMA

directors and other responders in January 2009. The district summits will follow in the spring.

Meanwhile we will also be meeting with the EMA directors, setting up the DPOC and DPC with officers, a fiscal agent, bylaws and procedures, etc.

H. Additional Resources

- *Where can I find additional district planning resources online?*

The IDHS web site has a number of district planning resources. These resources can be accessed by going to the IDHS web site and clicking on the link to the “Indiana Homeland Security Districts Map” on the far right hand side of the screen. The IDHS web site can be found online at the following URL:

www.in.gov/dhs

SDG also has a project web page with IDHS District planning resources. Copies of this FAQ, PowerPoint presentations, and other helpful documents and files can be found online at the following URL:

www.sdg.us/idhs

- *Who can I contact at SDG about district organization and planning?*

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