



**General Membership Meeting Minutes
July 11, 2012**

Attendance:

Jennifer Thrush, Union County Health Department	Shawna Jordan, Union County Health Department
Emma Speight, City of Upper Arlington	Todd Kirkpatrick, Licking County Health Department
Christa Dickey, City of Westerville	Dan Kochensparger, Upper Arlington Fire Division
Shaddy Swade, HandsOn Central Ohio	Alexis Comer, Madison County LCHD
Dennis Oliver, Fairfield Department of Health	Pam Palm, Knox County Health Department
Lindsey Wright, City of Whitehall	Jesse Carter, Delaware General Health District
Michael Straughter, Gahanna Schools	Laura Young Mohr, Columbus Dept of Public Utilities
Kelly Hand, Morrow County Health Department	Angie Tabor, Columbus Regional Airport Authority
Beth Sharb, City of Upper Arlington	Donna Stalter, Fairfield Medical Center
Brian Hoyt, City of Gahanna	Mitzi Kline, Franklin County Public Health
Amber Breedlove, Franklin County Public Health	Aimee Shadwick, ADAMH
Meggan Fallon, City of Gahanna	Sara Bardelang, Columbus Public Health
Lynn Cook, American Red Cross	Scott Kibler, Crawford County General Health District
Stephanie Andrian, HandsOn Central Ohio	Leslie Dybiec, Washington Township
Bernice Cage, MORPC	Beth McCollam, City of Gahanna
Scott McAfee, City of New Albany	Jennifer Jarrell, Delaware County Sheriff
Mindy Davis, Columbus Regional Airport Authority	

Call to Order: Brian Hoyt convened the meeting at 1409.

Previous General Meeting Minutes: Scott Kibler moved, with a second by Jennifer Thrush, to accept the minutes of the previous meeting as written. Motion carried by acclamation.

COPIN Updates: Brian Hoyt reported that Kelly McGuire has replaced Mark Anthony as the Franklin County EMA&HS Public Affairs Officer. As a result, the training module planned for this meeting (“ESF-15 Public Affairs”) was replaced with a roundtable session on external affairs lessons learned from the recent severe storms that affected most central Ohio communities.

JIC Logistics & Planning Committee: Chairperson Dan Kochensparger reported the following:

- The COPIN JIC Logistics & Crisis Communication Plan has been updated to reflect changes in the COHAN callout procedures.
- Committee members performed a site survey of the new Fairfield County JIC, which is in a different building in Lancaster. The chairperson delivered a slide show featuring highlights and best practices found during the survey.

Message Development Committee: No report.

Professional Development Committee: No report. The position of committee chairperson is now vacant.

Membership Committee: Chairperson Angie Tabor reported that the board of directors will convene following the general membership meeting, to vote on four new member applications. Tabor reminded those present that application forms are available online on the COPIN website.

Formal Training Session: "July 2012 Severe Storm: External Affairs Lessons Learned". Brian Hoyt moderated this session. Detailed notes are available as an attachment to these minutes.

Member Announcements: Ball State University now has a free online training course for public information officers, available at:
<http://cms.bsu.edu/Academics/CentersandInstitutes/ACCT/Courses/PIO.aspx>.

Next General Membership Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for October 10, 2012 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Franklin County EMA and Homeland Security at 5300 Strawberry Farms.

Adjournment: Bernice Cage moved, with a second by Aimee Shadwick, to adjourn the general membership meeting at 1550.

Respectfully submitted,



Dan Kochensparger
Secretary

“July 2012 Severe Storm: External Affairs Lessons Learned”.

City of Gahanna. Officials performed “windshield surveys” of the damage and opened a partial EOC at 7:30 p.m. with the primary involved departments, including public information. The city ran out of generators due to the need for them at major intersections to power traffic signals. Officials made emergency calls to residents known to have lost power. The city dedicated resources to debris removal. They opened a recreation center to allow the public to have a resource for personal hygiene, recharging of mobile devices, etc. Officials had to work with three counties in their area, which meant dealing with multiple power companies. They learned that phones that work off Internet and cable cannot be relied upon in a storm. Gahanna looked to its partners to borrow their messages and present an “aligned” effort. There is difficulty with some jurisdictions where there is an overlap in GIS grids from entity to entity. Gahanna had their internal GIS personnel color-code their AEP grids based on info given to them by AEP. The media then wanted to know why AEP didn’t have the same info as Gahanna. The city replied that they didn’t speak for AEP.

City of Westerville. The city has its own power company, eliminating the need to coordinate messaging. They recalled key city officials. They communicated with the public via emergency-related messages on the city website and social media.

American Red Cross. The focus of their core mission is on residences. The provision of mass care doesn’t usually need to start as soon as it did in this incident. The national office has communicated to affiliates with a directive involving “cooling centers”. The Greater Columbus chapter serves a 25 county area, and the wide geographical impact of this storm stretched their resources. New Albany contacted EMA for a list of shelters, and was directed to call the ARC. They wondered if they should simply call ARC first with shelter needs. ARC would like to be the “collector” of this kind of info instead of EMA, but needs to negotiate an equitable solution. It was two days into the event before they opened a true “shelter”. ARC didn’t open any “cooling centers”, because communities independently performed this function. The maximum ARC served at any one shelter was 17 persons. “People just don’t want to go to shelters.” Some people will not go to a shelter if they can’t bring their pets. It’s important in messaging to differentiate between a “non-ARC cooling center” and an “ARC shelter”. ARC shelters are always open 24-hours, always have food and water, always are staffed by at least one nurse, have 24-hour staffing, and provide “comfort items”. Non-ARC cooling shelters are open the hours a community desires, are not meant for overnight service, and have no established minimum or maximum services.

Public Health. They actually began heat advisories and warnings prior to the storm. After the storm, their key messaging addressed food safety. They contacted restaurants to advise not to serve patrons if they were operating on generator power. They also dealt with private well water safety.

City of Upper Arlington. There were multiple areas that experienced damage, with the heaviest being in the town center. One lesson learned was you cannot rely on neighbors and mutual-aid when an incident affects an entire region, and you must still be able to respond to non-storm-related emergency runs. Some residents believed government officials had a “secret phone number” they could contact the power companies with, and they wanted that number released to the general public.

HandsOn Central Ohio. There was a miscommunication experienced, where the 2-1-1 call center operators were telling people to call the ARC, and the ARC was telling people to call 2-1-1. There were steady but not overwhelming calls at first, followed by a surge on Saturday night and Sunday morning.

The media was reporting that FEMA was “on the way” with emergency generators, which caused one of the call surges because the general public thought they would receive them, not realizing these units were meant to power critical infrastructure. Calls also increased when the media began reporting on ways spoiled food costs could be recouped. The overall call volume stayed at a high level until July 4.

Franklin County EMA&HS. There was discussion as to whether it would have been helpful to have opened a county JIC. It would have been difficult for external affairs personnel from the core central Ohio agencies and governments to have provided personnel, but those from more remote counties with little to no damage could have picked up the slack and helped man the JIC. The ARC suggested it would have been helpful to have a JIC established, as then there could have been regular (e.g. twice daily) teleconferences set up so anyone who so desired could listen in and hear what the daily messages were. It was suggested that the sheer number of messages from EMA were overloading email inboxes and were redundant in nature. It was suggested these could be instead published on the EMA website so people could access them if they wanted. Others opined that they benefitted from the situational updates. There was discussion about not having the severe weather messages constantly sent out, because individuals can subscribe to weather service alerts on their own. It was suggested that EMA might offer different levels of messaging so subscribers can choose which they want to receive.

General Comments. AEP stated on their Twitter site that they send tweets during regular business hours “except in emergencies, when they are sent 24/7”, but they signed off daily during this incident. Some methods suggested for getting messages out when there is no phone, email, etc, included using amateur (HAM) radio transmitters, posting fact sheets at public buildings and churches, using AM dial information bands, and having community volunteers go door-to-door. Communities need to be made aware of the data sets/info sets that are available to determine factors such as vulnerable populations. One important message is to turn off heating sources, stoves, etc, so fires don’t inadvertently start when the power unexpectedly comes back on.