

PEPtalk

3RD QUARTER 2008



A Networking Organization of Professionals Involved In Planning For Emergencies And Disasters. www.pepkc.org

From The President

Greetings!

As the Board of Directors and I ready ourselves in the starting blocks of a new PEP Year, I would like to spend a few words reflecting on our mutual PEP experience. Over the last year, we've hosted presentations on a variety of topics including crisis communication, new threats to organizational continuity, prevention of workplace violence, public-private preparedness partnerships, and after-action reports. We have also grown to nearly 200 members in over 75 organizations, which represent six different professional industries. In response, we initiated the new PEP Bucks program to show our appreciation to our active members and to encourage the continued growth of our organization.

I am very pleased to lead an organization of this quality. I am continually impressed with the personal, professional, and organizational accomplishments of our membership. Over the last several years it has become abundantly clear that the strength of this organization is built on its membership. Therefore, PEP leadership will continue to search for new ways to provide opportunities for organizational preparedness and membership growth, while staying true to the essence of what has made PEP one of the preeminent public-private planning groups in the Midwest. Specifically, we will continue to streamline our communication with membership via meetings, emails, and our website. The PEP Board of Directors and I will also seek out general session presentations that are interesting and new, but still practical for every PEP member.

In closing, partnership and planning are not only our name, they are our mission. The member organizations of PEP share similar interests and challenges, which make every member's involvement in PEP of absolute importance. We can only successfully accomplish our purpose with dynamic participation and feedback. I encourage each of you to continue to be an active member of PEP and to continue to provide us feedback.

Because the future is not always clear, we all plan, prepare, and practice, only to do it all over again. However, based on PEP's past success I feel confident that this next year will be a great success.

Adam Crowe
President

Upcoming Events

Building An EOC

September 18, 2008

8:00 - 10:00 am

Location: TBD

International Association of Emergency Manager's (IAEM) Annual Conference

November 15-20, 2008

Overland Park
Convention Center

For more info:
www.iaem.com

Inside PEPtalk

[A Closer Look At Emergency Management Websites—Readability / Page 2-3](#)

[After Action Review Process / Page 4](#)

[Federal Agencies Contact Information / New Madrid Seismic Zone Conference / PEP Appreciation / Page 5](#)

[Safe Driving / Page 6](#)

[Directory of Officers & Directors / Call for PEPtalk Articles / Page 7](#)

A Closer Look At Emergency Management Websites—Readability

BY ADAM CROWE, M.P.A.

Emergency management and preparedness is an industry of growing importance. Catastrophic events such as Hurricane Katrina, the Greensburg (Kansas) tornado, the Southeast Asia Tsunami, and a growing list of terrorist events have quickly bridged the gap between the general public and professional emergency managers and responders.

Because of this increased awareness and importance among communities worldwide, the general public has played an increasing role in community mitigation and preparedness activities. To utilize this public involvement, emergency managers universally use public websites to share information with the general public.

The question that must be addressed, however, is how effective are public emergency management websites at reaching and educating the public about the hazards in the community and how to prepare to respond to them. Most public information and risk communication experts stress that information written for public consumption needs to be at the approximate reading level of a sixth grader. While this seems overly simplified, it is critical to remember that a growing portion of every community has special needs such as limited language capacity due to non-native languages, slowed cognitive ability, or limited education.

With these natural limitations identified, public emergency management websites were evaluated to determine if they effectively bridged the gap between emergency management professionals and local residents.

Ten public emergency management websites were selected for evaluation. Specifically, three cities (New York, Toronto and Las Vegas), two counties (Johnson and King), two regional areas (Kansas City Metro, Atlanta-Fulton Co.), one State (Florida), one Province (Nova Scotia), and one Federal agency (FEMA for Kids) were selected. These ten jurisdictions were selected due to their diversity in geography, population, and related hazards. These selections also represent major metropolitan areas at every level of government.

The main page of each jurisdiction's website was measured for readability using two different types of assessments. While both types were based on the average number of polysyllabic words (more than three syllables) per sentence, each evaluation was unique. The Flesch Reading Ease formula and the Fog Readability Scale used complex formulas which assessed whether or not the websites were at an easy, moderate, difficult, or advanced reading level. Conversely, the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level reading assessment used an intricate formula to estimate the actual grade-school reading level necessary for comprehension of the website message.

Ultimately, the readability assessment tools determined that the overwhelming majority (70-80%) of the surveyed emergency management websites were moderately-difficult to difficult to read. Likewise, the established reading levels ranged from grade 5 to grade 13 (which would be considered a university reading level) with an average of grade 10. Only two of the ten evaluated websites were deemed to be written at a reading level appropriate for the general public.

It must be noted that reading assessment tools like the ones used in this study are not full-proof. They are not able to take into account contextual clues that may be included in the website material and the diversity of the intended audiences. Such examples include the many pictures and small information boxes that are common place on many websites (including those that were surveyed). Even though these website tools are inherently built to try and simplify the message, they still may contain words or phrases that are too complicated or technical for the average person.

Unfortunately, the use of some technical terms inherent to emergency management is nearly unavoidable. Words or phrases such as "Emergency", "Disaster", "Emergency Management", "Mitigation", and "Preparedness" are to expressing the actions necessary to perform emergency management. This importance is evident in the fact that an average of 29% of the polysyllabic words noted on the ten surveyed websites was one of these industry-specific words.

(continued on page 3)

A Closer Look At Emergency Management Websites – continued

It is obvious that emergency management websites are difficult for the general public to read. By simplifying the language and continuing to use engaging pictures and shapes, the necessary and needed pieces of information will be more effectively shared with the general public. Emergency managers should be careful not to treat their websites as an afterthought, but rather as an effective tool for communication education and outreach.

Readability • Easy

Jurisdiction	Location	Website	Grade Level
Prepare Metro KC (Kansas City)	Kansas City, MO	www.preparemetrokc.org	7
FEMA for Kids		www.fema.gov/kids/	5

Readability • Moderately Difficult

Johnson County Emergency Mgmt & Homeland Security	Olathe, KS	www.jocoem.org	10
Atlanta-Fulton County Emergency Management	Atlanta, GA	www.afcema.com	12
Toronto Office of Emergency Management	Toronto, Ontario Canada	www.toronto.ca/wes/techservices/oem/index/htm	11
King County Office of Emergency Management	Seattle, WA	www.metrokc.gov/prepare/	11
Florida Division of Emergency Management	Florida	http://floridadisaster.org/family/	8
New York Office of Emergency Management	New York, NY	www.nyc.gov/html/oem/	10
Novo Scotia Emergency Management	Province of Nova Scotia	www.gov.ns.ca/emo/	10

Readability • Difficult

Las Vegas Office of Emergency Management	Las Vegas, NV	www.lasvegasnevada.gov/information/5813.htm?ID=	13
---------------------------------------------	---------------	-------------------------------------------------	----

After Action Review Process

May 2008 General Session

Mr. Phil Andrews, from the Army Center of Lessons Learned at Fort Leavenworth, provided an overview of his organization, explained the Army's After Actions Review (AAR) program and shared lessons from Hurricane Katrina.

The Army's AAR program was started in 1985 with a 12 person staff. Today, the organization is responsible for collecting, analyzing, disseminating, integrating, and archiving observations, insight and lessons to support military operations.

An AAR is a professional discussion of an event, focused on performance standards, that enables Soldiers to discover for themselves what happened, why it happened, and how to sustain strengths and improve on weaknesses.

The main goal of an AAR program is reinforce and increase learning. An effective AAR program would:

- Involve ALL participants
- Be held as soon as possible after the event
- Identify and analyze both strengths and weaknesses
- Increase interest motivating participants to improve
- Guide participants toward achieving learning objectives
- Link lessons learned to corrective training, formal education, or self-development

There are two types of AARs – formal and informal.

Formal AARs

Have observers and controllers (OCs)
Take more time
Use complex training aids
Are scheduled before hand
Are conducted where best supported

Informal AARs

Conducted by internal leaders
Take less time
Use simple training aids
Are conducted when needed
Are held at the training site

If you are thinking about implementing an AAR program, consult the Army's Training Circular titled "A Leaders Guide to After Action Reviews".

<http://35.8.109.2/resources/TC25-20AARs.pdf>

Federal Agencies Contact Information

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror. However, there may be instances where you need direct contact with various federal agencies. Here are some key phone numbers disaster victims can use to obtain information and disaster assistance (source: FEMA):

Federal Agencies:

FEMA Registration 800-621-FEMA (3362) • TTY for hearing/speech impaired 800-462-7585

FEMA Fraud Detection 800-323-8603

National Flood Insurance Program 800-427-4661 • TTY for hearing/speech impaired 800-427-5593

Social Security Administration 800-772-1213

U.S. Small Business Administration 800-659-2955

Internal Revenue Service 800-829-1040 • TTY for hearing/speech impaired - 800-829-4059

Tax Related Disaster Relief 800-562-5227

Housing and Urban Development 800-669-9777

Department of Veterans Affairs 800-827-0648

New Madrid Seismic Zone Conference

August 12-14, Rolla MO

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources is partnering with the U.S. Geological Survey Mid-Continent Geographic Science Center, the Missouri University of Science and Technology (formerly the University of Missouri – Rolla) and the Missouri State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) to host an earthquake preparedness workshop focused on the New Madrid Seismic Zone.

The workshop will be held August 12-14, 2008, on the campus of the Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, Missouri. The overall goal of this workshop is to provide a regional forum for the presentation, exchange of ideas, and potential solutions involved with preparing for a significant central U.S. earthquake.

For more information see the conference web page <http://conference.mst.edu/newmadridconf/>

PEP Appreciation

The PEP Board of Directors would like to thank Linda Linhoff of Swiss Re for serving as the PEP President for 2007-2008. Her dedication and commitment to the continued success of PEP was remarkable. She will continue to serve PEP as the Past President.

The PEP Board of Directors would also like to thank Joyce Cheng of USDA for her time and service on the PEP Board of Directors. Joyce previously served as the Treasurer.

Safe Driving

According to a recent report, the typical American driver spends about two hours in the car per day. What if you encountered a severe weather situation – would you know what to do? Take the following quiz and compare your answers with those given below.

Earthquake

Stay in the car? Get out of the car?

Tornado

Stay in the car? Get out of the car?

Winter Storm

Stay in the car? Get out of the car?

Flood

Stay in the car? Get out of the car?

Answers

Earthquake: Stay in the car

If you are in a car, slow down and drive to a clear place (away from buildings, trees and power lines.). Stay in the car until the shaking stops. See Red Cross publication ARC 455 for more earthquake tips.

http://www.redcross.org/static/file_cont164_lang0_71.pdf

Tornado: Get out of the car

If you are in a car or mobile home, get out immediately and head for the basement of a nearby sturdy building or lie flat in a ditch or low-lying area. See Red Cross publication ARC 4457 for more tornado tips.

http://www.redcross.org/static/file_cont244_lang0_114.pdf

Winter Storm: Stay in the car

Avoid traveling by car in storm, but if you must – have an emergency kit, keep the gas tank at least half full and let someone know your destination. If you do get stuck – stay with your car. Do not try to walk to safety. See Red Cross Winter Storm publication for more tips.

http://www.redcross.org/static/file_cont265_lang0_127.pdf

Flood: Get out of the car

If your car stalls in rapidly rising waters, abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground. Do not drive around barricades . . . they are there for your safety. See Red Cross publication ARC 4458 for more tips to prepare for a flood.

http://www.redcross.org/static/file_cont180_lang0_80.pdf

PEP Directory of Officers & Directors

Officers

President, Adam Crowe
Homeland Security Planner
Johnson County Emergency Management
& Homeland Security
111 South Cherry St., Suite 100
Olathe, KS 66061-3441
913-715-1007 office
913-791-5002 fax
816-260-1695 mobile
E-mail: Adam.Crowe@jocogov.org

President Elect, Sarah Keever, CBCP
Senior Business Continuity Analyst
DST Systems, Inc.
816 Broadway, 1st Floor
Kansas City, MO 64105
816-843-9197 office
816-935-0210 mobile
E-mail: sekeever@dstsyste.ms.com

Past President, Linda Linhoff, CBCP
Swiss Re • 5200 Metcalf
Overland Park, KS 66202
913-676-3131 office
913-207-1920 mobile
E-mail: Linda_Linhoff@swissre.com

Secretary, Linda DeTienne, CFM, CFMJ
National Catastrophe Restoration, Inc.
8065 Flint
Lenexa, KS 66214
316-636-5700 office
316-761-0014 mobile
E-mail: detienne@ncricat.com

Treasurer, Tom Munoz, MBCP
Sprint • 6100 Sprint Pkwy
Mailstop: KSOPHK0110 - 1A753
Overland Park, KS 66251-6113
913-315-5570 office
913-485-9774 mobile
E-mail to: Thomas.2.Munoz@sprint.com

Hospitality Coordinator, Dennis Largent
CoSentry, 10801 N. Amity Ave.
Kansas City, MO 64153
816-891-5911 office
913-221-1341 mobile
E-mail: dlargent@cosentry.com

Web Master, Nick Crossley, CEM, ABCP
Interim Director
Johnson County Emergency Management
& Homeland Security
111 South Cherry St., Suite 100
Olathe, KS 66061-3441
913-715-1007 office
913-485-1465 mobile
E-mail: ncrossley@jocogov.org

Newsletter, Jim Baird
U.S. Central Federal Credit Union
9701 Renner Blvd., Suite 100
Lenexa, KS 66219
913-227-6510 office
E-mail: jbaird@uscentral.org

Board of Directors

Bill Latteman, CBCP
Argus Health Systems, 1300 Washington St.
KC, MO 64105
816-435-5405 office
816-510-4305 mobile
E-mail: Bill.Latteman@argusHealth.com

Ronn Hennessy, CBCP
American Century Investments
4500 Main
Kansas City, MO 64111-7709
816-340-3834 office
E-mail:
ronn_hennessy@americancentury.com

Steven Hannah, MBA, CBCP, CISA,
CISSP, CHS Level III
Waddell & Reed, 6300 Lamar Avenue
Shawnee Mission, KS 66201-9217
913-236-1484 office
816-914-7912 mobile
E-mail: Shannah@waddell.com

Alisa Pacer, CBCP
O S H, inc., Safety & Health Training and
Consulting
111 South 4th Street
Edwardsville, KS 66111
816-674-6385 mobile
E-mail: dapacer@sbcglobal.net

Call for Newsletter Articles

The partnership for
Emergency Planning
Board of Directors
would like to invite all
members to submit
articles for publication
in the quarterly PEP
Newsletter. This
newsletter is circulated
to over 200 PEP
members representing
over 100 companies
and government
agencies in the Kansas
City Metro area.

You can submit articles
from other publications
(with author permission)
or write about a recent
exercise, lessons learned
in continuity / disaster
planning, or other
general areas of interest
to private and public
continuity and
emergency managers.

The articles should be
250-500 words in length
and submitted via email.
You may also include
a short profile of your-
self and company that
will be included with
the article.

If you are interested
in submitting an article
or would like more
information, please
contact Jim Baird
via e-mail at
jbaird@uscentral.org.