

Plousis

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the county's buildings were secure. He remembers visiting the American Red Cross in Cape May Court House and finding it teeming with volunteers busy with blood donations.

"It was packed. People that were down on vacation that were Red Cross volunteers from throughout the country came in and they were manning the phones. It was a great sight to see people were engaged to try to help," Plousis said.

Plousis said around 2 p.m. that day, the New York Police Department and Port Authority requested assistance from outside agencies. Cape May County Sheriff's Office sent 10 officers to New York to assist. He said the officers went to a staging area

at Liberty State Park, which was inundated with volunteers.

"Once they put out that broadcast, people literally from around the country were coming in to help out. Definitely some people in northern New Jersey got there faster than we did," Plousis said.

Plousis said 9/11 altered the way law enforcement agencies communicated with each other. He said since the attacks, law enforcement at the federal, state and local levels now interact frequently and with greater effectiveness than in the past.

"All law enforcement at every level changed dramatically after 9/11. I think anybody traveling or downing anything today realize we have taken extra precautions. It's not only at the airport but

local and federal courthouses and other vulnerable possible targets. Everybody has seen the ramping up of physical security in all of those facilities," Plousis said. "Plus, there's passive security in all those facilities that the public doesn't see."

According to Plousis, the broken communication between agencies before 9/11 made it difficult for agencies on several levels to share information. He said improving communication gradually improved in county, state and federal levels.

"After 9/11 the parochialness between the different law enforcement agencies has changed. There's definitely positive information sharing all the way down."

Plousis said he attended a meeting in Washington, D.C. two days after 9/11 with then-

attorney general Ashcroft and various sheriffs and police chiefs. He said Ashcroft pledged to improve communication between law enforcement partners.

One of these improvements is the Joint Terrorism Task Force, present in 94 federal districts throughout the country. Plousis said the task force is comprised of local, county, state and federal law enforcement who meet and exchange information on possible terrorist activity.

"We have the mechanism to get that information from the local policeman up to the FBI and vice versa," he said.

The United States Department of Homeland Security, created in 2002 as a response to 9/11, responds to domestic emergencies including terrorism and other disasters. Homeland Security

also works with local law enforcement agencies to share information and issue alerts on various possible threats.

Plousis said following 9/11, law enforcement has taken a more pro-active instead of reactive response.

"Prior to 9/11 it was very odd we would get alerts or information from Homeland Security or FBI or other federal entities. Now there's ongoing communications, both electronically and personal contact. Ten years out we have a more seamless system of law enforcement in the United States," Plousis said.

While serving as Cape May County Sheriff, Plousis was appointed as United States Marshal for the State of New Jersey. As a marshal, he said one noteworthy terrorism case was the Fort Dix plot.

In 2007, a group of six radical Muslim men plotted to attack military personnel at Fort Dix, gaining access to the base in the guise of pizza delivery men. The men, who were based in Cherry Hill, videotaped their weapons training in the Poconos and took the tapes to a Circuit City to have them transferred into DVDs.

The store clerk transferring the tapes notified local police, who called the Joint Terrorism Task Force. The investigation resulted in the trial and conviction of five men who conspired to attack Fort Dix.

"It was a good example of citizen involvement and local law enforcement feeding the information to the proper authority resulting in an arrest and conviction," Plousis said.

9/11 changed emergency management dramatically

By ERIC AVEDESIAN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE - On the bright, clear morning of Sept. 11, 2001, Cape May County Emergency Management Director Frank McCall was in Trenton with Ocean City Police Department's Communications Supervisor Kathleen Huffard at the request of then Gov. Donald DeFrancesco to receive an award for 911 dispatchers.

Such an event is commonplace in government, a few short speeches, some photos, back patting and handshakes.

It was not to be that day. McCall said during the ceremony, cell phones started ringing and talk turned to "some kind of aircraft ran into the World Trade Center."

When it became apparent that a second airplane pum-

meled the World Trade Center, McCall said the State Troopers assigned to the governor's security unit escorted DeFrancesco from the building quickly.

The terrorist attacks would stun the world, and change the way McCall and emergency management officials across the nation would interact with other government agencies.

McCall said ironically the Cape May County Emergency Management Office conducted a full-scale exercise on the Woodbine Airport on June 13, 2001 that dealt with an airplane crashing into buildings. McCall said the exercise included 1,000 participants including First Responders, the county medical examiner, HazMat and crisis counseling.

He said the county became a resource to the victims and emergency management community in New York City

following the 9/11 attacks. The county deployed law enforcement, fire and EMS task forces to New York, McCall said.

McCall said 9/11 changed the emergency management community "dramatically."

Created in 2006, the N.J. Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness is tasked with protecting the state from potential terrorist activity, shares intelligence with law enforcement agencies, safeguards state infrastructure and develops plans for emergency preparedness.

McCall said the N.J. Office of Homeland Security & Preparedness is divided into two primary responsibilities: the law enforcement side handles terrorism and counterterrorism activity, while the emergency management side deals with consequence management.

"I suspect as time goes on and we begin to reanalyze what operations under emergency management look like, they'll be further changes. From my perspective, anything that is done that favors the larger area of concentration and that is the protection of lives and public safety and makes sure the residents of New Jersey are safe is a good thing," McCall said. "There's always an ongoing evolution into how things get done."

McCall said he receives briefings and communications from the N.J. Office of Homeland Security "on a daily basis."

"Because our office is the hub of the communications for county government, oftentimes we get tips on things," McCall said. "Anything we receive here is passed onto the law enforcement community when it deals specifically with law

enforcement issues."

Responding to natural disasters, such as hurricanes, is also done in conjunction with local and state emergency management offices and homeland security.

McCall said the county conducted an exercise at the end of July with the Federal Office of Emergency Management and the N.J. Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness. The exercise focused on a widespread evacuation of Cape May County in the event of a major hurricane. A month later, Hurricane Irene threatened New Jersey and forced a major evacuation of the entire county.

McCall said it's important for agencies to conduct frequent emergency exercises. Such exercises not only prepare agencies for the worst disasters, but also give disparate agencies a chance to interact and become familiar with each other.

"Anytime exercises are done to test different scenarios is a good thing, because the worst thing that could happen is you have an event and people begin to meet each other for the first time. We bring all of the emergency management partners in and we find it so helpful to know who has what responsibilities, what their authorities are and to get to know them on a first-name basis," McCall said.

The ultimate goal of preparedness and planning, McCall said, is to prevent another 9/11.

"No nation likes to have an attack on their homeland from a foreign country unannounced. The tragedy of September 11th has opened the eyes of a lot of people to do more in being proactive and in preparing for emergencies of every sort," McCall said.



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Gas

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LPG would be suitable for natural gas.

Regarding an existing supply of LPG in the homeowner's tank, residents were advised they could continue to use LPG until their supply and/or contract ran out. According to Andrews, they can have dual fuel supplies in their homes, running separate appliances off propane, while using natural gas for others. He said it might require separate lines, however.

Gordon said South Jersey Gas would like to have customers hook up with natural gas service within three months after applying, however, they would be able to extend the time for people who have contracts with LPG suppliers.

"As long as you pay the (SJGas) customer charge you will be OK," Gordon said.

Asked about where mains would be installed first, Gordon said the particular sequence has not been worked out, yet. There is an overall design, but the streets would be determined after all the applications are in, so they can see where the highest demand is. However, he said construction would begin in October and all the mains would be laid within a year. Customers would be updated on the progress of the construction and told when they could expect gas service as the project progresses.

Residents asked what kind of lead time they needed to give a contractor, but the gas company representatives could only say they would notify customers when the mains would be coming down their streets.

A customer asked about the spotting of gas meters, since many homeowners leave the Point in the winter. Gordon said the location could be identified in advance of construction. South Jersey Gas also has a list of preferred contractors who have specific certifications and are okayed by the state, Gordon said.

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