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## In the "Loop"

By Andrew Velasquez III



*Regional Administrator Velasquez briefs FCO Mike Byrne at the New York Hurricane Sandy JFO*

On October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy made landfall, impacting coastal and inland communities along the east coast. It resulted in loss of life, major flooding, structural damage and electrical outages to over 8.5 million homes and businesses. A nor'easter followed nine days after Hurricane Sandy further exacerbating the impacts created by this unprecedented storm. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with the families who have lost loved ones, homes and possessions and are still in the process of recovering from this storm.

Even before the hurricane made landfall, FEMA was preparing for the storm. We prepositioned food,

water, blankets, generators, communications vehicles and personnel. FEMA Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMATs), trained to quickly coordinate federal resources to support the impacted states, were on the ground days before the storm hit land.

Personnel from FEMA Region V also mobilized in support of the Hurricane Sandy response effort. We deployed two of our Regional IMATs to the east coast to assist state and local officials with disaster preparations. After landfall, Region V staff were deployed to Maryland, New Jersey and New York to assist with emergency response and recovery efforts. I was deployed to New York to serve as a Deputy Federal Coordinating Officer for Operations. In total, 98 staff members from Region V were deployed in support of the Hurricane Sandy response and recovery effort.

While in New York, I saw firsthand the effects the storm had on area residents and businesses. Helping the Sandy survivors in their greatest time of need was top priority and I was able to see the tireless efforts that residents, businesses, volunteers and government partners put forth to make sure that people in the affected areas had access to the resources they needed. This was truly a whole community effort!

Thanks to all who have contributed to the recovery and rebuilding of the northeast. As always, the work you do is greatly appreciated.

## Hurricane Sandy Deployments

### Region V: All Hands on Deck for Sandy Response

The weeks around Thanksgiving and Christmas are some of the heaviest travel days of the year. However, FEMA Region V employees' travel during the holidays was a call to action in support



*A few of the nearly 100 RV personnel deployed to the east coast took a moment for a photo at the NY DR-4085 JFO. From left: Catrina Covino, Frank Shockey, Carolyn Robinson-Tucker, Jim Fumbanks, Maureen Cunningham, Eric Phillipson, Scott Richardson, Anna Pudlo, Eric Kuklewski, Jenny Baker, William Heyse, Julia McCarthy, Mark Peterson, and Yvette Saleh.*

of Hurricane Sandy response and recovery. Nearly 100 personnel were deployed to the east coast, supporting state, local and federal efforts after Hurricane Sandy. Here's a glimpse at where staff were located and the significant roles they filled in support of disaster survivors:

### Response Division

Just prior to landfall, IMAT Charlie was deployed to coordinate federal response efforts in Maryland. After riding out the storm in the Baltimore area, the team worked to support mass care and

emergency assistance needs, process mission assignments and help coordinate preliminary damage assessments. “I was impressed with the ability of everyone to step up during this deployment. We faced a lot of challenges and handled them as a team,” said IMAT Team Lead Jim Raymond. At the same time, IMAT Alpha deployed to Columbus, Ohio, while a total of 21 Response staff traveled to various locations throughout the east coast including New York and New Jersey to support post-Sandy disaster operations.

### **Recovery Division**

Recovery staff from Region V supported New York and Maryland –filling challenging roles in what was a very challenging disaster. Seth Gardner, Voluntary Agency Liaison (VAL) Task Force Lead in New York, described the uniqueness of dealing with a longer than normal response. “In the VAL shop, we aren’t often engaged in response efforts, but in this disaster we supported areas both in response and recovery. Managing this aspect, as well as coordinating a variety of new and existing partnerships, has made it a complex operation, but one I’m extremely glad to be a part of.”

### **Mitigation Division**

Region V mitigation employees deployed to the east coast after the storm, many who were placed in positions they had never filled before. Earnell Hardimon deployed as a Community Relations Team Lead in Queens, where he worked 14 hour days, seven days a week in some of the hardest hit areas. “It was an enriching experience providing important assistance information to affected citizens, while getting the opportunity to help bring hot meals to people who had mobility or other challenges that kept them from helping themselves.”

### **Preparedness Division**

Staff from Preparedness also supported the operation in roles that were new to them. Rolando Rivero started at FEMA HQ in training, moved to Fort Dix in New Jersey, headed to Brooklyn, and was finally sent to Staten Island as a CR Team Lead. “My team turned out to be nine TSA personnel and one person from Immigration. We worked mostly in high-rise housing authority properties, so we split up to ensure we reached every disaster survivor in the area.”

### **Mission Support Division**

With large numbers of deployments, Mission Support was a critical component of this effort dealing with the increase in administrative work. Emily Minkow was just one of 21 Mission Support staff deployed after Sandy. “As the local hire specialist in Maryland, I was given an incredible opportunity to work closely with senior management to put a successful hiring plan in place. It was a demanding and time sensitive job, but a great opportunity to forge partnerships at the state and local level to bring in people from the community.”

### **Office of the Regional Administrator**

In addition to the entire External Affairs staff, Regional Administrator Velasquez also deployed to support FEMA’s response in New York. “It was all hands on deck in Region V after the storm. Our staff’s depth of talent and knowledge proved invaluable during this operation.”

To view the latest updates on FEMA's Hurricane Sandy response, visit the [FEMA Sandy Facebook](#) page and check out the state-specific photo albums: [New York](#), [New Jersey](#), [Connecticut](#), [Maryland](#) and [Rhode Island](#).

## **The Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013**

On January 29, President Obama signed [the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013](#). The act not only provides much needed assistance to individuals, families, and communities impacted by Hurricane Sandy, but it also includes critical amendments to existing law that provide FEMA significant authority to adjust its disaster assistance programs to better meet the needs of disaster survivors and communities.

In addition to substantial Sandy related funding and FEMA programmatic changes, the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013 includes an amendment to the Stafford Act that provides Tribal nations the same status as states when requesting federal disaster assistance. Federally recognized tribal governments can now make a request directly to the President for an emergency or major disaster declaration, whereas in the past, Tribes have been required to request and receive disaster assistance through the state in which the tribal land is located.

Over the coming months program offices at Headquarters and the Region will provide more detailed information and guidance on how FEMA will implement these provisions.

## **IEMA and Chicago OEMC Visit New York JFO**

A disaster in a large urban area brings complex issues and challenges that FEMA, state and local officials don't often face. Hurricane Sandy brought these issues to the forefront, and provided an opportunity for Chicago and Illinois state officials to gather lessons learned in preparation for a similar disaster within Region V.



*Representatives from city of Chicago, IEMA and FEMA toured areas of New York that were impacted by Hurricane Sandy as well as received briefings from responders that included lessons learned.*

From February 4 – 8, staff from various Chicago city departments and the Illinois Emergency Management Agency visited the New York Joint Field Office to gain a firsthand perspective of response and recovery in a metropolitan area.

The visit began with an overview of the disaster and the geographic area affected. The briefing delved into the immediate response, and included a visit to Breezy Point and the Far Rockaways, two of the hardest hit areas from Hurricane Sandy.

Public Assistance discussions focused on large-scale debris management and included a briefing from the Port Authority, as well as site visits to view damage at the Financial District subway, White Ferry Terminal and State Island Ferry.

The visit also included Individual Assistance discussions about the unique housing challenges in this highly populated area, as well as an overview of the Shelter and Temporary Essential Power (STEP) Program – a pilot program launched for the Sandy recovery. The group visited a Disaster Recovery Center—one of 64 opened in New York for the disaster—and was also given a chance to see a home that benefitted from STEP repairs.

Region V Recovery Director Paul Ricciuti said the meeting was extremely well received by all who attended. “The goal was to provide real world context to the complexity of coordinating response and recovery operations in an urban environment such as New York City, where one out of every 38 people in the United States lives. This densely populated urban environment posed many significant challenges. Our Illinois state and Chicago partners plan to utilize what they learned to better understand the complexities they could face and use this knowledge to update their catastrophic plans, and to better prepare for future events.”

## **Region V Announces Employee of the Quarter**

### **Employee of the Quarter – 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2013: Ed Golinski**

Ed Golinski was named the Region V – Employee of the Quarter for the 2nd quarter of 2013. Ed has worked in the Region for the past 4 years, beginning in REP in 2009. He later moved to the Regional Watch Center in 2010 and is currently working in the Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program in the National Preparedness Division.

Ed consistently demonstrates a spirit of cooperation and professionalism, providing prompt and courteous customer service and always portraying a positive attitude and image as a professional public employee. Ed is known to be always willing to cooperate with others and is currently serving as a mentor for a new REP employee in addition to actively participating in a job skills analysis project with a Regional intern. Most recently, Ed coordinated the annual 2 ½ day REP conference, attended by more than 60 participants representing FEMA-HQ and NRC staff, state and local emergency managers and emergency personnel from the Region’s nuclear power plants.

Previous winners of the region’s Employee of the Quarter are Pat Glithero, Jim Fumbanks, and Rick Little.





## Region V Hosts First Virtual RISC Meeting

On January 23, Region V's Operations Integration Branch conducted the agency's first virtual Regional Interagency Steering Committee (RISC) meeting via Adobe Connect. The virtual presentation was made available to FEMA's entire RISC membership which consists of 425 members. FEMA headquarters also participated in the meeting. Participants from the field had full audio and video capabilities and were able to open chat to all members and participants in real time. At the height of participation, Region V had well over 75 accounts logged onto the meeting.

The RISC meeting provided an opportunity to bring together Region V's partners (local, state, federal, tribal and private sector) who have an emphasis on emergency management planning. This meeting consisted of a presentation on the role of social media during a disaster with Hurricane Sandy as a case study, Walgreens response to Hurricane Sandy, Center for Disease Control's (CDC) update on infectious disease and a briefing of the Defense Coordinating Elements (DCO) capabilities during disaster response and recovery. The meeting was made possible through the efforts of the Response Division staff Aaron Lyman, Todd Lawson and John Cheng, with IT support provided by Paul Casault.



*Jim Williams, Walgreens Manager for Emergency Preparedness and Response speaks that the RISC meeting held in Chicago on January 23, 2013.*

## Schakowsky Federal Resources Event

On February 11, Regional Administrator Andrew Velasquez attended a Federal Resources Fair sponsored by U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (IL-9<sup>th</sup>) event in Mt. Prospect, IL. The event, hosted at the Mt. Prospect Village Hall by Mayor Irvana Wilks, was attended by dozens of representatives from municipalities in the 9th Congressional district.

Local, state and federal officials discussed programs available from both the state and federal government. In addition to FEMA, representatives from the General Services Administration, U.S. Departments of Labor and Education, Environmental Protection Agency, Illinois Department of Transportation and Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity presented information.

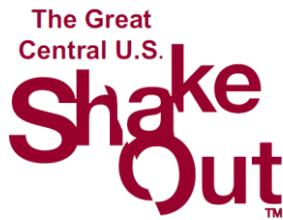
RA Velasquez spoke to those assembled about the Agency's role in assisting State, local and Tribal governments prepare for all-hazards through FEMA's grant and training programs. He also discussed the future outlook for grants, especially given the current budget climate and emphasized the importance of optimizing grant allocation based on regional needs and capabilities. Velasquez further discussed the Agency's evolving focus on maintenance and sustainment rather than the development of new capabilities.



*Participating in the government resources forum held in Mt. Prospect, Ill., were from left: John Keller, director of Local Government Affairs, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity; Joseph McKeown III, North East Region senior account manager serving: Kane, Lake, McHenry, Kendall and Cook Counties, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity; Steve Marquardt, Region 5 chief of state and tribal branch programs, Environmental Protection Agency; Ken Bennett, regional representative, U.S. Department of Labor; Irvana Wilkes, mayor of Mount Prospect, Ill.; U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky, (Ill.-9th); Andrew Velasquez III, Region 5 administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency; Ann P. Kalayil, Region 5 administrator, U.S. General Services Administration; Bola Delano, deputy director for the Office of Planning and Programming, Illinois Department of Transportation; Byron Zuidema, Employment and Training Administration regional administrator, U.S. Department of Labor; Julie Ewart, Region 5 director of communications and outreach, U.S. Department of Education; State Rep. Laura Fine, (Ill.-17th)*

## Shakeout

On Thursday, February 7 at 10:15 am, 2.9 million people across the central United States participated in the Great Central U.S. Shakeout. The annual ShakeOut drill urges citizens to **DROP** to the ground, **COVER** by getting under a sturdy desk or table and **HOLD ON** until the shaking stops.



This year, FEMA Region V teamed up with the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) at the Joshua Academy Charter School in Evansville, Indiana. Individual and Community Preparedness Officer, Mary Rhedin, was on site to educate the students on earthquake preparedness. As part of the event, IDHS brought their Quake Cottage (pictured below), which provides individuals with a realistic experience of the intense shaking that can occur during a 5.5-7 magnitude earthquake.

For additional information on what to do during an earthquake, protecting your home from potential earthquake damage or preparedness information, visit [The Great Central U.S. ShakeOut](#) and [Ready.gov](#). For additional ShakeOut photos from Evansville, Indiana “like” [FEMA on Facebook](#).



*Assistant Director of Indiana Homeland Security, Mike Garvey, with FEMA's Individual and Community Preparedness Officer, Mary Rhedin, and Indiana Department of Homeland Security's Public Information Officer, John Erickson, pictured with the Quake Cottage in Evansville, IN on February 7.*



## Tom Griffin's GIS Seasonal Tornado Density Map Recognized



Emergency Management Program Specialist (Geospatial Intelligence Specialist) Tom Griffin's Seasonal Tornado Density map was selected for publication by [ESRI](#) into their 2013 ESRI Map Book. This is a prestigious achievement and evidence that Region V GIS staff and products are being recognized as some of the best in the nation.

## New Indiana Director

On Friday, February 8, Region V leadership met with the newly-appointed [Executive Director of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security](#), John Hill. This meeting provided Director Hill with an overview of FEMA Region V programs and initiatives as well as discussions on regional priorities and objectives for working with our state partners.

In 2006, Hill was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve as the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administrator. In this role, Hill was involved in terrorism and hurricane response and emergency preparedness planning for natural disasters. Prior to his work on a national level, Director Hill served as a member of the Indiana State Police from 1974-2003, providing expertise as commander of the Commercial Vehicle Enforcement, Field Enforcement and Logistics divisions.



During his meeting with Region V leadership, Director Hill said he was looking forward to his partnership with Region V.

## New Michigan Director

Michigan State Police Director Col. Kriste Kibbey Etue announced on February 17 the promotion of F/Lt. Chris Kelenske to the position of [Captain and Commander of the Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division \(EMHSD\)](#).

Kelenske is now responsible for the statewide management and administration of Michigan's emergency management and homeland security programs. In this position, he also serves as the Deputy State Director of Emergency Management and Homeland Security. Kelenske plans to visit the Region V office in April for briefings on current Region V programs and initiatives.

Kelenske started his career with the department in 1995. Prior to his promotion, Kelenske was assigned to the Office of the Director as coordinator of the department's Secure Cities Partnership, which focuses on providing enhanced MSP law enforcement services in the cities of Detroit, Flint, Pontiac and Saginaw.



## National Severe Weather Preparedness Week Highlights from Region V



March 3 – 9, 2013 marked the second annual National Severe Weather Preparedness Week (SWPW) – a partnership between FEMA and NOAA to encourage all Americans to learn their weather risks and take steps to prepare.

Throughout the week Region V External Affairs staff coordinated opportunities to promote important severe weather preparedness messages in the most unique and effective ways possible. A few highlights of the outreach included:

External Affairs worked with the Chicago Department of Aviation to promote preparedness messaging at Chicago O'Hare and Midway Airports. Throughout the month of March, the airports will be airing a public service announcement recorded by Regional Administrator Velasquez encouraging travelers to prepare by visiting Ready.gov.

Region V staff coordinated with Chicago Transit Authority to host a preparedness booth at the CTA Headquarters office. For four hours RV staff distributed more than 1,000 pieces of preparedness materials, including some floodsmart.gov giveaways to more than 500 Chicagoans visiting the booth.

Preparedness messaging was distributed via partner and media outreach to more than a dozen news outlets in Region V, reaching more than 500,000 residents. Coverage included the Chicago Tribune, WLS-TV Chicago Morning News, News & Tribune in Indiana, and the Times Leader in Ohio.

Hopefully, National Severe Weather Preparedness Week convinced more people throughout Region V's six states to take the steps necessary to learn their weather risks, get prepared and be an example for their friends and family. For more information on how *you* can prepare for severe weather, visit [www.Ready.gov](http://www.Ready.gov).



*The Chicago Transit Authority hosted a FEMA preparedness booth during Severe Weather Preparedness Week. From left: Millie Rosa, Mike Stubbe, Kimberly Phillips, John Plante, and Robert Stucko.*

## New Region V Staff

Region V welcomes new employees including John Cheng, William Heyse, Matthew Goodwin, Richard Dunne, Dwayne Huffman, Kirstin Kuenzi, Scott Bailey, Lillian Thompson, David Samaniego, Katherine Boyce, Marc Franklin, Daniel Benz, Rommel Aquino, Anna Stevens, David Persaud and John Walsh.



*From Left to Right: Dwayne Huffman, Richard Dunne, Kirstin Kuenzi, Andrew Velasquez III, Matthew Goodwin, and Scott Bailey*



*From Left to Right: Lillian Thompson, Rommel Aquino, David Samaniego, Andrew Velasquez III, Marc Franklin, Daniel Benz, Anna Stevens, and Katherine Boyce*

## Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)

Thanks to everyone who participated in the 2012 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Due to Region V Hurricane Sandy deployments, the Region was not able to host as many fundraising activities as previously planned. However, we were still able to raise \$17,998.14, just shy of our \$20,000 goal. Thank you to those who generously contributed with a pledge and for all the loose change donations and pet photo contest participants.

Special thanks and recognition goes to AJ Lyman, our CFC Chair, and those who helped AJ organize this year's campaign: Rolando Rivero, James Taylor, Art Tuscher, Brian Morrill, John Cheng, Laurie Smith-Kuypers, Jessica Gerrie, Rusty Rickart and Morgan Holloway.

If you have any questions regarding the CFC, please contact AJ Lyman at [Aaron.Lyman@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Aaron.Lyman@fema.dhs.gov).

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