

*Initial Maintenance Workgroup of the Sangamon County
Multi-jurisdictional Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan
P.O. Box 2105, 2801 North Fifth Street
Springfield, IL 62705-2105*

MINUTES OF THE WORKGROUP MEETING – June 30, 2009

Call to Order - *The Chair, Derrick Pehlman, called the meeting to order at 5:33 pm, at the Jerome Municipal Building, 2901 Leonard Street, Jerome IL 62704.*

Attending were: Bob Thaxton (Buffalo), Patrick McCarthy (Chatham), Brian Markley (Curran), Jami Sponsler and Nancy Prytherch (Dawson), Melissa Layton (Divernon), Robert Winters and Alice Blakemen (Illioopolis), Greg Hashman (Jerome), Terry Nydegger (New Berlin), Kevin Kesselring (Pleasant Plains), Derrick Pehlman (Rochester), Michael Moos (Sherman), Hilda Mangiaracina (Southern View), Alan Pinter (Springfield), Phil Koeberlein (Williamsville), Mike Ashenfelter and David Butt (Sangamon County), Jared Owens (State of Illinois), Cheryl Ramsey (Federal government) and Greg Michaud (resident of Leland Grove). WICS News Channel 20 had a videographer present for the entire meeting.

Introductions - *The Chair welcomed all who were in attendance and asked for self-introductions. A sign-in sheet had been utilized by all present and the Chair asked for full and accurate contact information of our members.*

Jurisdiction Reports - *The Chair identified that we are now closing in on the one-year anniversary since our Plan was first adopted. He recognized Jared Owens of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) for the assistance we receive on mitigation matters at the state level and Cheryl Ramsey, a mitigation specialist visiting us for FEMA Region 5.*

The purpose of this meeting was to receive reports from the participating jurisdictions on activities relevant to the Plan during this past year. This was our second meeting. The several adopting communities which missed the first meeting are all present at this meeting. The Chair asked that they report first.

Buffalo – Buffalo has hopes of converting space within its village hall to a community safe haven. Significant expense will be involved. No source of local funds has been identified.

Chatham – Chatham’s GIS project is moving forward. It is about 60% complete for mapping the water system and 20% complete for mapping the electric system. Chatham uses the eLert notification system for citizens and others who are interested on behalf of citizens. Over 1600 are signed up for the service. The school board had authorized construction of a new elementary school which perhaps could be strengthened during construction for a community shelter. Pat will share the information about how to proceed.

Curran – Curran was incorporated in 2005. It is working on a comprehensive plan. There are 30 school-aged children within the community. An application has been completed and filed with IEMA for a community safe room within a planned village hall. Drainage is another mitigation concern and a culvert project is 45% completed.

Divernon – Divernon’s representative is a new member of the village board. They will try to make the public information project of brochures and newsletters happen.

Pleasant Plains – Pleasant Plains has completed its sanitary sewer project. It is now working with the State on a 75% storm sewer grant which has mitigation implications.

Sherman – Sherman has just completed its comprehensive plan. There are new drainage issues in the community after flash flooding occurred one year ago. Engineers have identified 5 such areas. The village is distributing mitigation/preparedness information by several means. Public sheltering at an upgraded village hall is being researched. Park ground is being planned along the highway with the opportunity for planting trees as a snow drift barrier.

Springfield – Springfield still hopes to identify and publicize storm shelter options for mobile home residents. Tree trimming is ongoing and power lines are being buried. GIS has potential for providing inundation studies around CWLP’s dams. Several vendors have given demonstrations for an emergency alert system.

Williamsville – Williamsville recently installed storm sewers which are benefitting the community. It wants to develop its own building codes.

Sangamon County – The Office of Emergency Management uses opportunities to pitch the value of NOAA weather radios. An article was distributed about using them for tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, floods and flash floods (attached).

Illiopolis – Illiopolis has started adding mitigation inserts to water bills. Its flood ordinance was approved by FEMA allowing for entry into the flood insurance program. The village ESDA program is being upgraded.

Jerome – New annexation is forthcoming which will significantly change its population.

Southern View – Southern View is proceeding with its new municipal building without engineering a safe room into its design. It will work with its Neighborhood Watch groups to complete a census of special needs persons within the village.

Dawson – Dawson has brochures on mitigation topics available at its village hall. It has identified warming and cooling centers for the community. Work has begun to identify its special needs population. Inserts into water bills include safety tips.

Open Discussion of Issues -

- *There is interest in exploring notification systems as a group and the secretary was asked to invite Ken Davis who has developed the eLert systems to meet with us.*
- *The Chair is asking everyone for annual reviews of our exposure to the threats named in the Plan. We should use the same standards as were used in writing the original Plan. Doing this annually, we will be better prepared for the 5-year update.*

Closing Remarks - *The Chair thanked everyone for participating. The meeting adjourned at 6:33 pm. The secretary then taped an interview with Channel 20.*

Severe Weather in the Springfield Area

While it is true that severe weather can occur during any month in central Illinois, the height of our storm season in the Springfield area is during April and May. 2008 aligned itself almost perfectly to this pattern with periods of active weather throughout the spring that culminated with our most intense storm striking on the evening of Friday, May 30. It was followed by a straight line wind event and wide spread flooding rain on the morning of Tuesday, June 3, after which our spring weather regime transitioned to calmer summer weather.

Our lone tornado of 2008 in Sangamon County occurred on Friday, May 30, in the rural area near Waverly. It was photographed by an observer who posted his pictures at Stormtrack.org. This was an EF1 tornado that damaged a residence and farm site on Caruthers Road.



Photo credit to Stormtrack.org by Skip Talbot

North of where the tornado dropped from this super cell, weather spotters with the New Berlin Fire Department were pounded by the largest hail we have had in the county over at least the past dozen years. A couple of the hail stones that were photographed exceeded 3 inches in diameter. That's bigger than a baseball!



Photo credit to New Berlin Fire Department by Larry Frank

Did you ever wonder why it is sometimes said that storm clouds look green before a tornado? That coloration is caused by the production of hail within the height of the super cell. Our Caruthers Road tornado was a textbook example of a thunderstorm in action.

As if one severe event was not enough for this weather system, it meandered across central Illinois all weekend and finally propelled itself out of here on Tuesday, June 3, when a squall line pushed through with a 64 MPH wind gust measured at Abraham Lincoln Capital Airport. This took down power poles north of Illiopolis late that morning.

This system generally put down between 6 and 7 inches of rain throughout the Sangamon River drainage basin. The river's crest at the Riverton gage was 26.97 feet on June 8. This is just a hair short of 4 feet above flood stage and was the ninth highest crest in over 100 years of data collection along this portion of the Sangamon River.

Even as the summer weather was more stable than what preceded it, July gave us one memorable event too. There was a deluge in the vicinity around and just northwest of Sherman from a stalled rain storm between midnight and 2:00 AM on Saturday, July 12. Reports from 3 different rain gages within the village, including a National Weather Service cooperative station, placed the precipitation total between 6 and 7 inches in this 2-hour span. Long dormant waterways became active that night channeling water to the Sangamon River and its feeder creeks. The force of the water moving in this flash flood circumstance was enough to wash away infrastructure built in its way.

Alerts and warnings for all of the severe weather events recounted here (tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, flooding and flash flooding) are available to anyone who has acquired a NOAA Weather Radio. These radios now come with Specific Area Message Encoding (S.A.M.E.) which allows you to program the code 017167 and only be alerted for Sangamon County events. Each county has its own unique code if you live elsewhere or wish to receive alerts for more than one county.

Everyone seems to carry a cell phone these days. For a small fee on your monthly bill you can attach your phone to an alerting service offered by one of the several major internet weather providers. These come to you as text messages which are great when you are on the go. The village of Chatham has even launched a free program to get such alerts to subscribers who sign up on the village Web-site.

We want you to be aware of the prospect for severe weather or other hazardous situations. There are many ways that this information can be accessed and the opportunities to do so seem to be increasing. Once you have been alerted, remember the safety rules that you have learned since childhood about how best to protect yourself.

The State of Illinois has taken an all-hazards approach to deliver this preparedness message. Check out the Web-site www.Ready.Illinois.gov for what you need to know before, during and after a storm or other emergency event.

By David Butt, December 8, 2008