



**T**his month, we will be looking at how to keep an LEPC energized to retain leadership in chemical emergency planning and preparedness for the community you serve.

Steve & Hilary

## 12th Annual HOTZONE Conference

The goal of the HOTZONE conference is to train local, state and federal responders for safe and efficient response to releases of hazardous materials which threaten public health and the environment.



People who attend include local fire, police, emergency management personnel, EMS, health care providers, and state & federal response personnel who participate in the incident command system or in its immediate support at the scene of a hazmat response or terrorist event in Federal Region 6.

Starting this year, we will have a track focused on activities and ideas for LEPC members.



*HOTZONE 12 will be held: October 20-23, 2011 -- Crowne Plaza Hotel - Reliant Park -- Houston, TX*

*SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS ARE STILL BEING ACCEPTED .... BUT DON'T WAIT !!!*

GO TO OUR WEBPAGE FOR MORE CONFERENCE INFORMATION and REGISTRATION, [www.hotzone.org](http://www.hotzone.org)

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# Personal Localized Alerting Network (“PLAN”)

Recently, FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate joined New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and partners to announce PLAN - the Personal Localized Alerting Network.



Having an emergency communications plan is one of the most important things people can do to be prepared for disasters. PLAN is a new tool to will enhance federal, state and local emergency communications plans with the public.

## What is PLAN?

The Personal Localized Alerting Network (PLAN) is a new public system that allows customers who own an enabled mobile device to receive geographically-targeted, text-like messages alerting them of imminent threats to safety in their area.



This new technology ensures that emergency alerts will not get stuck in highly congested user areas, which can happen with standard mobile voice and texting services. PLAN enables government officials to target emergency alerts to specific geographic areas through cell towers, which pushes the information to dedicated receivers in PLAN-enabled mobile devices.

PLAN complements the existing Emergency Alert System, which is implemented by the FCC and FEMA at the federal level through broadcasters and other media service providers.

Like the Emergency Alert System, which is a modernization of the earlier Emergency Broadcast System (1963-1997), PLAN is intended to keep up with new technologies that can keep all of us safer.



This modern, integrated and complementary alert system provides significant public safety roles for broadcasters, cable service providers, wireless service providers and other service providers.

Wireless companies volunteer to participate in PLAN—technically called the Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS).

PLAN is the result of a unique public/private partnership between the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), FEMA, and the wireless industry with the singular objective of enhanced public safety.



The Warning, Alert and Response Network (WARN) Act requires participating wireless carriers to activate PLAN technology by a deadline determined by the FCC, which is April 2012.



Participants that will offer PLAN ahead of schedule include AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile, and Verizon.

## How Does It Work?

Authorized national, state or local government officials send alerts regarding public safety emergencies, such as a tornado or a terrorist threat, to PLAN.

PLAN authenticates the alert, verifies that the sender is authorized, and sends it to participating wireless carriers.



Participating wireless carriers push the alerts from cell towers to mobile phones in the affected area. The alerts appear like text messages on mobile devices.

## Features

Geographically Targeted: A customer living in downtown Dallas would not receive a threat alert if they happen to be in Houston when the alert is sent.

Similarly, someone visiting downtown Dallas from Houston on that same day would receive the alert. This requires a PLAN enabled mobile device and participation by the wireless provider in PLAN.



Customers Automatically Signed Up: PLAN allows government officials to send emergency alerts to all subscribers with PLAN-capable devices if their wireless carrier participates in the program.

Consumers do not need to sign up for this service.

Alerts Are Free: Customers do not pay to receive PLAN alerts.

Covers Only Critical Emergency Alerts: Consumers will receive only three types of alerts from PLAN:

- (1) alerts issued by the President;
- (2) alerts involving imminent threats to safety of life; and
- (3) Amber Alerts. Participating carriers may allow subscribers to block all but Presidential alerts.



Unique Signal and Vibration: A PLAN alert will be accompanied by a unique attention signal and vibration, which is particularly helpful to people with hearing or vision-related disabilities.

## **HHS TOOLKIT OF PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY TEXT MESSAGES NOW AVAILABLE**



A new toolkit of prepared cell phone text messages advising people how to protect their health after a disaster is available now through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

These messages support state and local emergency managers in disaster response and are available online at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/psa>.



Cell phone usage and texting is widespread in the United States and many communities have text alert systems for emergency notification. During a disaster, the state or local agency can download and distribute the new public health messages using their existing cell-phone emergency message distribution systems. Community residents should contact their local emergency management agency to learn whether text message alerts are available in their community and to register if available.

To develop the public health emergency text message content, HHS experts worked with state and local agencies. The content, approved by subject matter experts, complements 30-second public service announcements for radio and television available through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The text messages cover a wide range of actions people can take to protect their health.

Messages are limited to 115 characters or fewer including spaces. Emergency responders can use the messages as they are or tailor the messages based on specific local needs. The toolkit currently features text messages relevant to hurricanes, floods and earthquakes.

Local and state agencies register their interest in using the toolkit by providing contact information to HHS, so they can receive alerts and updates as the content expands to include health tips for additional types of disasters. More than 400 agencies have registered so far. Agencies register by email: [publichealthemergency@hhs.gov](mailto:publichealthemergency@hhs.gov).



The text message toolkit is a collaborative effort of five U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' divisions: the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

## ***ENERGIZE YOUR LEPC***

We acknowledge Region 7 EPA for their efforts in developing this article, as well as the State of Kansas.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Emergency Planning & Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) of 1986, also known as Title III of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA), was enacted by Congress to help local communities prepare for and respond to chemical emergencies.

EPCRA requires facilities to report chemical storage and release information and instructs communities to develop emergency response plans.



Each state governor must appoint a State Emergency Response Commission (SERC). The SERCs are to design and appoint emergency planning districts and Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs), which have a vital role in coordinating information on chemical storage, emergency planning, and chemical spill response.

In addition, the Clean Air Act of 1990 under Section 112(r), or the Risk Management Program, was created to prevent chemical accidents at facilities using extremely hazardous substances.

While LEPCs play a critical role, they often have difficulty maintaining member participation. Many communities are more reactive than proactive on emergency matters.

For example, immediately after the 9-11 terrorist attack in 2001, LEPC members were very involved because of public interest in emergency planning. However, the momentum slowly declined two years after the major event.



Hurricane Katrina, which devastated coastal areas of Louisiana and Mississippi in 2005, is another example of an event that generated significant interest in emergency planning.

Better advance planning and preparedness could have improved emergency response, which likely would have minimized loss of life.



Competent and energized LEPCs are more likely to have a proactive approach and respond effectively to their community emergency needs.

It takes conscientious effort to maintain the participation of LEPC members through innovative ideas, practical exercises, constant motivations and incentives.

The bottom line is that effective planning saves human lives and reduces property losses and environmental impacts during emergencies.

## 2. LEPC ENERGIZING TECHNIQUES

The following recommendations were identified and chosen as essential factors in energizing and maintaining effective participation at the local level:



- Continuing Education
- Focus on Effective Leadership
- Team Building
- Empower to Complete Meaningful Tasks
- Recognize Contributions
- Stay Positive
- Remove Hindrances

### Continuing Education

We live in a changing world, and LEPC members need to be proactive in emergency response by being up-to-date with new legal requirements and technological standards. There are readily available courses and informational resources with no or low fees for the continuous educational growth of LEPCs.



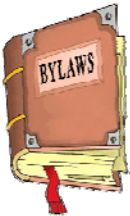


New technical resources and guidance to assist local emergency planners have been developed in recent years. Governments at all levels (local, state, tribal and federal) schedule regular conferences, workshops and seminars to develop professional competence and credibility and share new information with emergency planners and responders.

In Region 6, the annual HOTZONE conference is a forum for educational renewal, common interest networking and idea exchange. Go to [www.hotzone.org](http://www.hotzone.org) for more information.

### *Roles and Responsibilities*

The fundamental step of building effective LEPC committees starts with members understanding their roles and responsibilities. Expertise requirements for membership are found in EPCRA and other regulations. Members who understand their personal and legal responsibilities to the community are more likely to regularly participate in LEPC training activities. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and state agencies can provide compliance and outreach assistance, and they have a wealth of information on various emergency subjects available to the public.



### *Bylaws*

Both verbal and written instruction about their committees' bylaws (if any) should be included in the members' education.

For visual learners, having a hard copy of the bylaws is a useful tool. Revising bylaws can be productive when performed as a collective exercise.

### *Safety Training*

Continuous training on the subject of safety is also crucial in maintaining volunteers' interest. Regular safety classes can be taught in formal and informal settings. Examples of formal classes are OSHA HAZWOPER and First Aid & CPR trainings, which have periodical renewal requirements. Informal safety classes can be site visits at chemical plants or facility tours where LEPC members gain practical experiences with different protective equipment. Routine scheduled trainings allow LEPC members to stay motivated by building their confidence and credentials



### *LEPC Meetings*

An educational component must be an integral part of the LEPC meeting agendas. Examples include a slide presentation or video viewing of a recent emergency response event. Discussing response events generates creative ideas which renew the motivation in the LEPC as a team.

Participants visualize their roles in these events and simulate new assignments at the local level. State emergency agencies routinely schedule exercises for LEPC members.

At the local level, tabletop drills are also practical ways to evaluate success and challenge their committees.





## *Professional Development*

LEPC members can increase their knowledge by joining interest groups such as the National Association of SARA Title III Program Officials (NASTTPO), trade associations and state emergency planning organizations, which provide opportunities for LEPCs to work together to prepare for emergencies involving hazardous materials.

### **Focus on Effective Leadership**

Effective leadership and good management at the local level play a significant role in sustaining interest. Leaders in LEPCs should be elected officials or be from local government or industry. Emergency managers are often most familiar with local resources, including people, equipment and funding. These leaders should inspire positive teamwork in the committees.

An LEPC leader can be any member of the LEPC - the chairperson, emergency manager, or simply any volunteer on the committee who has an effective influence on the group or team.

LEPC leaders foster an environment where members become high performers and frequent participants. These leaders clarify their purpose and goals, build commitment and self-confidence, broaden the team's collective skills, remove externally imposed obstacles and create opportunities for others.



Team leaders believe in their purpose and their people and often exercise the following six principles:

- Keep the purpose, goals, and approach relevant and meaningful.
- Build commitment and confidence.
- Diversify the mix and level of skills.
- Manage relationships with outsiders, including removing obstacles.
- Create opportunities for others.
- Do real work.

### **Team Building**

Instilling trust in a group of people can be a rewarding goal. There are many ways to achieve this goal.

For example, social activities are fun and effective for engaging LEPCs and their families.



These occasions build cooperation and provide networking opportunities. Picnics and outreach at community events are excellent ways to create unified involvement.

Fundraising activities can be good incentives to perk group interest.

Hazmat emergency exercises serve a dual purpose of being educational and providing a group bonding experience.



Other ideas to build a successful team are:

- Clearly defined purpose, goals and roles
- Clear and effective communication
- Supportive member behaviors (balance of creativity and conformity)
- Well-defined decision procedures
- Balanced participation
- Established ground rules and norms
- Understanding of effective group process
- Effective problem solving methods

Besides group building, the maintenance and management should be based on solid pillars of high performance teams:

- Establishing urgency and direction
- Selecting members based on skills and skill potential, not personalities
- Paying particular attention to meeting's agenda and action items
- Setting some clear rules of behaviors
- Setting and seizing upon immediate performance-oriented tasks and goals
- Challenging the group regularly with fresh facts and information
- Spending lots of time together
- Exploiting the power of positive feedback, recognition, and rewards

Following these suggestions will increase membership and motivation. Getting and keeping members involved is crucial to your LEPC's success.

### **Empower to Complete Meaningful Tasks**

A Chinese proverb says: "Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand." Empowering volunteers to complete meaningful tasks, solicit ideas and create initiatives keep people interested.

One example of a collaborative meaningful task is the Schools Chemical Cleanout Campaign (SC3), a national program aimed at reducing risks of chemical exposures in schools.

LEPCs can provide technical assistance to their communities about proper chemical management in K-12 schools. Another way LEPCs can participate in their communities is by giving outreach and educational materials about topics such as Shelter-In-Place to their local schools and nursing facilities.



These activities can be performed in collaboration with community groups with comparable interest in emergency preparedness, such as:

- Citizen Corps Councils work to ensure the security and safety of people.
- Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) train citizens to be first responders in basic disaster medical operations, and light search-and-rescue operations.
- Fire Corps advocate enhancement of fire resources.
- Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) assess the capacity of the practicing and retired medical population, including physicians, nurses and supporting health professionals.
- Neighborhood Watch Programs monitor community criminal activities and are now joining forces with the CERTs.
- Volunteers in Police Services (VIPS) are emerging groups supporting local police forces with law enforcement activities.



## Recognize Contributions

Publicly recognizing specific individual contributions is also important. The morale of a team and its members will grow when they feel valued and when their efforts are noticed.



A sense of belonging is important in any organization or team.

For example, when members are absent from a meeting, someone may volunteer to call or e-mail the absent members to let them know they were missed.

Keeping members involved is a must in maintaining interest.

Recognition causes people to strive for greater achievements. Recognized members usually become more productive or more competitive.

A common way to recognize people is to give an award or nominate them for an award.

There are many different types of awards for LEPC members given by communities, private entities, and state and federal governments.



Also, please remember the importance of publicly recognizing volunteers who have demonstrated good or Another outcome for giving awards is the visibility it gives to local facilities, businesses and their leaders. Industries are most likely to allow time and give support to their employees when these employees are publicly known to support the common cause of community safety and wellness.

## Stay Positive

"Attitude is everything!" Keeping a positive attitude is a must when working with LEPCs.



In many organizations, most of the significant work is done by a small fraction of group. Research has demonstrated that in any organization, 20% of members do 80% of the work.

Know and keep track of core members. Look for exemplary examples to share with the group and send positive and uplifting messages frequently.

## Remove Hindrances

LEPC leaders should pay attention to indicators that change the course in membership participation.



The indicators below are warning signs for emergency leaders to address these issues.

If not addressed in a timely and effective manner, these symptoms can impair members' interest and performances.

Indicators are noticeable at both individual and collective levels.

At a personal level, the following indicators to watch for among LEPC committee members are:

- Loss of energy or enthusiasm ("What a waste of time.")
- Sense of helplessness ("There's nothing anyone can do.")
- Lack of purpose or identity ("We have no clue as to what this is all about.")
- Disengagement, or unconstructive and one-sided discussions without candor ("Nobody wants to talk about what's really going on.")
- Meetings in which the agenda is more important than the outcome ("It's all show-and-tell for the boss.")
- Cynicism and mistrust ("I knew this teamwork stuff was worthless.")
- Interpersonal attacks made behind others' backs, to outsiders ("Dave has never pulled his own weight and never will.")
- Finger-pointing at top management and the rest of the organization ("If this effort is so important, why don't they give us more resources?")



At a group level, an issue of concern is diversity in the composition of the LEPC.

The regulations recommend that "the LEPC membership must include, at a minimum, local officials including police, fire, civil defense, public health, transportation, and environmental professionals, as well as representatives of facilities subject to the emergency planning requirements, community groups, and the media."

Another critical factor in the composition of the LEPC is the socio-cultural representation of the community in which the committee is located. There are additional concerns that can impact the mission of LEPC. Transparency is the best tool when faced with these threats.

Knowing and managing threats can be accomplished by having an open discussion about:

- Lack of resources (funds, time, technology and competent people)
- Political climate (internal and external) - whether community social priorities are aligned with the LEPC's goals
- Leadership - finding committed community leaders to champion the committees' activities
- Bias - misinformation, inaccurate data, and false notions about a community can create public resentment, lawsuits, or an unexpected and undesirable outcome that can undermine the committee

### 3. CONCLUSION

The ideas and tools presented in this document are intended to help develop and maintain members' participation in LEPCs.



Local emergency leaders, not just emergency managers, are key personnel who can prepare their communities for emergency events.

Preparing a community for emergencies requires community involvement of well-trained and enthusiastic volunteer residents.

Managing and leading volunteer participation is seldom addressed in LEPC committee functions.

Like any critical resource, the human resource element is sustained with strategic planning and positive action.

Maintaining an effective LEPC requires constant a supply of energy through activities, innovative ideas and education.

LEPC members are much better prepared to respond to emergencies when they are well connected in their community and can rely on each other's competence.

Keeping LEPCs active and energized is essential for saving lives and minimizing damage to property and the environment.




**HAS YOUR LEPC:**

- Established a permanent address for facilities, the SERC, and EPA to mail required forms and information;
- Notified the SERC of any changes to the LEPC structure, especially a change in the chair or address;
- Provided EPCRA training to emergency responders, specifically local fire departments who often can provide information to facilities during fire inspections and police departments who respond to haz-mat incidents?
- Established a 24-hour manned emergency phone number (i.e., sheriff's office, 911, fire department) for facilities to make release notifications -- an answering machine is not sufficient



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**Disclaimer**

**Region 6 Emergency Notification Numbers**

Arkansas Dept. of Emergency Management	800-322-4012
Louisiana State Police	877-925-6595
New Mexico State Police	505-827-9126
Oklahoma Dept. of Environmental Quality	800-522-0206
Texas Environmental Hotline	800-832-8224
*****	
National Response Center	800-424-8802
EPA Region 6	866-372-7745
CHEMTREC	800-424-9300