



Central PA Alliance for Response Learns of Nearby Resources

May 2, 2011

Adams County Library District headquarters, Gettysburg, PA

The Central Pennsylvania Alliance for Response met on May 2, 2011, at the Adams County Library District headquarters in Gettysburg, PA. An audience of library, historical society, archives, and emergency management staff members heard presentations on statewide emergency programs and participated in a tabletop disaster response exercise.

After introductory discussions on recent emergency incidents, including a water main break that affected the State Capitol Complex during the early Spring, the audience heard Pamela Weeks, State Citizen Corps Program Manager at the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) – who had previously spoken at the AFR Leadership Institute in Philadelphia – give a much more expansive presentation focused on Central Pennsylvania response resources.

Weeks discussed the wide range of hazards that could affect the region, ranging from flooding, ice storms, and land subsidence to technical concerns such as hazardous materials spills and nearby nuclear power plants. If one of these disasters were to strike, Pennsylvania's County Emergency Management Agencies and nine Regional Task Forces can coordinate prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

Weeks spoke about goals for community preparedness, which include issues ranging from child safety to where people will park during a disaster at a civic organization or a business. Citizen Corps, which has expanded from mostly addressing terror issues to all-hazards planning, assists communities through its Community Emergency Response Team (addressing needs from search and rescue to animal safety), Medical Reserve Corps, Volunteers in Police Service, Neighborhood Watches, and Fire Corps, which helps address fundraising for volunteer and other fire departments.

Weeks wants to make sure cultural heritage employees are prepared for disasters both at home and at work. This includes having, and practicing, disaster plans at both locations, knowing evacuation routes, and a number of other issues. After hearing Weeks' presentation, the Central Pennsylvania Alliance group hopes to schedule her half-day workshop, which covers issues including Employee Preparedness, Continuity of Operations, and Technological Preparedness, including computer file backup.

The group was pleased to have Weeks observe their tabletop disaster scenario exercise, which addressed wind and flooding issues (a key threat in Central PA). At the end of the meeting, group members heard about Alliance for Response organizational activities in Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Savannah, and discussed further organizational activities for their group.