



READY RACINE

FALL 2020

Volume 15, Issue 2

Racine County
Office
of
Emergency Management

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Mission

To assist the community in mitigating known hazards and in preparing for, responding to, surviving and recovering from both natural and man-made disasters.

NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH

County Executive Jonathan Delagrave has proclaimed September as National Preparedness Month (NPM) in Racine County and urges all residents and businesses to develop their own emergency preparedness plans and work together toward creating a more prepared society.

NPM is recognized each September to promote family and community disaster planning now and throughout the year. As Racine County continues to respond to COVID-19, there is no better time to be involved than now. The 2020 theme is: "Disasters Don't Wait. Make Your Plan Today."



The emphasis throughout September is:

Make A Plan

Talk to your friends and family about how you will communicate before, during, and after a disaster. Make sure to update your plan based on the Centers for Disease Control recommendations due to the coronavirus.

Build A Kit

Gather supplies that will last for several days after a disaster for everyone living in your home. Don't forget to

consider the unique needs each person or pet may have in case you have to evacuate quickly. Update your kits and supplies based on recommendations by the Centers for Disease Control.

Prepare for Disasters

Limit the impacts that disasters have on you and your family. Know the risk of disasters in your area and

check your insurance coverage. Learn how to make your home stronger in the face of storms and other common hazards and act fast if you receive a local warning or alert.

Teach Youth About Preparedness

Talk to your kids about preparing for emergencies and what to do in case you are separated. Reassure them by providing information about how they can get involved.

"Ultimately we can save time, we can save money and we can save lives by being prepared before disaster strikes," commented David Mack, Racine County Emergency Management Coordinator, "so take the time now to put together a plan, build a kit and learn about the hazards we face right here in Racine."

LESSONS LEARNED FROM COVID

If you ask what keeps me up at night, I would respond, an F5 Tornado hitting the city of Racine, a train derailment forcing an evacuation and a pandemic event.

Over the past thirty years, I have seen floods, snowstorms and tornadoes and have overseen 7 Presidential Disaster Declarations, 2 SBA Disaster Declarations and 3 Snowstorm Disaster Declarations. But none of these resulted in Racine County's Emergency Operation Center (EOC) being activated.

That all changed on March 19th when we activated the Racine County EOC to manage the COVID-19 pandemic.

As I began my 31st year with Racine County this past April, we were in the midst of the largest and longest incident of my career. One might even say, a once-in-a-career event.

For three months, we worked daily in the EOC, sifting through information, coordinating resource requests, developing contingency plans, working with hospitals and long-term care facilities, coordinating testing sites and supporting public health.

Never in my career did I think that we would "stand up" the EOC for a week, let alone months. But there we were.

So, what have we learned?

In 30 years, a lot has changed.



David Maack and Captain Jim Weidner brief WEM Administrator Dr. Darrell Williams in the EOC

Personnel, policies, and technology are the big three. Over the past three decades I have worked with hundreds of people, from elected officials, department heads and support staff. When they retire or move on, new personnel come in and have to be trained.

In addition, policies change. When I started in emergency management, we encouraged all responders to use an incident management tool called the Incident Command System (ICS). After 9/11, ICS was required to be utilized by all first responders. No longer was it a recommendation, it was now mandated. Even the way EOC's are managed has changed over time, all for the better.

And don't get me started on technology. When I walked through the doors in 1990, most departments did not have computers, there was no email and the internet was non-existent. Today, a smart phone gives us access to many different tools that we can use to respond, even remotely.

My first EOC was in the Racine Police Department's Auditorium. Phone lines were on standby and the phones, tables and other supplies were in a locked closet. If activated, everything would be pulled out of the closet. Someone had to call the phone company to activate the phone lines and the phones all had to be plugged in. I think it was used twice in a drill.

When Racine County renovated

VOLUNTEER DEPUTY COORDINATOR STEPS DOWN

After almost 47 years volunteering as a Racine County Deputy Emergency Management (EM) Coordinator, Dave Voss has decided to step down.

While it wasn't an easy decision to make, especially closing in on 50 years of service, he knew it was time.

Volunteer Deputy EM Coordinators play a crucial role, helping to augment the Racine County Emergency Management Office (RCOEM) which up until recently was a one person office, as well as serving on call when the EM Coordinator is unavailable.

Dave was appointed as a Deputy EM Coordinator in 1974. In addition, he served the Racine Police

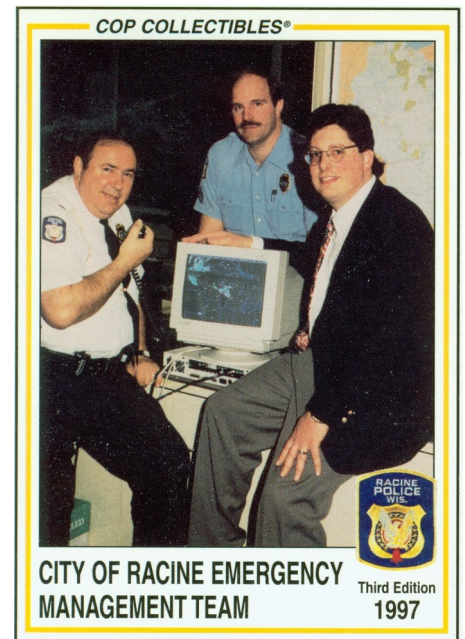
Department, retiring after 30 years as a Lieutenant in 1999.

Shortly after he retired, Dave was hired as the Racine County Project Impact Coordinator and assisted in implementing disaster resistance in Racine County. During his tenure, he helped build valuable relationships within the community.

Racine County was one of three communities in Wisconsin chosen to participate in FEMA's Project Impact initiative in 1997 to help communities reduce their disaster tolls through hazard-mitigation activities.

After Project Impact, Dave worked for the Volunteer Center of Racine County, where he

worked closely with RCOEM on Homeland Security and Citizen Corps Initiatives.



The Racine PD included the RCOEM EM Team in their 1997 COP Card

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LESSONS LEARNED CONT.

the Law Enforcement Center, an area in the basement was dedicated as an EOC. Through the years we have made many upgrades, and through this activation, we have seen how well it worked under a real-life situation.

While we have conducted emergency EOC exercises and drills, most lasted for just a few hours and in hindsight, one realizes that more time is needed to truly see how functional the EOC is.

Unlike a tornado, flood or train derailment, this pandemic moved slow enough that we had time to develop plans without the pressure of having it done yesterday.

This gave us the opportunity to be thorough, as well as to see how well our EOC functions. From little things like the placement of electrical outlets to bigger needs like adequate white boards or monitors, we have been able to really test the EOC and make improvements as we go along.

The cooperation that we have saw among agencies has also been another positive development.

Daily, while practicing social distancing, we had both county and municipal officials working together to address issues related to the pandemic.

Initiatives that we have implemented include setting up isolation facilities for those who may need to self-quarantine and alternate care facilities to address potential hospital overflow, coordinating requests for personal protective equipment, coordinating testing sites for both the community and at facilities with outbreaks, and developing recovery plans to help transition back to normal operations.

In a sense, the EOC has become a hub for information dissemination, planning initiatives and resource allocation.

BE PREPARED FOR WINTER WEATHER

Winter storms are considered deceptive killers because most deaths are indirectly related to the storm.

Winter storms create a higher risk of car accidents, hypothermia, frostbite, carbon monoxide poisoning, and heart attacks from overexertion.

They can bring extreme cold, freezing rain, snow, ice, and high winds and they can last a few hours or several days; knock out heat, power, and communication services; and place older adults, young children, and sick individuals at greater risk.

Before we know it, winter weather will be upon us but there are steps that you can take today to prepare for tomorrow.

- Learn more about our risk for winter storms. Extreme winter weather can leave communi-

ties without utilities or other services for long periods of time.

- Prepare your home to keep out the cold with insulation, caulking, and weather stripping. Learn how to keep pipes from freezing. Install and test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors with battery backups.
- Pay attention to weather reports and warnings of freezing weather and winter storms. The Emergency Alert System (EAS) and NOAA Weather Radios provide emergency alerts.
- Gather supplies in case you need to stay home for several days without power. Keep in

mind each person's specific needs, including medication. Do not forget the needs of pets. Have extra batteries for radios and flashlights.

- Create an emergency supply kit for your car. Include jumper cables, sand, a flashlight, warm clothes, blankets, bottled water, and non-perishable snacks. Keep the gas tank full.
- Learn the signs of, and basic treatments for, frostbite and hypothermia.



SUMMER STORMS

This past August, severe weather rolled through Racine County. Several Tornado Warnings were issued, and strong winds wreaked havoc on the area. In addition, torrential downpours resulted in flash flooding in some areas.

Advanced warning saves lives so it is important that every household have an All Hazards NOAA Weather Radio. In addition, make sure that you are able to receive Wireless Emergency Alerts on your cell

phone. There are also several good apps that will notify you of severe weather watches and warnings.

Most summer storms never result in disaster declarations. Yet, many homeowners find themselves with unexpected repairs to make in the aftermath of these storms.

Ensure that you have adequate insurance coverage to

manage large repairs, check to see that you have a rider on your policy to cover water back-up in your basement and put money away in a "rainy day" fund to cover uninsured damage.



RCOEM ADDS FULL TIME DEPUTY POSITION

The Racine County Office of Emergency Management is pleased to announce that Jay Kerner has been hired as Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator.

Jay comes to the agency from the WI Department of Corrections (DOC) where he last worked in the Preparedness & Emergency

Response Section out of Madison. Prior to that, he was the Training Captain and Emergency Response Unit Tactical Group Supervisor at the Racine Youthful Offender Correctional Facility.

During his 22 year tenure with DOC, he worked closely with community partners, building relationships between outside agencies and the institution. Wrote and facilitated full scale exercises for the DOC in conjunction with community partners.

Along the way, Jay was certified as a FEMA Master Exercise Practitioner. In addition, he is working

on his certification as a WI Certified Emergency Manager .

Jay has worked closely with RCOEM on emergency exercise facilitation and he attended the Community Specific Integrated Emergency Management Course in Emmitsburg, MD with the Racine County delegation.

“I am glad to be on board with Racine County in this position to assist the county in being prepared for the future when it comes to emergency management,” commented Jay Kerner.



DAVE VOSS CONT.

Through the Volunteer Center, he assisted the Racine County Office of Emergency Management coordinated the Racine County Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) and Long Term Recovery Committees.

An avid volunteer, Dave enjoys doing community service work with the Racine Community Outpost (the group which builds the

COP Houses), Kiwanis Club of Racine, the Kiwanis Holiday Lights Foundation, Racine County TRIAD, the Wisconsin region of the International Police Association, amateur radio clubs and his church.

“I will miss working with Dave,” commented David Maack, “he was a critical member of the team and brought year’s of experience, along with community connec-

tions, to the table. I appreciate his dedication and service.”

In recognition, County Executive Jonathan Delagrave proclaimed September 28th as David C. Voss Day in Racine County.



STAY INFORMED

There are a number of ways in which you can stay informed and involved with Racine County Emergency Management. In addition to our quarterly Ready Racine newsletters, you can learn more about RCOEM by:

- Visiting our website: <http://readyracineco.com>
- Download the Ready Badger App: <http://appfactoryuwp.com/projects.php>
- Visiting our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/readyracineco
- Submitting your questions and concerns to rcemergencymanagement@racinecounty.com
- Volunteering with Racine County Emergency Management

LOOKING BACK...

