

State Prepares for April TOPOFF Drill

Inside this Issue

By Donna Micklus and John McKay

It

doesn't look good for New London Harbor when toxic chemicals are released by terrorists.

Fortunately, they're only *faux* toxic and all part of a *simulated* terrorist attack on Connecticut as state agencies coordinate with the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) on an four-day emergency preparedness exercise to test how state and federal entities work together to use resources to respond to the attack.

Nicknamed TOPOFF - Top Officials Exercise - it's a two-year cycle of seminars, planning events, and exercises designed to strengthen the nation's capacity to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from large-scale terrorist attacks...all culminating in this full scale, multi-state, multinational simulated attack involving biological, chemical, or radiological weapons or other weapons of mass destruction.

Last week, DAS Commissioner Linda Yelmini joined her colleagues from other participating agencies for a briefing at the armory led by new DEMHS Commissioner Skip Thomas.

"In preparation for the actual event, they staged a mock drill of a chemical release where 200 people on an Amtrak train were impacted," she said.

Yelmini said that the April 4-7 exercise is reported to be the largest-ever-terrorist-response-drill.

"It's designed not only to test resources and reveal weaknesses, but also to see how effective international communication is since targets in Canada and the UK are also attacked," she explained.

She added that dignitaries from those countries will be in Connecticut participating

in the exercise in addition to Governor M. Jodi Rell, New Jersey Governor Richard J. Codey and a host of high ranking federal officials.

For over five years, DAS Communications' John McKay has been going to mock simulations at the then Office of Emergency Management. As a member of the Governor's Communications Team it was his job to write and distribute news releases and respond to inquiries from the public.

"We've run every kind of state emergency possible," said McKay.

"We've had meltdowns at Millstone, hurricanes in September and nor'easters in August. This will be a lot more intense, however, not only because of the nature of the attack but also because of the level of federal and international involvement," he emphasized.

"As of right now, I'm attached to the VIP component of TOPOFF consisting of legislators, local officials, U.S. Cabinet members and foreign dignitaries. I'll be in New London for two days saving the world!" added McKay.

"But in all honesty it's a process that's as interesting as it is intense to witness, from local government reaction to directives from the White House. It's good to know we're ready for a serious emergency in Connecticut," McKay said.

A spokesperson for Governor Rell's office said that the exercise should not affect everyday life for Connecticut residents.

"TOPOFF is designed not only to test resources and reveal weaknesses, but also to see how effective international communication is..."

**DAS COMMISSIONER
LINDA J. YELMINI**

When Irish eyes are smiling

2

Kudos

3

Procurement News

4

Hip to be HIPAA

5

Platinum record

5

Workforce planning

6

Be on the lookout

7

IS THAT O'WSIANKO FOR ST. PATTY'S DAY?

By John McKay

The luck of the Irish was with DAS on March 17, as Mike Owsianko's daughter, Allison, was front and center in her traditional Irish step dancing garb to perform some quick jigs.

Now you may have guessed that Owsianko doesn't sound very Irish.

"The inspiration comes from my wife's side," said Mike. "Her grandmothers' maiden name is Sullivan, and we really enjoy this time of year...it's Allison's busiest." Mike went on to say that his daughter really loves the dancing but he has absolutely no clue where she gets her talent. "Not from her parents!" joked Mike.

Allison may make the dancing look easy, but according to Dad, she works hard to get better and better. Just nine years old, Allison has been studying step dancing since she was four. "I want to be famous like Michael Flatley," she said. She said she particularly looks forward to her competitions and was very proud to announce she had recently won second place in her Jig dances and third place in her Reels dancing.

Allison's dance company, the Shamrock School, performs at nursing homes and at St. Patrick's Day dinners in the greater Glastonbury, West Hartford, Plainville and Southington areas. She hopes to continue her dancing ...and we hope she comes back next year!



Allison Owsianko in her finest step dancing garb



In action!



Proud Mom and Dad with their star performer

The DAS Times is published monthly by the Department of Administrative Services Communications Office 165 Capitol Avenue Hartford, CT 06106

M. Jodi Rell
Governor

Linda J. Yelmini
Commissioner

Donna J. Micklus
Editor

Visit our website at www.das.state.ct.us

Maureen Blackburn thanked **Dave Lynn, Cheryl Catania** and **Mary Gugliemino** “for all of the support and hard work they did for me while I was on medical leave. Also, **John Pacholski** who helped me through a very tough time. They are very supportive and professional!”

At the HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) Security Meeting at DOIT on March 2, Doug Frost thanked **DAS** for sharing their HIPAA Security Procedures with the Teachers’ Retirement Board (TRB). Doug stated that: “TRB was able to steal from the procedures shamelessly”. DAS is the only agency to have completed, and have approved, all required HIPAA Procedures and the required Risk Analysis. These were completed by **Vin Lombardo** and **Rick Miarecki**, respectively.

Government Account Manager Russell Rodd from Pitney Bowes sent the following message to

Maureen Friedman regarding his experience with CT \$hops 2004: “I just wanted to take a moment and let you know how delighted I am to participate in the CT Shops show that you and your DAS staff have put together over the last three years. I have always had a smooth set up and plenty of good people to meet at my booth. It is a true delight to participate in such a professional grade event. I must also tell you that even with such a prominent name such as Pitney Bowes, I still meet new potential customers each year. In fact, each year I acquire approximately \$20,000 worth of new orders from the new customers met through your event. This far outperforms the \$ 2-4,000 spent on the booth itself. This is definitely a ‘return on investment’ that few could argue with. Thank you again for putting this show on and I look forward to the 2005 event.”

Commissioner James Fleming from the Department of Public Works

wrote the following message to **Donna Micklus**: “On behalf of the Department of Public Works, please accept my sincerest appreciation for

hats off

By Cindy Rusczyk

the support of the **DAS Print Shop** during the *Fourth Annual Black Heritage Month Celebration* on February 23, 2005. This is the fourth year that we, in the State Office Building, have collaborated on this celebration. This project promotes diversity and furthers the state government’s commitment to creating and sustaining an inclusive work environment. I applaud the **Print Shop Staff**. The event would not have been a success without their contribution.”



They're coming b-a-a-a-c-k-!

Take Our Kids to Work Day will be held on Wednesday, April 20 for kids age eight and over. Got an idea for a fun, work-related activity? Call Nancy Jones at x 5044. To register, call Cindy Rusczyk at x 5196.

Never a Dull Moment in Procurement

February Forum Draws Large Crowd

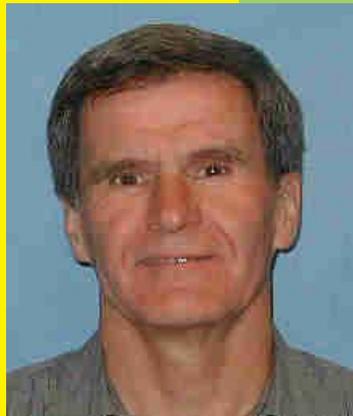
Cozy in winter can be a good thing. The unanticipated crowd of 90-plus at the February 16 Procurement Forum definitely made for close quarters, and the eager participants didn't seem to mind.

DAS' Procurement Forums gather purchasing folks together to provide information, discuss - and hopefully resolve - mutual issues and learn from each other. And the word seems to be spreading.

At the February Forum the agenda was jam-packed. Carol Wilson, Procurement Director, gave an overview of the Buy Smart, Buy Together (BSBT) spend management initiative. Members of the contracting staff that were involved in BSBT presented a synopsis of their new contracts along with the projected savings.

Meg Yetishfsky, Director of Supplier Diversity, offered attendees innovative ways to incorporate more certified Small and Minority Business Enterprises in their bids and contracts. Cynthia Shea, from the Contractor Prequalification Program, explained the purpose of her program and clarified when agencies need to utilize a prequalified contractor.

Jim Passier spoke about Governor Rell's Executive Order No. 3, which is the requirement for executive branch agencies and units of higher education to post their bid documents on the State Contracting Portal which resides on the DAS website. Stay tuned!



Jim Passier



Carol Wilson

Cindy Shea



Meg Yetishfsky

Procurement Learning Center Now in Session!

It is just so keen to be green. A "green" training session was the first official Procurement Learning Center (PLC) class held at the State Office Building on March 15 (ignored the Ides).

Barbara Moser of Procurement Services' Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP) program presented a half-day class called "Environmental Requirements for State Contracting."

Thirty employees, representing a dozen different state agencies, received in-depth information about EPP, the EPA guidelines and Connecticut statutes relating to environmentally preferable purchasing.

Moser explained that EPP is a "broadening of purchasing practices that considers product lifecycle characteristics and their effects on the environment and human health and safety."

Attendees discovered that there are many EPP products available on current state contracts: re-refined oil, retread tires, recycled antifreeze, recycled traffic cones, carpeting, re-manufactured ink cartridges, recycled content copy paper and office supplies and lots more.



Barbara Moser

Ed.Note: Portions of the above were excerpted from the WIN newsletter

HIP TO BE HIPAA

By John McKay

That's Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act in case you didn't already guess.

"HIPAA can be a tricky beast," said FSC's Vin Lombardo. "There are a ton of phases, steps, and programs associated with HIPAA that we have to meet. It's taken on a life of its own, but we're ready to meet the challenge."

Lombardo explained that FSC/Collections is a HIPAA-covered entity classed as a Healthcare Clearinghouse, and most recently was required to create and implement 54 policies and procedures regarding the protection of electronic health information. Count 'em, 54!

"We were proud to be the first agency to have completed and gotten approved all of the required documents," he said. "We have been sharing them with the other agencies to help them with their compliance efforts."

HIPAA guarantees insurability of employees that change jobs, reduces fraud and abuse of federal entitlement programs, improves efficiency, protects individual's private health information, and establishes security standards for health care information systems.

"A lot of sensitive information is collected, used, processed and shared in Collections Services. HIPAA requires us to keep that information secure, accurate, and



available to authorized people and for authorized uses," Lombardo added.

Health information is among the most sensitive and personal information collected and shared.

A Wall Street Journal/ABC poll asked Americans what concerned them most in this century. 'Loss of personal privacy' was the first concern. All other issues, such as terrorism, war, and global warming scored less.

"Prior to HIPAA, health care information was less protected than credit reports or even video rental records. It can be used 'to heal us' or 'to reveal us.'" "This is all about keeping health information that identifies the individual private and secure," said Lombardo.

Lombardo predicts that HIPAA will continue to grow, and vows that DAS will continue to meet the challenges.

A Platinum Record?

By John McKay

DAS' Property Distribution Center (PDC) has auctioned off some pretty unusual stuff in its day. Remember the antique tractor? And what could top those horses? Well, can you say platinum? On March 8, PDC auctioned 91.5 t. ounces of platinum from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. Four bids were received with Northeastern Metals & Chemicals Inc. providing the winning bid of \$64,801!

Special thanks to PDC's Jim Potyra. He literally weathered the storm of the year that Tuesday to see that everything went as scheduled.



MAY THE (WORK) FORCE BE WITH YOU!

By Nina Ritson

Did you know that by 2009, 25% of the current state employees will be eligible for retirement?

What are the trends for future short-ages? What type of knowledge and skills are needed for your agency's future business, and are your employees prepared?

This was the focus of the kickoff of the *DAS Workforce Planning Website* on March 15 in the SOB. The event was presented by Steve Soklow and DAS Human Resources to the Agency Personnel Council Meeting, and was well attended by personnel folks from all agencies in the executive branch.

Workforce Planning (WFP), not exactly the latest buzz word, has been around for quite some time.

"You know, everyone has been doing WFP for years without realizing it, taking whatever steps are needed to ensure that they have the qualified staff to successfully run their business," Soklow said.

One example he cited was the recent Nursing Fairs with the one-day interview and hiring process.

"Several agencies had an immediate, critical need for qualified nurses. Together with DAS, they planned and executed this approach to fill the positions. To a large extent, all this WFP initiative is doing is making the WFP approach more systematic, more analytical and repeatable," Soklow said.

So, what is so special about the DAS Workforce Planning website?

What started as a handful of workforce planning tools has become a whole encompassing process with staffing analysis and projections based on an agency's staffing history and business plan.

"Agency HR staff can access each tool just by clicking on its name, and can view the purpose of the tool, the

process to use it, and the expected results. They can pick and choose which tools to use or take a tour of them all."

Soklow emphasizes, "These tools are most successful when used *with* an agency's business plan. Without a business plan, the tools can certainly help, but the end result is not quite as complete."

"In developing our approach, we had a couple of guiding principles," Soklow stated.

"One was to keep this simple to use, and the other was to give the agencies as much latitude as they needed. They could use some of it or all of it. We structured it so that most tools can be used independently of the others."

He went on to say that there are many other WFP models out there, and described how other states had tackled workforce planning.

"Georgia's approach is so complex," he said, "one would need a master's degree to figure it out! That was exactly what we did NOT want."

In Phase 1 of the process, agencies collect staffing data using an ad hoc reporting tool from CORE CT. The purpose is to understand the current staffing profile. It creates a staff roster, including demographic information such as job title, age, salary, turnover rates, and extremely important – retirement eligibility – currently eligible, eligible in two years, or in five years.

Armed with this information, plus the knowledge of future business changes and goals, agencies can determine what steps are needed to transform their current workforce into their workforce of the future.

Another favorite tool is Succession Planning, a process to ensure

Check out the new Workforce Planning site at <http://www.das.state.ct.us/HR/WorkForce/default.asp>

that qualified staff are available to replace key employees who leave the agency. The whole WFP initiative is concerned with identifying what future staffing needs will be, and then figuring out how to get there.

So who is buying in? Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Department of Environmental Protection are already on board.

"We are currently helping them with the Phase 1 part of the process – collecting current staff data," Soklow said. He went on to say that he sees DAS going out and working with other agencies as well.

He is quick to add that the site would not have been possible without the hundreds of hours of work done by web guru Bill Skyrme.

"He was patient with us as we developed the process and this could not have come together so successfully without him." He also praised the contributions from Nina Ritson of Communications who did some design work, and MIS' Sue Cieniewicz, who did all the programming to transform the CORE CT data into meaningful, usable information.

News Bits



Be on the Lookout for Outlook !

By John McKay

Microsoft Outlook will soon be replacing DAS' current email system of Lotus Notes. "We'll be doing the big switch over the weekend of April 1," said MIS' Rick Miarecki. "When everyone comes back to work on Monday, April 4, Outlook will be installed on their computers."

Cheryl Cepelak and Kathleen Kabara are running 'basic training' classes for DAS on how to use Outlook 2003 as well as explaining the stages of the installation process by MIS. "A lot of people have Outlook on their home computers, but our turnout for training has been good with a lot of positive feedback," said Cepelak.

DAS is transferring from Notes to Outlook to synchronize with the rest of the state. "Outlook is now the standard email package in Connecticut state government," said Miarecki.

But Lotus Notes won't be completely forgotten. DAS Central, along with Time Processing, DAS-1's and DAS-8's, will still be accessible through Lotus Notes.

MIS has asked that employees clean up their Lotus Notes by deleting any old, outdated and unnecessary emails. "This will help make the process go faster," said Miarecki. Anyone wanting a head start on using Outlook 2003 can visit www.microsoft.com and go through an online tutorial.