

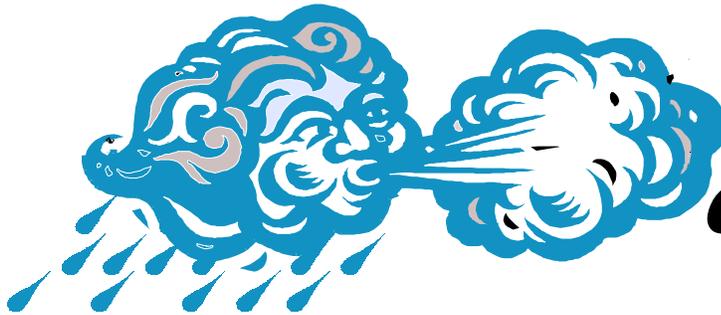
PURCHASING POWER

A publication of DAS Procurement Services

GOOD STUFF CHEAP • Vol. II, No. 4

September 1999

Weather or **NOT**



Procurement faces a **Cat 4 Hurricane?!**

On the sunny morning of August 24, 1999, as the rest of Connecticut faced weather dilemmas no more taxing than selecting a sunblock, DAS Procurement Services' Peter Smith was hard at work in the Hartford Armory, consulting with the Military Department and battling the 125 mph winds of a Category 3/4 hurricane which had been dumping four inches of rain on the state each hour.

New Englanders know this region's fickle weather well and have developed a great respect for the unique climatic catastrophes the state could potentially face at any time. So while the weather outside was far from frightful that humid summer day, John Wiltse, director of the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), was at work conducting a statewide drill called "Nutmeg Winds" to ensure that if and when such a stormy morning arrives, that the weather remains the only scary thing state residents face.

"OEM set up the drill as a learning experience and a teaching lesson," said Smith of the simulation. "It was a very real test to determine the state's ability to respond to situations like these." Smith was tasked with a number of procurement-related activities, many of which, he

says, would likely not have been immediately obvious in a time of actual crisis if not for this full-scale dress rehearsal. What they learned could affect the way the state writes its RFPs.

When the fictitious storm hit, Smith began to receive a flurry of weather advisories, press releases, and bulletins which, if the words "This is a drill" weren't emblazoned across the top margin, would be exactly like those used in an actual emergency. Heightening the level of reality, Lieutenant Governor M. Jodi Rell participated as well, briefing a room full of local broadcasting students and regional disaster coordinators all conducting emergency preparedness tests of their own. Participation went all the way up to the federal level, with the Department of Defense and the Federal Emergency Management Agency participating in this dry run to ensure the highest level of accuracy and thoroughness.

The staged requests for emergency supplies came to Smith first in a trickle, later in torrents. "We needed

See *Weather or Not*, page 3

In This Issue

Barometric Pressure

Not-so-stormy weather wreaks havoc

1

Penny Wise

Jim Passier on Y2K preparedness

2

Success Story

DAS goes to the head of the class on software buy

3

Money Clips

On the money info and other spare change

4



The End of the World As We Know It?

By now, we've all heard all about Y2K. All we can do is wait and wonder what's going to happen come the big day of January 1, 2000. Will this be the biggest non-event in history or are we returning to the stone age? Of course, like you, DAS is not entirely certain what is going to happen, but we have been getting ready to handle any reasonably foreseeable problems that develop.

We are participating in the Business Contingency Planning (BCP) process under the direction of the Department of Information Technology (DOIT) and their consulting firm, Renaissance. Their BCP model identifies critical processes and establishes backup and contingency plans in the event of Y2K problems.

In case Y2K isn't enough to worry about, Connecticut is headed into hurricane season, followed shortly by our annual winter storm season. You read about the mock hurricane drill "Nutmeg Winds" in the lead story. That exercise was lead by the Military Department, and DAS - including Procurement Services - participated. The timing of the drill was excellent, as we learned a good deal about what works and what doesn't in an emergency situation. We are using this experience to improve our procedures and to adapt them to our Y2K preparation. Some Y2K potential failures are similar to those that could occur in a natural event like a hurricane - power outages for example. That similarity helps make our learning from hurricane drills transferable to Y2K contingency planning.

Of course, the major concern regarding Y2K is information technology system failures. Our bid and contracting processes are built on standard desktop "shrinkwrap" software packages and use of the Internet service provided by DOIT. We do not expect any Y2K problems with these systems. In addition, all of our desktop computers have been certified for Y2K compliance. Finally, we have adequate methods and emergency procedures for purchasing and contracting that can be utilized if required.

With regard to our suppliers' Y2K readiness, we identified approximately 350 vendors that provide critical goods or services to the state. Letters have been sent to all of these vendors asking them to confirm their Y2K state of readiness and their ability to continue to provide service in the event of Y2K problems. Procurement Services will analyze these responses and develop contingency plans where appropriate. We will be providing information and recommendation to agencies as these plans are developed.

On the e-commerce front, our activities are continuing and we have undertaken an important new enhancement to vastly improve the graphical user interface (GUI or "gooey" as the techies call it) of the system. The new approach reduces the number of steps needed to place orders and provides additional options to users. We expect that these changes will be completed and in place by October 1. The need for this change surfaced during our pilot phase of the system and was a result of input from our test agencies. It certainly points out the importance of customer feedback to all our efforts. While we are disappointed with the delay, everyone on the development team felt that the improvements were well worth the pain. In the meantime, we are continuing to add additional contracts to the system, increasing the variety of products that can be acquired through OrderLink.

We are excited about what is coming out of our e-commerce activities and we look forward to showing this system to you in the very near future. **S**

Jim Passier

PURCHASING POWER

*A publication of
DAS Procurement Services*

John G. Rowland
Governor

Barbara A. Waters
Commissioner

James Passier
Manager - Procurement Services

**Michael Mansfield for
DAS Communications**
Editor, layout and design

*For more information about any of the articles in
Purchasing Power, contact us at:*

Phone: (860) 713-5095

Fax: (860) 713-7484

E-mail: Mike.Mansfield@po.state.ct.us

dumpsters for the removal of storm debris,” he said, “and lots of portable toilets.” Soon, the tasks grew more challenging as the fake storm began to unleash a string of events and problems as unpredictable as the real thing. One minute, he prevented a disaster by locating tanker trucks that could be used for storage after a water treatment facility failed. Shortly thereafter, a fuel tank rupture shut down New Haven Harbor. The area’s nuclear reactor had been shut down, but Smith needed to come up with a shipment of diesel fuel to help keep the reactor cool.

“I called an actual vendor to see if we could do this if we were put on the spot,” Smith said. He breathed a sigh of relief when he learned the vendor could, in fact, get the fuel there quite easily. Easily, that is, if it could be delivered into the now-fictitiously flooded New Haven Harbor. “Fortunately, the vendor had other distributors, but then they couldn’t get to the site because the roads into the city had been shut down,” he said. Several communications later, Smith had arranged a Department of Transportation escort to get the trucks to the nuclear facility.

Smith said challenges like this and the dozens of smaller challenges they breed showed participants in this fake storm areas where problems could arise in the event of a real catastrophe. For example, when he had to find lodging to accommodate the up to 12,000 individuals who would come from out-of-state to help - from utility workers to Army Corps of Engineers personnel - Smith found a hole in the plan more easily fixed now than when it’s too late. “We learned that every hotel room in the state would be booked, mostly by people reluctant to go to shelters,” he said. This shortcoming has led DAS Procurement to look into involving college campuses and the like for this purpose.

Smith said he could see emergency preparedness become a more prominent factor in state purchasing. “We may ask vendors if they would be interested in joining our emergency response team,” he said. “Because in a crisis, our contracts don’t matter anymore. It’s our *contacts*. They’re all we have. We need actual people who we can call at home and count on to pitch in.” ■

\$UCCESS \$TORY

DAS Procurement Hosts

NASPO '99

Conference draws full house, rave reviews

DAS Procurement Services faced a colossal task: Host and coordinate the National Association of State Purchasing Officers’ (NASPO) 1999 Northeast Regional Conference. They could have aimed low and ensured a degree of success. Instead, they aimed for the stars, and succeeded in creating a conference that greatly surpassed even their most ambitious hopes.

Within days of the show’s announcement, all available openings had been quickly sold out to delegates from New York, Massachusetts, Delaware, Vermont, Maine, and Pennsylvania among others. They

The list of attendees, vendors, speakers, hotel staffers and other great folks who helped make NASPO '99 such a special time for the group is far too long to list in a four-page newsletter. This will have to do: “Thank you all so very much!”

spent July 28 through 30 immersed in both the finer points of modern state purchasing and the fine grandeur of Water’s Edge Resort on the shore of Long Island Sound in Westbrook, the host facility.

Connecticut stands at the forefront of many of the progressive concepts discussed, and DAS person-

nel lent their insights and experience in lectures covering topics from e-commerce to the use of purchasing cards.

Among the guest speakers were State Comptroller Nancy Wyman, who gave a well-received speech on the state’s role in advancing these cutting-edge technologies; the always affable Commissioner Dr. Henry Lee; and even a stress management expert named James Ayotte.

“I’m extremely pleased and proud with the way the event went,” said Procurement Manager Jim Passier. “Everything from the spouses’ trips to the gift packs - the group really pulled it together and made something special. We’re still receiving positive words and praise from the attendees.” ■

4 Conventional Wisdom

Procurement to exhibit, discuss, and demonstrate new purchasing resources at CCM Conference, October 5

Once again, DAS will be among the over 100 exhibitors at the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) Annual Convention and Exposition on October 5 at the Radisson Hotel and Convention Center in Cromwell.

DAS representatives will be promoting the agency's many services to the towns and municipalities of the state, including new Procurement innovations, the State and Federal Surplus Property Distribution Program, and, for the first time, Financial Services Center offerings such as the Grants Management Program.

From 11:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., DAS Procurement Manager Jim Passier will

be part of a panel giving a special breakout discussion on electronic commerce.

Demonstrations of all the Internet-based services offered by Procurement and the State and Federal Property Distribution Center will be given at the show as well.

The one-day conference runs from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

We look forward to seeing you there. 



PURCHASING POWER



Procurement Services
165 Capitol Avenue
Box 150414
Hartford, CT 06115-0414

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO.
4313
HARTFORD, CT