

Colorado Homeland Security Summit
Colorado State Capitol
July 28, 2008

A high level of emergency response preparedness can have a positive impact on every aspect of society. Business, education, healthcare, transportation, government, and even the average American family, can all operate more securely and safely when our emergency response capacity is functioning properly.

It is paramount that Colorado's first responders have the resources needed to respond successfully. The objective of the 2008 Colorado Homeland Security Summit was to review current programs and practices, and to ascertain if federal agencies are complementing and supporting the mission of state and local entities.

Several examples of success and areas of improvement were discussed. Minutes and testimony from the Summit are provided below.

**** Minutes: July 28, 2008 – 9:00am to 11:30am ****

Congressman Mark Udall: (Welcome Remarks) It is important for Colorado to be fully prepared to respond effectively to both human caused emergencies and natural disasters. Hurricane Katrina uncovered a deep weakness in emergency response capacities nationwide. To prevent that from being repeated, it is important that first responders are able to do their jobs under any circumstance. Federal, state, and local cooperation is necessary for planning and action. The Denver urban area has benefited from DHS (Department of Homeland Security) grants and so far has applied them to high risk urban areas. Weak links need to be identified and new legislation specific to any problem areas may need to be considered.

Congressman Ed Perlmutter: We must improve on the way we keep our citizens safe, and work to mitigate any damages that might come. Response methods are an area that needs work from both national and local levels. As we prepare for the upcoming DNC (Democratic National Convention) it is a perfect time to test our readiness and operate as a team.

Governor Bill Ritter: Federal audits found deficiencies in Colorado homeland security, and we were criticized for being unorganized and lacking leadership. Direct action and major steps were taken after the audits. As a result, the Office of Homeland Security (OHS) was created. General Mason Whitney was named director of the office. The mission of the OHS is to do everything possible to prevent terrorist attacks, protect and respond effectively; and to recover quickly from any incident with open lines of communication between agencies and all levels of government. The Alamosa salmonella

outbreak saw response teams demonstrate a quick, effective response, and the outbreak was contained because all levels worked together. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) has also indicated that our response to the Windsor tornado was “textbook.” The strong local leadership set the tone, and everyone went to work at the right time. This can serve as a national model. Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection we can attain excellence.

General Mason Whitney: Significant changes were made as a result of the audit, which lasted from September 06 to April 07. Every aspect was looked at – grants, state security, and management. The challenge was that Colorado Homeland Security goals were not being accomplished. A strong commitment is needed in order to sustain federal guidelines. We needed a new organizational structure. During the audit the state did not have assurance that its goals were being accomplished. We needed more guidance where finances were concerned, and we need to make sure resources are spent effectively. The new strategy needs to become a long-term plan that is monitored yearly.

The three focuses areas in developing a new strategy are grant management, risk threat analysis, and direct implementation. Grant administration needs to get under control. Before the audit the state lacked effective internal controls. Some of the problems were caused by budget issues and low staff; also 2003-2006 was an evolutionary period and DHS grant guidance was unclear. \$7.8 million were found to be suspect in terms of money allocation.

Program readiness is another focus. The state homeland security strategy was fairly good, but we needed more capabilities, so we went to every region to make sure everyone was involved. We identified 37 target capabilities that are needed to plan for possible threats. We are currently going through a capability assessment process which will be sent back to the goal leaders so that our capabilities may be further developed and an organizational structure set up. Each state agency has a role, which needs to be matched up with some kind of authority.

In the end, there needed to be something on the governor’s level to evaluate all aspects – grants, response coordination, and execution. That is why the OHS was formed. The OHS has only been operational since the 1st of July, but incremental improvements have been made

Udall: We are very fortunate to have General Whitney on board with us. Will the rest of the dais introduce themselves and state what organization they are with.

Garry Briese: (FEMA/DHS) There has been a positive response to the audit. There has been a clear change in the level of accountability in Colorado. As a result there is stronger cooperation, better response capabilities, and improved partnerships between local, state, and federal levels. The Windsor Tornado was as good as it gets when it comes to response.

Elizabeth Marks: (FEMA/DHS – Grants) I was here before and after the audit, and there have been significant improvements. Movement is in the right direction.

Mark Silveira: (FEMA/DHS – Grants): There have been great changes under General Whitney’s leadership, and the draft rewrites are moving forward.

Joe O’Keefe: (Protective Security Advisor – DHS) Critical infrastructure and national infrastructure plans are necessary. The goal is for federal, local, and state partnerships to work together.

Udall: There will be testimony from 5 witnesses for 5 minutes each, and then the floor will be opened for discussion and questions.

Panel Testimony:

- Sheriff Robinson – Arapahoe County Sheriff, Chairman of North Central All Hazards Region, Board Member of Urban Areas Security
 - 9/11 taught us a clear lesson that we should work regionally, and work together, for the best interests of the people. Some of our accomplishments include the creation of All Hazards Regions. The state has recognized the need for a more central office of homeland security, and we have seen a meaningful statewide plan distributed and understood.
 - The North Central Region has had several accomplishments to date – public and private sector partnerships; anticipating problems; learning to think regionally; deploying public safety equipment on a regional level; deploying protective equipment for police and fire; training programs; exercises to test capabilities; involvement in regional planning; and solid communications across the front range and the state.
 - But there are changes we need to see happen – more accountability for funds that come to local and regional efforts; some of the funds held by the state should be marked and identified for fiscal agents; most regions are supported by one local government agent (this is a burden and a sacrifice); more ongoing assistance and official support of the All Hazards Regions; we work very hard and we need a level of official authority from the state; future guidance all needs to be consistent so that rules do not change mid-stream; and grant applications should not be formulated to meet inside-the-beltway demands, but rather to be achievable by local government.
 - The work we have done has served the very best interests of the people, and we will continue to serve.
 - Homeland security begins with hometown security.
- Scott Keller – Homeland Security for the North Central Region, one of nine Homeland Security Organizers in the region

- Responsive and sustainable reactions are needed. We have capitalized on regional partnerships and assisted local governments in filling gaps.
 - Subject matter expert committees have been created—they can ask the right questions in evacuation, response, and regionalization.
 - Some key partners in assistance are Red Cross, Salvation Army, Bonfils, and RTD.
 - Regional assistance program GIS (Geographic Information System) databases from all counties are all included in one database eliminating regional boundaries. Communications plans are more regional, and equipment has been acquired such as zone controllers, to affect communications. The ability to talk has been vastly improved.
 - More improvement is still needed since there is no national planning system—having an overarching planning system is critical for success—then we can work with public and private sectors. We are challenged to meet federal requirements, but the process is problematic. For example, we were given 30 days to implement tier 2 data, but by the time it got down to practical implementation level they only had 10 days to get it together. An annual schedule is requested, giving people more appropriate timelines to follow.
 - There are inadequate system administration resources. This limitation has made resources hard to come by. We need more management administration funds, because 3% is too low. In rural areas this problem is exacerbated, they are without equipment and funding altogether.
 - A key focus area is sustainability—how can we sustain the organizational structure and programs beyond federal funding?
- Dave Parmley – President Elect of the Colorado Fire Chief’s Association, Lake Dillon Fire Chief
 - A true all hazards response requires partnerships between federal, state and local officials, so that it can be sure necessary resources are available to respond to any problem.
 - The Colorado Fire Service focuses on responding to local and man made disasters. This year alone there have been over 100,000 responses by fire departments, not including hazardous materials, natural disasters, and national disasters.
 - Colorado Fire Chiefs understand counter-terrorism as a natural response, because the response to natural and man made disasters are similar.
 - Large disasters can steer funds away from training and other programs, but it is very important that basic fire and EMS are maintained. Congress can help by making sure FEMA keeps the staffing and the funding coming. The needs are much greater than the current funding can address. Decision makers cannot lose sight of support for fire, EMS, hazmat and urban searching. It’s also important that resources are not double counted.
 - We need the ability to provide resources in a timely manner, Colorado emergency mobilization is a partnership, and Colorado fire chiefs don’t want to create a standing army, FEMA should create something national.

Colorado fire chiefs think resources should be deployed at no cost, instead of incurring annual fees.

- There is a significant wildfire risk and a lot of it is in the urban wildfire interface areas near federal lands. It is important to reduce fire behavior potential. And to do this, all agencies must work together. However, federal land management is unable to complete tasks on their own in a timely fashion. The NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process takes too long to complete! For example, pine beetle projects are on hold because of a court case, and the US forest service has had to pull back.
 - Volunteer fire departments are having trouble maintaining the ranks along with increasing time demands, training requirements, federal regulations, and aging communities.
 - Fire takes a serious toll on Colorado financially. In 2007 15,000 fires killed 21 and injured 200. Four fire fighters were killed in 2007. Fire damage costs millions of dollars each year.
 - We need updated data for fire reporting.
 - We can no longer ask our emergency personnel to survive on fundraisers and local tax revenue, state and feds must provide adequate resources. A good portion of money could be saved through preventative maintenance.
- Chief Henninger – Colorado Association of Police Chiefs, Vail Police Chief
 - A Regional approach has encouraged collaboration and dialogue; grants have improved first responder's capabilities. Vail has conducted 2 large scale exercises that have made us better at dealing with problems.
 - We ask federal support to continue. It helps fund training, which has significantly helped our response team capacities.
 - The in-state mutual aid plans have improved relationships between all agencies, moving resources around within the state and to other states if necessary.
 - Federally funded fusion centers collecting local, state and regional information have been established under CIAC (Colorado Information Analysis Center). This brings about information sharing in all disciplines.
 - There are some weaknesses. The regional approach makes it so that vast areas with different needs have led to difficult compromises, and constantly changing plans have made it difficult to form agreements in rural areas. For long term solutions, strategies must be based on what makes the most sense. Sometimes grant funds should not be lumped together. Break them up so they can focus on natural or man made incidents.
 - Federal strategies need to be long term, and realistic with funding over multiple grant cycles. Please consider more funding and support for all hazards and mutual aid.
 - Provide greater support to the fusion centers.
 - Reinstigate a law enforcement terrorist strategy.

- Steven Blois – Colorado Emergency Management Association (Past President), Emergency Manager for Greeley, Colorado
 - It is important to bring together diverse organizations. They are all vital in preparation.
 - There are some strengths in the current system. Nothing works better than the prospect of collaboration and cooperation, it creates sustainability. Also, CIAC has been a positive and should receive continued support.
 - There are weaknesses. The grant applications change every year, becoming more complex. The grant review process also changes yearly, leaving people cynical and confused. It is important that we know ahead of time what to expect, because budgeting requires foresight. Not to mention that smaller communities could be left out of the grant process entirely because of grant exclusivity. Grant planning should not be done in a vacuum, it should transcend all regions to coordinate as many grants as possible. Lastly, the best decisions are not always made at the state level, local control is necessary because in rural areas it is difficult to keep the same administrator for over 2 years.
 - Overall we need to think locally, act regionally.

Udall: We will now move to comments from the audience.

Audience Q&A:

- Chris Olson – Retired Director of Safety in Englewood, Citizen Preparedness Program
 - We ask for continued support of citizen outreach. Citizens want to know what to do. With National Preparedness Month coming up, we have a tremendous amount of partners. We need their continued support. The Windsor tornado citizens were prepared because of the successful Be Ready Campaign.
 - Perlmutter: Grants were released and one was for ¼ million dollars for citizen outreach, in order to maintain the program.
 - Olson: Yes, it is higher than it was in prior years. Please continue that support.
 - Whitney: We haven't deployed our community preparedness throughout the state. We are hiring a community preparedness program manager which should allow them to effectively deploy the program throughout the state. Rural areas need community preparedness programs.
- David Daly – Parker South Fire District
 - One item that gets overlooked is funding for national training. It raises the knowledge and skills of fire chiefs and responders. Please also consider more disaster simulation training.

- Gary Severson – Northwestern COG (Colorado Council of Governments)
 - Firm believer in regionalism, but funds are eroding in some areas. Paying for administration costs are difficult, 3% is simply too low and we do not have deep pockets.
 - Perlmutter: do you agree with a federal fiscal agent?
 - Severson: The best decisions are made locally with federal oversight. In Colorado our All Hazards Regions have no statutory authority. Also, there does not appear to be any major effort to coordinate between the nine regions. There is no coordination for evacuation plans either.

- Melinda Johnson – MMRS Director
 - I haven't heard much about EMS and hospitals here. There is a confusion of grants between DHS and HHS, because grant funding is very different, it is hard to incorporate private sectors. They need to be streamlined.
 - Perlmutter: Office of Health Affairs head has been to Colorado for preparation for the DNC. Is there no coordination?
 - Johnson: They are working on it, but HHS is the responder, and DHS has a responsibility to make sure the elements are in place. They have different requirements and different priorities.
 - Gary Briese: We are reaching out to EMS agencies. We have a minimum of 3.5 to delegate EMS. Hospitals need to get ready in response to DNC surge. There is much confusion with private sector partners.
 - Jessica Johnson Simmons – Pikes Peak MMRS (Melinda's counter part): Continue MMRS funding in the future. Requesting annual support, we are the only program of our kind. \$50 million dollars is needed.

- Doug McBee – Fire Chief, West Metro Fire Department
 - We will be prepared for the DNC.
 - We need continued funding for the USAR (Urban Search and Rescue) program. I had a chance to participate in the early stages, though we weren't involved enough.
 - We get great information from CIAC.

- Dr. Brian Crawford – Director in El Paso County
 - Medical training is important as we approach hospital preparedness; 60-70% of health care providers are not aligned with a hospital. It has been a challenge to reach out to private practitioners and volunteers.

- Perlmutter: The communication has been great, the deficit, however, seems to be occurring with training. These people don't have much time, but they need to meet grant minimums. It's unrealistic.

- Whitney: Coordination between public health and homeland security needs to develop more capabilities and align the grants.

- Udall: Some important things I'm hearing are local control, communication efforts, making sure we are prepared and ready, greater funding and support.
- Perlmutter: Are there additional comments from the panel or witnesses?
- Perlmutter: (to Sheriff Robinson) as the chairman of the north central region, what have we have been doing in preparation for the convention?
 - Robinson: we have not taken a significant role, but the entities within the region have taken part. The training and equipment we have acquired will help.
- Perlmutter: What other steps need to be taken to get the money distributed?
 - Robinson: We have gotten there. The challenge is accountability of the grant funds. We need to be utilizing tax dollars. We are having challenges in the fact that many jurisdictions are getting to a point where they won't sacrifice local responsibilities for state and regional responsibilities.
 - Whitney: The grant program used to have 5% for management and administration funding. That has been reduced to 3%. Essentially there is a 40% cut and it is vital that we get back to 5%.
 - Johnson: It is 40% of salaries, not of the entire grant, but it is a huge fiscal burden that 3% of grant is not able to cover.
 - Whitney: Statutorily you are correct, but people didn't know the 3% was going to come in instead of 5%. There was no state or congressional buy in. It should be kept at 50%, but DHS did only 15%. We need a common sense approach to develop funds. All the strings attached make it difficult to administer all the funds.

Perlmutter: It looks as if we are done. We have never had an audit like the one that criticized Colorado, so I took it to heart. I am encouraged by the testimony. There have been significant strides. We took comfort in the governor having such a substantial law enforcement background. We really needed some first response capabilities. We have much more confidence in what we are doing with the grants. Our missions are to make us safer, and to make sure the mission is being accomplished in an effective fashion. There are significant steps being taken. Everyone must be ready for DNC. We have a real test ahead of us. Thank you for attending. We are adjourned.

Submitted Outlines of Witness Testimony:

Sheriff Robinson:

- Homeland Security Organizational Structure Changes within the State of Colorado
- The Need for Consistent Homeland Security Program Guidelines from the Federal Government
- Long Term Sustainment of Homeland Security Programs
- Management and Administration Limitations in Current Grant Programs
- Challenges for Rural Agencies and Jurisdictions

Scott Kellar:

- Capability Based Planning Structure is Generating Positive Effects; We are Asking the Right Questions
- Regionalization: Success & Challenges
- Need for a National Planning System
- Provision of Adequate Implementation Time for Federal Requirements, e.g. Tier II Data Call
- Management & Administration Funding Limitations
- Lateral Integration of Grant Programs/Funding from Federal Agencies

Steve Blois:

Areas noted as a Positive:

- Collaborative efforts, region wide are better now than anytime prior
- There are information systems, collection, analysis and dissemination that are better now than ever before in the state. (C.I.A.C.)

Areas needing improvement:

- HSGP funding process should try to stay consistent, driven by strategic needs and regional capability
- Planning efforts should be an inclusive process and not just a defined regional effort; plans cannot be made in a vacuum.

My "Takeaway" (personal plan for assisting in overall systems improvement)

- Continue in the development of, participating in, and evaluating of exercises, testing capabilities.

- Being a collaborative participant in local, regional and state wide efforts to prepare for any natural or man made event.

Dwight Henninger:

Vail Police Chief Dwight Henninger is the immediate past president of the Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP), a 5 year law enforcement representative to the Northwest Colorado Homeland Security Region, a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Executive Committee and Homeland Security Committee and is the IACP representative to the International Association of Fire Chief's Emergency Management Committee. Chief Henninger also serves as a Board member for the Colorado Information Analysis Center and is the chair of the State of Colorado Mobilization Working Group.

Strengths of the current Federal Homeland Security policies:

- The Homeland Security Grants and Colorado regional approach have encouraged regional collaboration and dialog between emergency managers and public safety officials in large diverse areas of the state, which was not occurring prior to this process.
- The grants to the regions have improved first responder's capabilities and allowed for the funding of exercises, planning and equipment that local agencies would not have been able to afford without the federal grants.
- An outcome of this regionalization is the formation of 3 All-Hazard Type 3 Incident Management Teams in Colorado, which have successfully responded to the Southeast Colorado Blizzards in 2007, the Salmonella outbreak in Alamosa numerous wildland fires across the state, most recently to the Windsor Tornado in May and will assist with the DNC.
- The development of these teams has been facilitated by ICS position specific training, like a plans section chief course and program development conducted by FEMA's US Fire Administration's All-Hazards Incident Management Team Technical Assistance Program, which is a part of the Emergency Response and Support Branch. This program has developed over 33 of these all-hazard teams around the country. Additionally, the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management personnel have served as mentors and facilitators of development of these teams and their members. This training has significantly helped the Town of Vail by providing training and mentoring of our employee's ability to respond to a pine beetle damaged forest fire.
- FEMA has also provided support to the International Association of Fire Chiefs to help states develop in-state and state-to-state mutual aid plans, which have been useful in developing improved relationships between differing disciplines of first

responders and to provide for robust plans for moving resources in-state and to assist other states during Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) deployments and other incidents that overwhelm local capabilities.

- The funding of fusion centers around the country and in particular Colorado's Information Analysis Center have been critical to improving the sharing of information that may prevent future terrorist attacks. These centers collect, vet and share critical information of both a criminal and terrorist nature, as it must be remembered that all terrorists are criminals and they use typical criminal activities to fund terrorist activities.

Weaknesses of the current Federal Homeland Security policies:

- The regional approach that Colorado has taken on in the distribution of Homeland Security funds has required vast regions of the state, with differing needs and views of what is important, to at times compromise: and the ever changing strategies, tools and plans promulgated at both the state and federal level have made it extremely difficult for those individuals that are not assigned full-time to homeland security duties, which is no one in the Northwest Region of Colorado, to effectively develop long-term strategies to improve the capabilities of responders to both the potential of natural disasters or terrorist incidents. This creates a lack of focus and inability to set a mission and work towards long-term solutions to identified problems.
- These compromises lead to picking strategies that are the easiest and have short-term successes such as the purchase of a piece of equipment or hiring a contractor to write a plan. A vast majority of Colorado's funds have gone towards the purchase of 800 MHz radios, which is important. The lumping of funds for all disciplines (Fire, Law and EMS) has reduced the willingness of these multi-disciplinary groups to work on difficult issues such as information sharing, intelligence gathering and communication. It is CACP's recommendation to break up the grants as was done up until this past year and re-institute and fully fund the Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program grants, but understand that all grants should focus on both natural and man-made incidents.
- Strategies and assessment tools can not be changed yearly and expect that the grant submissions reflect these changes within the short time frames that these grants require. The strategies and tools used to make grant funding decisions must be long-term and allow for first responders that are not full-time grant writers to work over a number of years to develop plans and strategies that provide for funding over a number of years for important projects.