


Public Information Committee

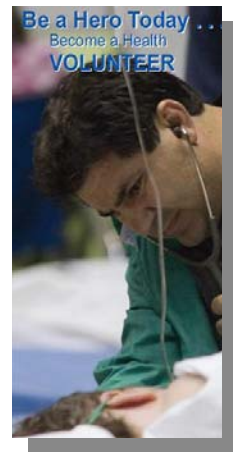
Purpose Statement

The mission of the Public Information Committee is to provide essential communication to the public and first responders in Illinois so they are knowledgeable in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from a critical incident.

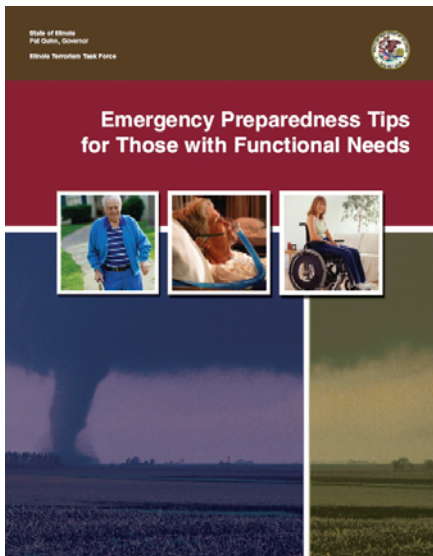
2008 Key Activities

- The Ready Illinois website (www.ready.illinois.gov) continues to evolve since it was first introduced in the fall of 2007. The site offers comprehensive information on steps people can take before emergencies happen, what to do once a disaster has occurred, and tips for recovery after the event. In addition, during a large-scale disaster, current information about the situation and details about such things as shelter locations and road closures can be posted on the site to help people access needed information. In 2008 the website was updated with the following features:
 - Spanish translation of the website by accessing the “Español” link.
 - Enlarged text capability by utilizing the “Change Font Size” boxes .
 - The “Current Emergency Information” feature was utilized three times: April 18th earthquake, spring statewide flooding, and Northern Illinois University shooting.

- Through the Volunteers in Medicine brochure, medical professionals are encouraged to pre-affiliate with existing medical organizations, such as the Illinois Medical Emergency Response Team, the Illinois Nurse Volunteer Emergency Needs Team, and the Medical Reserve Corps.



- Being prepared for disasters and emergencies is important for everyone, but it can be even more critical for individuals with special needs, who may rely on the assistance of others during an emergency. A new publication developed by a team of emergency management and health professionals addresses the unique preparedness considerations of individuals with functional needs and their caregivers. "Emergency Preparedness Tips for Those with Functional Needs" offers preparedness tips for people with visual, cognitive, or mobility impairments; citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing; those who utilize service animals or life support systems; and seniors. The document is available in print and as downloadable files from the Ready Illinois website.



- In an effort to make sure that all people in Illinois, including the deaf or hard of hearing, receive critical information about disasters and other emergencies, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency and the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission signed a memorandum of understanding. The agreement provides that the commission will assist in providing sign language interpreters to relay critical emergency information to deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the event of a disaster. In addition, IEMA will involve the commission when the deaf or hard of hearing are impacted by a disaster to ensure that their critical needs are being met.



IEMA Director Andrew Velasquez III, left, and Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission Director John Miller sign a Memorandum of Understanding.

- The Illinois Terrorism Task Force, through grants to the Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System, funds the School Security Training Project for public and private schools. Two training courses are being offered: 1) "Critical Incident Response Teams," a one-day session on how to form such teams; and 2) "Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Illinois Schools," a two-day, instructor train-the-trainer course. The Safe School Security Training Project continues to achieve a high level of success with demand for the training courses statewide remaining steady through 2009. With the addition of higher education training, the grant will continue to provide valuable emergency training to schools throughout the state.
- The Campus Security Training Project, funded by the ITTF and co-sponsored by the Illinois State Board of Education, was expanded to include Illinois institutions of higher education. The Illinois Campus Security Task Force (CSTF) was charged with identifying training needs and implementing programs that will help campus security officials prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies. The two-phase training initiative includes a statewide training series of executive briefing seminars followed by train-the-trainer courses. These courses are designed to increase the capacity of higher education institutions to continue on-going review, assessment, training of staff, faculty and students, and testing of campus emergency plans. Upon completion of Phase I, an assessment will be completed by a committee of ITTF and CSTF representatives. The assessment, which will include feedback from participant evaluations and a survey completed by the Illinois Community College Board, will be used to determine expanded training needs and content for Phase II training.
- Following is a summary of significant achievements in the School Security Training Project and the Campus Security Training Project during 2008:
 - The grants have funded a total of 118 one-day courses and 17 instructor train-the-trainer K-12 courses to date. A total of 22 courses have been completed through the current grant, which is 37 percent above targeted deliverables. A total of 5,197 participants have completed these courses to date.
 - A total of 786 public school districts out of 889 statewide have sent representatives to the training sessions.



- A total of 446 non-public schools out of 1,253 non-public attendance centers statewide have participated in the training courses.
- A model Emergency and Crisis Response Plan template along with a checklist are available for access on the ISBE website.
- In October 2007, a series of regional training seminars for the new Campus Security Training Initiative were completed. To date, a total of 11 sessions have been completed with 391 participants attending the "All-Hazard Emergency Planning for Colleges and Universities" training, representing 114 out of 191 higher education institutions in Illinois.
- The training curriculum has undergone a fifth revision, incorporating most of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) curriculum addressing the Incident Command System as well as lessons learned and best practices from incidents occurring at schools in Illinois and nationwide.
- Efforts have been made to include non-public schools. Sessions have been completed for the Jewish Federation Schools of Chicago (24 schools) and the Northern District of Lutheran Federation (54 schools). Regional Offices of Education are being encouraged to open training sessions to non-public schools in their areas.
- The project has, as of January 2009, offered courses through all of the Regional Offices of Education (ROE), which serve all counties and public school districts in the state. One session was completed for Chicago Public Schools (CPS), hosted by the Office of Emergency Management and Communication (OEMC). Additional sessions were offered to assist CPS in meeting the U.S. Department of Education Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools grant requirements.
- Special sessions are being solicited for training the Health, Life Safety Inspectors from each of the five Illinois State Board of Education areas. The strategy is to ensure the inspectors are fully knowledgeable with the provisions of the School Safety Drill Act and the required components of School Emergency and Crisis Response Plans they are tasked to review as part of their compliance probes and annual inspections.
- A special project to provide training for higher education institutions to form behavioral threat assessment teams has been initiated. Funding has been allocated in the FY08 grant and proposals have been received from four entities. A select group from the Campus Security Task Force will rate the proposals and assist in selecting a contractor to provide two train-the-trainer sessions in the spring of 2009. It should be noted the Campus Security Enhancement Act requires all higher education institutions to create Threat Assessment Teams. This law is effective Jan. 1, 2009.
- On May 4, 2008, the Governor announced the creation of the Illinois Seismic Safety Task Force (ISSTF) to enhance earthquake mitigation measures in the state so homeowners and business-owners have the protections they need if a damaging earthquake strikes, and buildings and other infrastructure are prepared to withstand seismic activity. The ISSTF



assessed the adequacy of existing earthquake mitigation strategies, particularly those in high-risk areas along fault lines in the southern portion of the state. The co-chairs of the ITTF Public Information Committee serve on the task force and will work with its partners to implement recommendations. A final report of the task force is pending release.

- The ITTF Public Information Committee participated in the Animal Rescue and Restore Project of the National Project Advisory Committee. One of the products was a joint project between the Regional Institute for Community Policing (RICP) and the Department of Homeland Security called: "It's A Disaster! What Are You Going to Do?" Workshop attendees learn specific fundamental concepts associated with developing an effective individual disaster plan for themselves and their companion or service animals.
- Illinois offered instructor courses for both Teen and Campus CERT (Community Emergency Response Team). Each course is a three-day train-the-trainer (t-t-t) program and includes new annexes to the standard CERT Instructor Guide. The C-CERT instructor t-t-t program targets campus police, public safety, security, emergency management, EMS, risk management, facilities management, community relations or outreach, environmental health and safety, or any other personnel who may be tasked with recruiting, training and leading CERT teams at academic institutions, as well as faculty who may incorporate CERT into courses for academic credit. The Teen CERT Instructor t-t-t targets high school age students and high school administrative personnel in the development of programs that involve high school students as CERT members who can assist in school emergencies as well as in their communities.



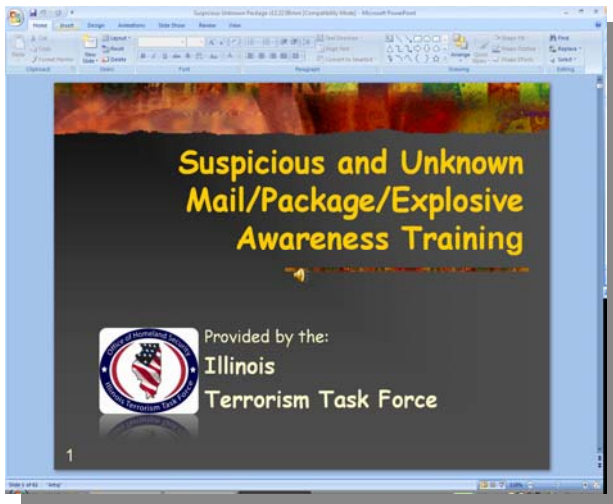
- During 2008 the Committee endorsed the work of the Illinois Department of Public Health's Faith Based Initiative to spread public awareness and encourage preparedness through the faith based community. Information about pandemic flu preparedness has already begun, and we hope to expand that preparedness information into an all hazards approach.
- The ITTF continues to publish the following brochures and make them available to the public and first responders. Each of the following brochures is also available on the Ready Illinois website.
 - [Together We Prepare Brochure](#) (English and Spanish) discusses how to prepare for emergencies through developing an emergency plan, disaster kits and training.
 - [Family Communications Plan](#) (English and Spanish) encourages families to organize contact information for family members, schools, doctors, etc. It also provides three wallet-sized cards so family members can carry this information with them.
 - [Disaster Kit](#) (English and Spanish) details how to prepare for emergencies with a list of items that should be included in a disaster kit.
 - [Homeland Security Advisory System](#) (English and Spanish) outlines action plans that can be taken for each alert level of the federal Homeland Security Advisory System.



- Disaster Planning for Pets and Livestock brochure discusses how to prepare for and care for animals during emergencies.
- Biosecurity Basics brochure provides information to help better prepare the agriculture community with simple actions to take to protect their livestock.
- The committee has distributed homeland security information at numerous public venues:
 - The task force was represented at the 2008 Springfield and DuQuoin State Fairs by a cooperative display in the Governor's Tent by the Office of the State Fire Marshal, Illinois State Police, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency and the ITTF.
 - Emergency Preparedness Month - the task force provided brochures to local communities to use during Emergency Preparedness Month in September.

2009 Initiatives

- The ITTF Crisis Response and Prevention and Public Information committees developed a Power Point program with audio narrative that provides information on suspicious mail, packages and explosives. The 30-minute program provides information for governmental and private sector employees on how to implement basic safety procedures for themselves, their co-workers and their families. In addition, the program provides a sample action plan template, an informational poster and a threat checklist brochure. All are available on the Ready Illinois website.



- The committee will continue to work with the Illinois Department of Public Health's Faith Based Initiative to spread public awareness and encourage preparedness through the faith based community.
- The committee's Special Needs Emergency Preparedness Workgroup will develop a document for first responders to provide guidance and action plans on how to address the eight functional needs highlighted in the publication "Emergency Preparedness Tips for Those with Functional Needs."
- The committee plans to research and develop an Emergency Resource Guide that would identify by zip code the nearest local offices of Department on Aging, Human Services, Emergency Management and Red Cross Chapter.
- As mentioned earlier in this report, the committee is working with the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission to have sign language interpreters relay critical emergency information during disasters. The committee is working with commission staff to prepare pre-scripted and pre-recorded emergency messages in American Sign Language that can be used by the media during emergencies as well as available on the Ready Illinois website.



- The committee has recommended publishing a newsletter to ensure current information on task force activities, programs, outreach projects and funding is available to the public and first responders. During 2009, this project will be developed and implemented.
- The committee plans to update the ITTF Glossary of Terms and Acronyms to reflect the National Incident Management System goal of common terminology.
- The committee will present to the ITTF Transportation Committee a proposal for the development of a “Planning for Transportation Emergencies” brochure, looking to that committee for expertise and suggestions on what to include. The goal is to have the information available on the Ready Illinois website and in print by the summer of 2009.
- As part of a three-pronged effort to reach Illinois youth, the ITTF, in cooperation with the Illinois Broadcasters Association, continues work on an activity book, computer game and a public service announcement contest for high school students. Further information on this initiative can be found under Key Illinois Homeland Security Activities in this report.
- The Public Information Committee, in coordination with the Regional Institute for Community Policing and a cyber safety workgroup of subject matter experts, will develop and introduce to the public and first responders action plans and initiatives to protect computer systems from attack or infiltration.
- 52 TIPS to Pickup—The ITTF Public Information Committee, with the input of subject matter experts, will develop an interactive calendar for the public and the media that provides safety/emergency preparedness tips for each week of the year.
- The Public Information Committee will continue to work with the ITTF webmaster to ensure the Ready Illinois website remains dynamic and up-to-date. The committee will continue to ensure the website is multilingual and accessible to individuals with visual and hearing impairments.
- The committee will remain committed to ensuring schools and higher education campuses are safe and prepared by continuing Safe School Training and Campus Security Training.
- The committee will continue to provide current information to the public and private sector to encourage emergency preparedness. The committee also will continue to work with the Elected Officials Committee and the Illinois Municipal League in the development of information for elected officials.

