

History of the Telecommunicator Emergency Response Taskforce (TERT) Initiative

In November 2005, the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) Vice President Jason Barbour and North Central Region Vice President Ron Bonneau attended the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) Conference in Phoenix, Arizona. There, they signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with IAEM to advance the TERT program.

In December 2005, NENA learned that FEMA was establishing a way to credential responders in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. FEMA's credentialing process identifies basic knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) of various response disciplines. Disciplines initially identified were: Fire & Hazardous Materials, Search and Rescue, Law Enforcement, Incident Management, EMS, Medical & Public Health, Public Works and Veterinary. A critical category was missing: telecommunicators. Subsequently, a NENA representative met with various Homeland Security and FEMA leaders to ensure telecommunicators were added to the credentialing process.

On March 3, 2006, NENA North Central Region Vice President Ron Bonneau and NENA Legislative Affairs Director Patrick Halley met with Kyle Blackman, Division Chief of the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Mr. Blackman explained the credentialing process and how NENA might meet the criteria. They also talked with House Homeland Security Committee staff members and Andrew Mitchell, Director of the Office of Domestic Preparedness under Homeland Security.

According to Mr. Blackman, the industry must establish a standardized profile of a public safety telecommunicator, reflecting the necessary KSAs, as well as a standardized Tier Deployment Structure (TDS). He also said that the KSAs and TDS should be developed in collaboration with relevant associations, specifically **NENA** and **APCO**.

In March, at the Operational Development Conference in Orlando, Florida, NENA asked the Disaster Planning Subcommittee to work on a TERT Operation Information Directive (OID). A three-day working session produced a first draft of the NENA TERT OID, including deployment processes and a telecommunicator profile for team members. Designed to foster discussion of the TERT process and program, the OID will be fully examined by the TERT committee and State Coordinators.

Also in early March 2006, NENA President David Jones met with APCO President Wanda McCarley to discuss the TERT initiative. During the meeting President McCarley agreed that APCO should join with NENA in the TERT effort. Shortly thereafter, she appointed First Vice President Willis Carter as the APCO Board's TERT liaison.

On Wednesday, March 8, 2006, during the 4th Annual 9-1-1 Goes to Washington, NENA President David Jones and Vice President Bill Munn talked with Acting FEMA Director Paulison about credentialing of telecommunicators within the context of the NENA TERT program. Agreeing that credentialing telecommunicators is an important issue in responding to man-made and natural disasters, Director Paulison assigned the telecommunicators credentialing process to the NIMS office of FEMA and to Division Chief Kyle Blackman.

Subsequently, during the late spring of 2006, work moved forward in forming a joint APCO/NENA TERT program. APCO appointed several individuals to serve on a joint TERT committee, and by mutual agreement of the Executive Boards of both organizations, the program was named the National Joint TERT Initiative (NJTI). A formal agreement creating the NJTI was signed by APCO and NENA.

The initial NJTI committee consisted of:

Ron Bonneau, NENA Co-Chair

Brent Lee, APCO Co Chair

Sherry Decker, TX

Lisa Dodson, TX

Natalie Duran, FL

Doug Edmonds, IL

Kurt Hardin, WA

John Haynes, PA

Steve Newton, NC

Tom Nudo Sr., FL

R. D. Porter, MO

Craig Whittington, NC

William Winn, SC

Chip Yarborough, CA

Later in 2006, two new members were appointed to the NJTI by APCO to effect a balance between APCO and NENA appointees. The appointees were Bonnie Maney, FL and Tim Hennessey, CA. Doug Edmonds was appointed as NJTI Co-Chair to replace Ron Bonneau, who was elevated to NENA Acting First Vice President.

Also, in the fall of 2006, it was agreed that the NENA OID for TERT would be transferred to the NJTI and be re-titled as Model Recommendations for TERT Deployment (MRTD). Work on finalizing that document is currently in progress.

Following, formation of the NJTI it was agreed that four subcommittees would be established to further the work of the joint initiative project. Those subcommittees are:

- **TRAINING:**

Develop a nationally recognized training curriculum for telecommunicators who respond during TERT deployments. Training is at the disaster response awareness level required by FEMA/NIMS as basic skills and abilities are dictated by individual agencies.

- **MRTD:**
Develop a Model Recommendations for TERT Deployment document. This document to include, but not limited to, incident types, criteria for taskforce members, requesting agency role, deploying agency process, review process, required documentation, needs lists, forms and agency MOU/agreement process.
- **EMAC (Emergency Management Assistance Compact):**
Develop typing and credentialing of telecommunicators as required by FEMA/NIMS. Identify related equipment and supply needs in relation to individual types.
- **PROMOTIONS:**
Develop a variety of promotional products describing TERT and the NJTI. This sub-committee has produced a brochure and is currently working on a CD/DVD presentation related to all aspects of TERT.