



**EAST CENTRAL PA REGIONAL TASK FORCE
(ECTF)**

PRESS RELEASE—April 9, 2010

East Central Pa Regional Task Force Elects New Leaders

In recent business, the Executive Board of the East Central PA Regional Task Force elected Walter H. Peters III, Chair, and Stephen Bekanich, Vice Chair, of the organization.

Walter H. Peters III, Emergency Management Coordinator and Director, Montour County EMA/911 has served as Vice Chair of the group for over ten years, and succeeds Arthur D. Kaplan, who chaired the Task Force since its inception in 1998.

Stephen Bekanich, Luzerne County Emergency Management Coordinator, has been employed by Luzerne County for the last 21 years, and has also been a Task Force member since its formation.

The East Central PA Regional Task Force (ECTF) is one of nine such Regional Task Forces in Pennsylvania, and is comprised of Berks, Columbia, Luzerne, Montour, Northumberland, Schuylkill and Wyoming counties. Together these counties consist of 320 municipalities, 4,070 square miles, and over one million residents. The mission of the Task Force centers on supporting, expanding, and coordinating response capabilities across the entire continuum of emergency response.

The Task Force, which serves at the behest of the respective County Commissioners throughout the seven-county region, is committed to maximizing the safety, health, and well-being of its citizens. The Task Force utilizes an All-Hazards approach to emergency preparedness, focusing on supporting and coordinating the efforts of member counties to effectively prepare, plan, respond and recover from actual or anticipated incidents or emergencies. All aspects of emergency preparedness, response, and recovery are addressed by the ECTF.

Over the past seven years, the Task Force has received nearly \$20,000,000 in funding from the United States Department of Homeland Security, all of which has been used to enhance the safety and security of the region. In the past year alone, five training exercises were conducted throughout the Task Force counties, each of which was designed and executed to strengthen response proficiency pertaining to various crisis situations. The Task Force supports a nationally trained Incident Management Team which serves to coordinate disaster responses, and provides ongoing training to its team members. A Public Information Campaign was launched by the ECTF in 2009 to educate and prepare the public regarding the H1N1 pandemic. The Task Force also supported PA Department of Health activities pertaining to H1N1, and participated at several Mass Vaccination Clinics across the region. Additionally, Task Force initiatives and funding equipped specialized regional response teams, facilitated planning for Public Health emergencies, and assisted in procuring funding for interoperable communications systems.

Current Task Force projects include the implementation of a region-wide emergency alert system, on-going training of the Incident Management Team, and enhancement of our first-responders capabilities and equipment.

To learn more about the East Central PA Regional Task Force, please visit the website at www.ectf.us.

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