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In the EYE of *the* STORM

Ocean City, NJ fighting Superstorm Sandy

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"CODY provides our officers in the field the power to better do their jobs." -- FBINA Grad, Chief Chad Callahan

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Association Perspective *continued from page 4*

I must acknowledge all of the FBINAA Staff also for the work they do behind the scenes: Executive Director **Greg Cappetta**, **Laura Masterson**, **Nell Cochran**, **Ashley Sutton**, **Becky Storm**, **Angela Colonna**, **Liz Seal**, **Christie Glinski** and **Lisa Munoz** as well as our conference staff **Yvonne Bean**, **Nikole Colonna**, **Mark Lorimer** and **David Anderson**.

I want to express my appreciation to the current board of the FBINAA: **Diane Scanga**, **Laurie Cahill**, **Joe Gaylord**, **Barry Thomas**, **Joey Reynolds**, **Scott Dumas**, **Johnnie Adams**, **Keving Wingerson** and welcome **Joe Hellebrand** as the Section 3 Representative. You have a great group of hardworking individuals that truly have the interest of our membership and the overall growth of the organization at heart. Since my time on the board we have moved to make the FBINAA more transparent, more inclusive and improve communications. I believe we have done that as shown by the inclusion of our members in all our committees, rotation of those positions as counselors in YLP, Historian, and Chaplain, etc. We have started monthly e-mails / newsletters. The web site has included a social network in a secured area for our members. This year we also started a committee called the Public Private Partnership Committee with the intent of growing the involvement of the business world in our association.

In closing, I want to say a huge Thanks to my wife **Sue**, daughters **Justina**, **Jennifer**, **Jessica** and **Juliann** (YLP Session 9) who all grew up attending the FBINAA functions. Without the support of my City

Manager **Sue Hann** and my entire staff at the Palm Bay Police Department, I would never have been able to carry out the duties of President this year.

I wish you and your families all the best for 2014. I know that President **Laurie Cahill** is looking forward to serving you and will continue the work of this Board. If I can ever be of assistance, don't hesitate to contact me. 

Sincerely,

Doug Muldoon

Doug Muldoon
2013 President

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IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

For Ocean City, New Jersey fighting Superstorm Sandy meant having the right people with the right technology

Myles Tillotson



As Hurricane Sandy approached the cooler waters off the Eastern Seaboard in late October last year it was officially downgraded to a tropical storm. But, in nature, timing is everything. Sandy attached itself to a cold front to become a nor'easter with a wider area of impact than a typical tropical storm. Plus, when the eye of the moisture-laden storm made landfall just five miles north of the summer resort community of Ocean City, New Jersey on the evening of October 29th, it was greeted by high tide and a full moon. On a barrier island surrounded completely by water, Ocean City was a prime target for Superstorm Sandy.

When the storm finally passed the next day, most of the damage and loss of life was still being felt further up the New Jersey coast and across the New York metropolitan area. But Ocean City didn't escape Sandy's fury by any means. Winds exceeding 70 miles per hour and three separate tidal surges left more than \$400 million in damage to Ocean City commercial and residential property and an estimated \$20 million in damage to the city's famed boardwalk and other municipal infrastructure and facilities.

But even with flooded streets and homes, and downed electrical wires everywhere, there was fortunately no loss of life or serious injury. With just a few exceptions, residents had heeded the warnings of public safety and emergency management leaders like **Chad Callahan**, Ocean City Chief of Police, to evacuate the island before the bridges to the mainland were closed. Chad maintains that this successful outcome was due in large part to clear and consistent communications with the media and directly with residents and business people. "In an event like Sandy there can be no ambiguity in the message you're trying to deliver," he says. "It's important that people understand exactly what you want them to do."

Chad, a National Academy graduate (Session #225 in 2006), points directly to the training he received at Quantico for giving him a strong foundation in the communication skills he needs for handling emergencies like Sandy and in his day-to-day work. "The best class I took was media relations," he recalls. "I've used

because you can't anticipate assistance from other agencies. Everyone is in crisis mode." Two of the department's three patrol squads were assigned to remain on the island throughout the storm, with the third staying on the mainland (where most officers live), positioned to provide relief immediately after the storm. "From prior experience, we knew that once you were off the island, you were most likely not going to be able to get back on (until the bridges were reopened)."

Chad emphasizes how important it is in a situation like Sandy to give your people time to prepare and evacuate their families first so they know they're safe. "That way they can focus on their jobs," he says. "Everybody stepped up, although some officers who are single parents and caregivers needed extra time to make special arrangements for their families. I learned that you have to be flexible and firm at the same time."



Ocean City, New Jersey Police Department under water.

the tools I learned to better communicate with and through newspapers, radio and other media outlets. Through the strong partnerships we built with local media we were able to get the right information to the public before and after Sandy." He also points out that "the training has really helped me navigate potential hurdles, like anticipating media questions and preparing clear responses that reinforce the key message I want to get across."

PREPARING FOR SANDY

In preparation for the storm, Chad ordered a total recall of all personnel, regardless of status. In major emergencies like Sandy, he stresses, "you have to be self-sufficient

THE EYES AND EARS OF THE STORM

Starting well before Sandy arrived, the department's Communications Center which handles 911 calls and dispatches for the department, as well as the city's Fire Department, got inundated with calls for information and help. As Chad explains it, "in times like this, 911 is the one number people know to call."

For Ocean City's citizens and public safety professionals alike, the Communications Center became the "eyes and ears of the storm" and the center of action for handling calls and dispatching resources before, during, and after Sandy. A core team of dispatchers staffed the Center for three days - eating

continued on page 12

In the Eye of the Storm *continued from page 11*

and sleeping off-shift in the building - before relief could arrive from the mainland two days after the storm. "Along with everybody else in our public safety and emergency management departments, they did an outstanding job," according to Chad.

The Communication Center team relied on the technology that supports them every day to get them through the storm. Since 1999 the centerpiece of that technology support has been an integrated public safety solution from Pennsylvania-based **CODY Systems**, which also happens to be a top-level supporter of the FBI National Academy. "Two key members of our sales force are both retired law enforcement leaders and NA grads," commented **Frances Heffner**, CODY Systems' President. "The training that the men and women receive through the programs they offer are invaluable."

The CODY solution in place at the Ocean City Police Department includes a powerful RMS (CODY Desktop™) and an integrated CAD module (CODY Dispatch™). "Information-led policing and the use of advanced software has been the Ocean

City Police Department's approach for some time now," Chad Callahan states.

The CAD module is integrated with the Center's 911 call answering system so that name and address information from land line-based calls automatically populates in CAD. With the unusually high volume of calls the Center handled during Sandy, features such as these that save dispatchers time in entering information and dispatching emergency response became ever more crucial. Plus, it is fully outfitted with a geographic information and mapping solution that presents dispatchers with a map view right on the CAD workstation. They can see the incident location, as well as the current location and status of all responders in the field. The result is more intelligent assignment and faster response based on proximity - both of which are of utmost importance when dealing with heightened danger to both residents and officers.

Information from a call for service or incident inputted at the Communications Center is immediately and automatically available to the responding officer in the field, who can add detail on the service or incident response without having to re-key data already en-

tered. Through the Desktop tm they can access vital information on residents, vehicles, businesses, and more in real-time. Related files, images, sound waves, and other supplemental documents can be attached to records to maintain comprehensive information in one location. This is made possible because all the information is stored in one relational database which promotes rapid search and retrieval. "Providing our officers with the timely and accurate CAD and RMS information they need in the field gives them the power to better do their jobs," Chad maintains.

GAINING A REAL ADVANTAGE WITH THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY

This technology solution has helped the Communications Center and the whole department work smarter and certainly proved its worth over and over again throughout Sandy's torment. That was evident in how successfully the Center managed all the resources assembled to fight the storm. "For Sandy we had close to 150 first responders involved, including our officers and the city's Fire Department EMTs and Fire personnel. CODY brought it all together for the dispatchers. They could see on one screen who


continued on page 13


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In the Eye of the Storm *continued from page 12*

was on duty and who was available across both agencies. That gave them a real advantage in a chaotic time," Chad explains.

The system also helps Chad and his command staff collect and synthesize the information they need to manage the department. "CODY is designed so you can extract information in many different ways," he points out. "For example, we can do a search on calls for service by different criteria, such as location and incident type, and have that information at our fingertips in seconds. And all the operational data we need for our annual report can be easily extracted." The capability to document call for service and response information fully and accurately proved to be especially important to the department immediately after the storm. When there's a Presidential declaration of a disaster, as there was with Sandy, the local agency must quickly substantiate manpower hours for FEMA reimbursement.

"As we progress in how we want to use technology in the department, it seems that CODY has already included those features. For example, when we started looking at electronically logging and barcoding evidence, we found that the Desktop™ includes a Property and Evidence module that can do this for us." Chad says.

The city's Emergency Notification System also played a large role in preparing residents for the storm. The system includes a "reverse 911" feature for sending voice messages to all land line phones registered in Ocean City, as well as the ability to send emails to citizens who had signed up on the city's web site. Critical information like storm forecasts, evacuation routes, bridge closure plans and shelter locations was broadcast to more than 25,000 people.

While most residents who could not leave the island on their own were successfully evacuated, some residents decided to ride out. As the water rose, the number of panic calls to the Communications Center's 911 line increased. The city opened an emergency on-island shelter, but getting to stranded residents became a challenge with streets made impassable by water and sand and the danger of downed power lines. Also, under the OSHA standard the department follows, personnel are not allowed to respond to an emergency when sustained wind speed is greater than 40-45 mph, as it was for several hours that night. "We won't put our people in harm's way," Chad explains, "but if someone were in imminent danger, it would be very difficult to hold some of our people back. Fortunately we didn't have to make that call." Chad expects the situation to be differ-



Downtown Ocean City, New Jersey experiences the wrath of hurricane Sandy.

ent in the next storm. "I guarantee that most of them won't stay next time. They saw firsthand what a powerful storm can do."

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

As a resident of Ocean City with his wife, Denise, and their two sons, Chad has a personal stake in the community's recovery from Superstorm Sandy. The Ocean City economy depends on seasonal tourism and home rentals, which usually begins in late Spring. "We had a slow start this past season, but it picked up over the course of the Summer," Chad observes. "We are still in the recovery phase, but construction is underway and we are looking forward to record numbers of vacationers in 2014."

One of the unexpected impacts of the storm was at least a short-term reduction in crime. Even over the typically busy summer season, "this year our numbers were down across the board," Chad says. "We made fewer arrests, and there were fewer accidents, which is a good thing." One police activity that has increased at Chad's direction, however, is late night property checks. "With the large number of summer homes still damaged and vacant, we've become more proactive in trying to prevent break-ins by taking preventative action. And, we're able to document and keep track of these property checks right in CODY."

FBINAA – A NETWORK YOU CAN RELY ON


Starting as a part-time seasonal officer in 1993, Chad progressed through the ranks to become chief in 2008 (replacing retired Chief Bob Blevin, also a National Academy graduate of the 162nd Session). But, he says, there's always a new problem or situation that you haven't faced before. That's where the FBINAA comes in. "The NA network and the camara-

derie among graduates is incredible. I can pick up the phone or email to ask a question about a specific issue and get an immediate response. No matter how large or small the department, we're all dealing with the same problems and there's always someone able and willing to give you the guidance you need."

Chad's National Academy network starts locally. "We have a strong state Associates organization in New Jersey, which meets quarterly, and there's good representation from Ocean City." Bob Blevin serves as Treasurer, Captain Jay Prettyman (Session #237 in 2009) and retired Lieutenant Bruce Twiggs (Session #230 in 2007), also actively participate.

THE DRIVING FORCE

According to Chad, this platform will continue to be the backbone of the department's technology for handling emergencies like Sandy, as well day-to-day operations. In fact, the system is being expanded to provide RMS access to the city's Fire Department personnel in the field via a bandwidth-lean "anywhere" RMS application, CODY Express™. "We believe that it's important for everyone to be on the same public safety software, sharing the same information seamlessly," Chad maintains. "It will ultimately improve the safety of police, fire and EMS responders and be a huge benefit to our local residents and tourists alike."

"There's no doubt technology is the driving force of law enforcement today," Chad concludes. "We're excited about continuing our partnership with CODY to further enhance our department-wide policing capabilities." 

About the Author: Myles Tillotson writes extensively about public safety and biometric identification solutions. He can be reached at mylestillotson@verizon.net