

COUNTY OF YORK

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 24, 2023

TO: York County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Neil A. Morgan, County Administrator



SUBJECT: Emergency Plans

At a recent Board meeting, I was asked to provide some information regarding how the County and/or the region prepare for extreme emergency situations such as war or terrorist incidents. Accordingly, I am providing a high-level overview of how such horrific possibilities are thought about in local government.

There is an emergency planning framework that exists in all Virginia localities. In the case of York County, our own efforts are broadly integrated with those of our neighbors through some working groups affiliated with the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC). Much of the resiliency within this region would be based on the many working relationships that exist between local government professionals, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), and personnel at regional military facilities. While there are frameworks for all kinds of events, those frameworks cannot anticipate all of the possible scenarios that could occur and are necessarily just starting points for reacting to a specific situation.

The most important concept to understand is that all of our emergency plans build on the same framework. The so-called "All Hazards" guidance is then cross-referenced with more detailed concepts related to nuclear, chemical, biological, mass casualty situations, and, of course, weather emergencies. County personnel as well as staff in neighboring jurisdictions practice a command and control structure known as the National Incident Management System (NIMS). All of our key staff are certified in these techniques which are modeled on the military organization system including logistics, planning, operations, and command. Pursuant to the County Code, the County Administrator serves as the Director of Emergency Operations and I in turn have designated the Fire Chief as the County's Emergency Coordinator.

Weather emergencies are the most frequent occurrence and it grounds the staff with the basic experience of standing up an emergency response. Additionally, each year the County's emergency team participates in a very detailed nuclear simulated disaster exercise associated with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM). While the particulars would change, the basic response posture would be the same for any other kind of complex emergency. Many larger emergencies would very quickly involve mutual aid and trigger regional support. For example, through longstanding regional agreements, there are caches of specialized equipment controlled by various localities (including York). Smaller localities also rely on neighboring localities to provide expensive support for things like bomb disposal and hazardous material management. The

localities that provide those services to their neighbors receive state and federal grant funds to partially offset their costs.

Of course, none of the arrangements I have described would leave our community prepared for worst-case situations involving all-out war. In that type of scenario, one would expect command and control to quickly devolve to federal military and Homeland Security authorities, although surviving local government capacity would no doubt be absorbed into the larger effort much as we have observed in Ukraine over the past year.

Morgan/3322