

Livingston County Takes Lead as Emergency Plan Gathers Steam

(Taken from Daily Press & Argus article on January 12, 2004. Permission granted to reprint.)

ON THE WEB

Michigan State Police Emergency Management

Division: www.michigan.gov/emd

A plan to share resources among agencies responding to future large-scale emergencies is circulating across the state, and Livingston County is taking the lead in approving it.

The county is one of the first in the state to approve the document, known as the Michigan Emergency Management Assistance Compact, according to Sgt. Kevin Mark of the Michigan State Police Homeland Security Division.

The compact sets out rules and reimbursement rates for local government agencies to follow when they have to lend or borrow resources such as fire trucks or police cars during large-scale emergencies.

Mark said the compact would only apply during disasters on the scale of Sept. 11, 2001.

"First responders will come to the event because it's the right thing to do. Americans help Americans. We just want to facilitate that."

Sgt. Kevin Mark

He said signing onto the compact will make it easier to get federal funds as well.

Richard Winsett, Livingston County's director of emergency management, said several local jurisdictions have signed the compact, including the county itself, Green Oak Township, the village of Pinckney, and the Brighton Area Fire Authority. He said the Fowlerville and Hartland fire departments and Putnam Township are considering it.

"It puts together a structure that we can go by. Everybody obviously wants to help and respond, but it causes some confusion. There has to be some structure to it."

Richard Winsett

Mark said about two dozen localities have agreed to the compact. He said he is now working with large cities such as Detroit.

As agencies sign on, they will submit lists of all the equipment and resources they have available. That information will go into a database managed by the state police in Lansing.

That would enable the state police to coordinate which agencies contribute what resources in an emergency, Mark said.

All localities within Livingston County already are part of a "mutual aid" agreement under which emergency resources are shared without cost. The new compact would apply when all resources within such aid agreements are exhausted.

"It would have to be something pretty overwhelming," Winsett said.

Denis Aseltine, police chief in Pinckney, said it's important not to have to guess about how to proceed in large emergencies.

"It defines the rules and procedures to be followed for asking for help, and for charging for help that was provided."

Denis Aseltine

Aseltine added that he thought having the compact in place would make agencies more willing to help other jurisdictions.

Mark said he hopes to sign up all 1,800 local agencies in the state, although he doesn't have a deadline for doing so.

Winsett said he plans to start visiting local officials in person for agencies that haven't signed the compact by the end of the month.

Brighton attorney Kevin Gentry helped draft the compact when it was first proposed in early 2000. He said the document has since been revised due to input by interest groups, but is close to what he originally wrote.

"It's similar to what I drafted," he said. "It was rewarding to be involved in something at the start. Events of the past few years have brought home the fact that things like this need to be attended to."