June 29, 2012
Derecho
Arlington County’s Response

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Lessons Learned

- Situational Awareness
- Communications Infrastructure
- EOC Management
- Power Restoration
- Vulnerable Populations
- Other items discussed
  - Staffing needs
  - Personal preparedness
  - Debris removal (contractor needs)
Common Strengths

- Internal and External Communications
- Community Engagement
- Personal and Organizational Preparedness
- Flexibility
Situational Awareness

- NWS warning not sufficient
- Minimal updates from Verizon
Situational Awareness

• Other tracking difficulties
  o Road closures
  o Dark Intersections
  o Trees down
  o Facility status
Communications Infrastructure

- 2.3 million without reliable 911 service for up to 4 days
- Central phone facilities lost power
  - Tandem generators failed.
  - System adjustments after power was restored.
Communications Infrastructure

• Lessons learned
  o Robust generator maintenance
  o Network system redenigns to improve redundancy
EOC Management
Continue planning, training and exercises
EOC Management

- EOC environment not familiar to all
- Learning curve improving for WebEOC
- Keep planning documents updated to align with EOC functions
- Cross-train staff from non-public safety departments.
Power Restoration
Vulnerable Populations

• Long term care, assisted living, other senior facilities, and facilities addressing functional needs
Vulnerable Populations

- Add to critical facilities
- Facilitate preparedness planning with managers
- Ensure shelters are prepared for these populations.
- ADA compliance may not be enough.
Power Restoration Issues

- Generator maintenance/performance
- Communications with power utilities
  - Excellent at management level
  - Work needed to coordinate in the field
Derecho Impacts on Arlington County

- No storm-related fatalities
- Initial Damage Assessment for Arlington
  - $1.6 million private property damage
  - $872,000 public property damage
  - (Compared to $3 million for Snowmageddon)
Arlington County - Significant challenges

• Massive power outages
• Devastating phone outages
• High temperatures with heat index 100-105
Arlington County - Major Power Outages

- 68,000+ Arlington households without power Saturday morning, about 60% of County
  - ~1 million+ without power across Virginia

- Excellent, robust Dominion Power response
  - Initial focus on **most vulnerable**:
    - Hospitals, health facilities
    - Nursing homes, senior living
  - Brought in 1,200 workers from 13 states & Canada, in addition to 3,000 employees, contractors & retirees
  - All power restored by noon July 8
Arlington County - Verizon Problems

• 9-1-1 service was spotty
  – Required creative problem-solving
  – Low-tech solutions: staffed every fire station with 24/7 personnel to assist residents
    • Included Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) volunteers

• Regional 9-1-1 support during incident
  – Misdirected 9-1-1 calls handled with mutual aid & radio channels
  – Began restoring July 1; system stable by July 5
  – No serious impacts reported in Arlington
Arlington County - Heat Index

- Crippling, dangerous heat conditions
- Opened 16 cooling centers
  - All libraries and community centers, including a 24-hour center
  - All public pools were open beginning Sunday
  - Fashion Center at Pentagon City and Ballston Common Mall (Sun.)
- Urged people to check on their neighbors

Photo credit: ARLnow.com
Arlington County - Response

• Activated Emergency Operations Center (EOC) @1am Saturday, June 30
  – Kept it operational 24/7 until Wednesday night, July 4
  – Virtual EOC until Friday night, July 6

• Traffic signals: 82 intersections dark
  – Placed generators & fully mobilized police teams

• County roads blocked: 45 totally and 27 partially
  – 60 Dept. of Parks employees
  – 8 crews from Dept. of Environmental Services
  – Some crews on 13 days straight
  – Collected 768 tons of brush
  – Responded to 315 calls about damaged/downed trees
Arlington County - Public Safety Response

• Dept. of Human Services
  – Staff checked on senior living facilities, including independent living

• ACPD
  – Managed, staffed 82 dark intersections, helped remove fallen trees
  – Placed officers at a number of senior residences & centers
  – Dedicated team of six officers to civil disturbance team

• ACFD
  – Staffed extra units, including medic units; used every available apparatus
  – Staffed units to check power lines; assessed, taped off, reported to Emergency Operations Center

Temporary spray park @Quincy Park
Arlington County - Extra Efforts

• Library’s 70+ staff and volunteers kept Libraries open extra 31 hours
  – Including over July 4 holiday
  – Dept. of Parks brought in staff to keep Walter Reed Community Center open as overnight cooling center

• All told, 416 staff worked numerous 24/7 shifts on storm recovery
  – Total: nearly 40,000 hours
Arlington County - Reaching Out

• Leveraged all our tools
  – Homepage: 26,464 individual views
  – Storm Updates: 16,654 views
  – Arlington TV: 927 views of “After the Storm” and “Storm Recovery Update”
  – Most info also in Spanish

• And used low-tech methods
  – Created flyers; CERT volunteers took door-to-door to most vulnerable populations
  – Pushed info to local radio stations
  – Broadcast via 1700AM Arlington
  – Sent special edition, text-only Derecho Insider to 8,300+
Arlington County - Attracted New Interest

- 580 new Arlington Alert accounts (now 46,517)
- 79 new Twitter followers (now 5,543)
- 31 new Facebook (now 6,493)

Arlington Prepares mobile app: 436% increase in usage

- Sharing source code with other communities
  - Counties of Montgomery (MD), Prince William (VA), San Diego (CA)
  - City of Worcester, MA
  - U.S. Marine Corps
Arlington County - Lessons Learned

• Incident Command System provided flexibility
  – Enabled successful emergency management through an unforeseen, complex incident

• Some in our community are not prepared
  – E.g., no backup plans for those with life-and-death oxygen needs

• September awareness campaign for entire community
  – Week of Sept. 23-29
  – Encouraging everyone to participate in some aspect of preparedness
  – Community Exercise September 27, 2012