

**Partners in Preparedness Conference Notes**  
**April 10-11, 2007**  
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The following are conference notes taken by Eric Holdeman at the 2007 Partners in Preparedness Conference held in Tacoma, Washington, April 10-11, 2007. Remember these are notes, and not a transcript!

**Regina Phelps**—Was the keynote speaker for the start of the conference. She spoke on public-private partnerships. She related it to “You’ve got a Friend” by James Taylor, the singer. A partner is a friend, and is not hostile to one another.

What does “Partner” mean to the private sector. They expect:

- Communications from the public sector
- Most direct conduit
- Information—What’s going on?
- Resources
- Access to buildings and homes
- Coordination with public agencies

This is basically the same type of needs that the public sector has from the private sector.

You need to look for common ground, we vs. me! [where have you heard that before?]

You should know the hazards. FEMA looked at the top three [before the events] and they were:

1. Terrorist Attack in NYC
2. Catastrophic Earthquake in San Francisco
3. Hurricane and levee break in New Orleans

Only an average of 8% of the population is prepared for disasters. Avian flu is possibly the greatest threat of our lifetime.

Barriers to making the public – private partnership work:

- You need leadership
- It takes time to develop the relationships
- Resources, money and people
- Tools for sharing information

- Lack of disasters
- Lack of perceived value

She gave some examples:

- ChicagoFirst, that was formed in 2003
- BENS, a business network
- Kansas City area
- The Center of Disaster Resilience here in the NW (She was referring to the good work Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) had done to collaborate here in the region with the series of Blue Cascades Exercises
- San Francisco Ready

Remember that 70% of all businesses in the United States are small businesses and 90% have less than 20 employees.

**Susan Reinertson, FEMA Region X Administrator**—Spoke about the new vision for FEMA. Their priorities are:

1. Implement the Director's Vision
2. Regional leadership in emergency management, with innovated business practices
3. Shape the FEMA Workforce with
  - a. Education
  - b. Awards

Ten Regional Advisory Councils to be established, launching in mid-summer. There are new FTEs established.

- Fire Liaison
- Law enforcement Liaison

The RISC will remain in place. FEMA is at 90% staffing with all ten Regional Administrator positions filled.

NRP and NIMS are both under revision [note the delay in these due to coordination and further revisions being made].

They are looking to have a 24/7 Watch Officer function to be established at FEMA Region X [MERS currently performs that function].

**Dennis Mileti**—spoke about mega disasters in a plenary session. In mega disasters no one will be able to help people where they are, because you can't get there [This is the issue I talk about when discussing the Seattle Fault Earthquake scenario and how downtown Seattle could be cut off from every which direction].

Mega Disasters don't have quick recoveries.

Objective Risk is the risk scientists perceive.

You need to have people self-determine what their readiness will be. People will choose the lesser of two ills when they receive conflicting messages.

We must match our efforts and funds to the risks we face. States have to manage their own risks as if they are their own nation. Instead, states are filling out forms to get money from DHS and FEMA.

Risk perceptions—We think in human time. If you have not experienced it, you don't have to worry about it. This measuring time in human scale is not realistic.

Whatever it is that you do, you cannot do it alone, you need expert advice. Advice based in science, science in all its forms, not from politicians.

We need to stop being reactive to individual voters. Laws passed after events are political knee jerk reactions.

People act as though citizens are the problem and organizations are the solution. In reality, organizations are the problem, not the citizens. He believes that the key disaster kit items citizens need following an earthquake are crowbars and gloves to rescue one another.

We need performance based mitigation. We need to abandon reliance on building codes. How many people might die? Is it acceptable? Different levels of protection should be expected.

No following the building code is the key element.

We don't have sufficient cash reserves for mega disasters. Can you have all-hazards insurance? Can we reduce insurance rates for those who do mitigation?

**Dennis Mileti**—Spoke at a break out session entitled, "A Conversation with Dennis Mileti."

Emergency managers need to stop doing emergency management planning 40 hours a week. Instead you need to take long lunches and extended breaks at which you create new partnerships across the public and private sectors.

We need to get scientists and practitioners out of their silos. And, we need electeds who are champions, who will take advantage of windows of opportunity [that would be those times immediately following a disaster when there is political motivation to do something.]

Windows of opportunity don't last forever. Studies have shown that following a disaster the public's interest rapidly wanes after two years (unless it is kept alive). For politicians that window is only six months.

California is going to do an extensive disaster preparedness survey of their population. They are spending \$700K+ on this effort. You need to stop having people self-evaluate how prepared they are for disasters and ask specific questions like, "How much water have you stored?"

He quoted someone else in saying, "History does not repeat itself, people just keep making the same mistakes."

Dennis believes that there is an "Iron Law of Perception." There are not real truths, only perceived truths.

He recommended a book, Wellington, "After the Quake" as a good text for reconstruction planning.

Climate change: Natural disasters will be more frequent, more rainfall, [look at the Northeast's Storm of this past week], with more flooding and hurricanes. To change the future we will need a revolution in thinking. He does not believe that the United States will be proactive in preparing for the impacts.