

WEST SIDE REGIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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Pennsylvania law and Federal regulations mandate that each community must have an Emergency Management Coordinator, Emergency Operations Center and an Emergency Operations Plan along with required levels of training for all local officials and staff personnel. Therefore, early in 2004, representatives of the Borough of Wyomissing and the Township of Spring entered into discussions concerning the establishment of a joint Emergency Operations Center in the proposed Spring Township Central Fire Station that was then under construction. Those discussions created the idea of developing a part-time paid position of an Emergency Management Coordinator that would serve both municipalities. Both Spring Twp and Wyomissing recognized that the current needs of emergency management training and developing an emergency operations plan needed more than just token attention. As the discussion continued, adding the Boroughs of West Reading and Sinking Spring to the plan was developed. Public safety and municipal management officials from the four municipalities scheduled meetings to explore the formal arrangement of entering into an inter-municipal agreement to establish the West Side Regional Emergency Management Agency.

Although there were a few loosely formed emergency management regions in Pennsylvania, staffed mostly by volunteers, there were apparently not any that were financed and organized to the extent necessary for use as a model in forging a West Side EMA agreement. The group was in effect "pioneering" in the concept of having each municipality assessed on a per capita basis to fund the operation of a regional emergency management operation. In addition each municipality was required to commit to the Agency for 5 years and currently has one elected official serve on the Agency's governing board which meets publicly once per quarter. A sub-committee of fire and police department heads from each municipality serve as a "Technical Committee" as needed to advise the Agency.

The Regional EMA became a reality in January 2006. The mission of the Agency is to have a plan for organizing and providing resources to assist the public in any type of natural or man-made disaster. The office and Emergency Operations Center that serves all four municipalities is located in the Spring Township Central Fire Station, Monroe Ave and West Wyomissing Blvd. Currently, Thomas M Bausher serves as the part-time paid Emergency Management Coordinator of the Agency. In addition, there are four volunteer deputy coordinators, along with six other volunteers that assist with the work of the Agency. The volunteers have backgrounds in a variety of emergency services, although only a willingness to learn and assist the community is required. Meetings and training sessions are used by the staff to continually work on preparing the staff and facilities for any type of community emergency.



Front Row

Thomas Bausher, Emergency Management Coordinator; John Schach, Jr., Deputy Coordinator; Bruce Longenecker, Deputy Coordinator; Matt Small, Emergency Operations Center Planner

Back Row

Scott Hoyt, Evacuation Planner; Brandon Epting, Resource Planner; Paul Roth, Deputy Coordinator; Jeff DeMarte, Damage Report Planner; Don Boulanger, Communications Planner; Wanda Derr, Medical Planner and Public Information Official