

## VATF- 1 Activated for Disaster in Japan

Virginia Task Force 1 (VATF-1) was activated by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Friday, March 11, and departed Dulles International Airport early Saturday morning for Japan to assist in the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami.



A VATF-1 team member prepares his gear.  
Photo by Greg Licamele, Office of Public Affairs

The team arrived at Misawa Air Base, Sunday, March 13, by commercial aircraft, returning to Fairfax County on Sunday, March 20.

Approximately 32 tons of equipment and supplies, including four inflatable boats, were transported separately by military airlift.

The self-contained, heavy task force of 74 personnel has technical search and rescue specialists, search and rescue canines, structural engineers, a medical component consisting of physicians and paramedics, and other critical support personnel. VATF-1 traveled to Ofunato, a seaport city of approximately 40,000, and established a base of operations.

Prior to their departure from Japan, VATF-1 and California Task Force 2 (CATF-2) transferred nearly \$145,000 in equipment to the Ofunato Fire Department to assist with local recovery efforts. The equipment included four zodiac boat kits – containing

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## Spring Flooding

By Laura Southard

Spring flooding has arrived in Virginia, and flood damage is costly! Just 1 inch of water in a home or office can mean \$8,000 in cleanup and repairs.

Most homeowners insurance policies do not cover damages and loss caused by flooding. Talk to your agent now about flood insurance. Here are important facts to know:

- There is usually a 30-day waiting period before coverage begins.
- Renters can buy flood insurance, too, to cover personal belongings or business inventory.
- Basement coverage includes repair or replacement of items such as furnaces, water heaters, washers, dryers, air conditioners, freezers and pumps.
- Buying flood insurance is the best thing you can do to protect your home and business and your family's financial security from a flood.
- Flood insurance is relatively inexpensive.

Go to [www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov) or call 1-800-427-2419 for more information about flood insurance. Prepare your home and family now for flash floods:

- **Make a family emergency plan.** Write down your plan. Decide ahead of time where you will go if you have to leave and where family members will meet up. Identify an out-of-town emergency contact. Go to [www.ReadyVirginia.gov](http://www.ReadyVirginia.gov) for a plan worksheet.
- **Get supplies for your emergency kit.** Start with three days' water and three days' packaged and canned food. Add a battery-powered radio with a weather band and extra batteries. Store in waterproof containers with wheels or that you can lift easily so you can take them with you.
- **Stay informed about what could happen.** During storm season, listen to local media for up-to-date reports on weather watches and warnings. Get a battery-powered portable radio in case the power goes out. Choose one with a NOAA Weather Band.

*Laura L. Southard is public outreach coordinator with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.*



U.S. Spring Flood Risk Map for 2011, courtesy of NOAA.

According to the National Weather Service, more deaths occur due to flooding each year than from any other severe weather related hazard. The main reason is people underestimate the force and power of water. All areas of the country can be at risk for flooding and when such conditions are forecast, important information and lifesaving alerts are available at [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov).

More than half of all flood-related deaths result from vehicles being swept downstream. Remember, flash flooding can take from a few minutes to a few hours to develop. Be prepared to take detours and adjust your route due to road closures if there is standing water. As little as 6 inches of water may cause you to lose control of your vehicle. Flood water may be much deeper than it appears as the roadbed may be washed out. Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood dangers.

In most cases, standard homeowners insurance policies don't cover flood damages. FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program makes flood insurance available to renters, homeowners and business owners through thousands of insurance agents located in nearly 21,000 communities. Flood coverage can be purchased for properties both in and outside of the highest risk areas but should be considered regardless of where you live since 20 percent of all flood insurance claims come from moderate-to-low-risk areas. The average cost of a policy is \$570 a year, and Preferred Risk Policies outside of Special Flood Hazard Areas can be as low as \$129 a year. Learn more at the [FloodSmart.gov](http://FloodSmart.gov) website, or by calling 1-800-427-2419.

## Resources for Japan

FEMA is working in support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the lead federal agency when it comes to responding to international disasters.

If you are looking for ways to help, you can **donate** to support Japan Tsunami Response by going to [www.interaction.org/](http://www.interaction.org/). Also check out guidelines to avoid charity fraud from Fairfax County’s Consumer Affairs Division at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/consumer/education/fraudulent-charities.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/consumer/education/fraudulent-charities.htm).

For additional information and updates on response efforts, you can go to the USAID Disaster Assistance Website at [www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/humanitarian\\_assistance/disaster\\_assistance/help/index.html](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/help/index.html). If you are concerned about the safety of friends or family and you cannot get in touch with them, you may contact the U.S. State Department via email at [pacifictsunamiusc@state.gov](mailto:pacifictsunamiusc@state.gov).

## DHS Announces Release of New Training Course: Workplace Security Awareness

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has announced the availability of IS-906, Workplace Security Awareness, a no-cost training course developed by the department’s Office of Infrastructure Protection Sector-Specific Agency Executive Management Office. The online training provides guidance to individuals and organizations on how to improve security in the workplace. No workplace – be it an office building, construction site, factory floor or retail store – is immune from security threats. Employees are often the target of these threats as well as the organization’s first line of defense against them. Threats endanger the confidentiality, integrity and security of your workplace, as well as your virtual workplace and computer systems. This course presents information on how employees can contribute to an organization’s security. The course is at: <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/IS906.asp>

The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management is available to deliver emergency preparedness presentations to community organizations and homeowners associations. If interested, contact Marcelo Ferreira at 571-350-1013, TTY 711, or via email at [marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov).

## Marcelo’s Minute

### Donating in Disasters

In times of crisis, many individuals help their communities get back on their feet. Unfortunately, some individuals take advantage of the situation. Recently, I received an email from a private account claiming to be from the



Marcelo Ferreira

“British Red Cross Japan Tsunami Appeal Board” requesting donations from “well meaning individuals and corporate organizations.” After verifying with the American Red Cross of the National Capital Region that this request was indeed spam, I compiled some tips for donating during a disaster.

1. Donate to experienced, reputable organizations.
2. Find out if donations are being accepted by the locality.
3. Financial contributions to a recognized disaster relief organization are the most effective donations.
4. Only donate in-kind goods that are specifically requested by recognized organizations.
5. Confirm the need by contacting the voluntary organization of your choice before collecting or sending the goods.

When thinking about donating in-kind goods – used clothing, household items, perishable foods – remember that the receiving agency must redirect valuable resources away from providing services in order to sort, package, transport, warehouse and distribute supplies. Cash donations, on the other hand, reach victims quickly and can be used to fund response and recovery efforts, obtain goods and services locally and provide direct financial assistance to disaster survivors.

### Additional Resources:

FEMA – Helping Others

[www.fema.gov/rebuild/recover/howtohelp.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/rebuild/recover/howtohelp.shtm)

USAID – How You Can Help

[www.usaid.gov/japanquake/index.html#help](http://www.usaid.gov/japanquake/index.html#help)

Marcelo Ferreira, OEM community liaison, holds the Associate Emergency Manager (AEM) credential from the Virginia Emergency Management Association (VEMA).

## VATF-1

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boats, motors, fuel tanks, paddles, 16 kerosene heaters, 160 cots and 160 sleeping bags.

Both teams worked under the direction of the Tokyo Fire Department.

VATF-1 also was activated last year following the earthquake in Haiti, assisting in the rescue of 16 people. The team has deployed worldwide to both natural and manmade disasters for approximately 25 years, including Kenya, Taiwan, Turkey, Oklahoma City, the Pentagon and Armenia.

More on VATF-1 is online at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/vataskforce1/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/vataskforce1/).



One of six Virginia Task Force 1 dogs being deployed on search and rescue efforts in Japan.

*Photo by Greg Licamele, Office of Public Affairs*

### FEMA's Role

FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate recently shared his views on emergency response during the Center for Strategic and International Studies/Louisiana State University Series on Disaster Management and Emergency Response. Fugate's three key messages:

- The public is part of the solution.
- The private sector is a valuable resource.
- FEMA is authorized to support governors or a lead federal agency.

The video is available at <http://csis.org/event/femas-role-disaster-response>.

## Next Generation 9-1-1

*By Bruce A. McFarlane Sr.*

On Friday, March 11, I attended the third session of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Emergency Access Advisory Committee (EAAC) in Washington, D.C. The EAAC is charged with developing a national survey (more on page 8) on the next generation 9-1-1, how it will look and how it will be used by people with access and functional needs.

There were several key topics covered, including the taping of the survey using an ASL interpreter and the expected distribution of the survey access link on the Internet. The EAAC wants to ensure that not only will the survey be accessible, but that people and organizations that represent people with disabilities and seniors know where to find the survey.

One member of the NG 9-1-1 committee is also working on the 3GPP non-voice emergency services committee (NOVES). He reported that standards are being developed for real-time text streaming to 9-1-1, which will eventually provide access for users to contact 9-1-1 using multi-media methods, starting with text and eventually leading to video and/or picture data streams.

During the afternoon session, the committee began looking at possible recommendations that could be supported by the data collected through the survey. A key recommendation would be the development of technical standards and requirements for use by public safety answering points (9-1-1 call centers), designated default answering points and local emergency authorities. Additionally, a suggestion was made to consider a user-friendly clause to ensure that standards and requirements developed do not require additional or extra-ordinary steps by callers to contact 9-1-1 for assistance.

I encourage you to participate in the survey ([www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/EAAC/](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/EAAC/)) and have a say in how the next generation of 9-1-1 call centers will be accessible to all Fairfax County residents. If you have questions, e-mail [bruce.mcfarlane@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:bruce.mcfarlane@fairfaxcounty.gov).

*Bruce McFarlane Sr., inclusive emergency planner for the Office of Emergency Management, holds the Certified Emergency Management Assistant credential from the Virginia Emergency Management Association.*

## Tornado Drill at NVMHI

By Donald E. White

Disaster drills at psychiatric hospitals can be tricky for even the best emergency planner. Solution? Engage both the staff and patients. Result? The 2011 Statewide Tornado Drill was a rousing success at the Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute (NVMHI).

NVMHI is the Virginia state hospital, next door to Inova Fairfax Hospital in Falls Church. About 325 staff members serve 123 psychiatric patients from Northern Virginia.

For the 150 staff on-site, this was a break from their training classes or work. For the 123 psychiatric patients this provided meaningful participation in emergency preparedness.

For the community, this was a repeated demonstration of facility preparedness for this disaster scenario.

How did we do this? Staff education was provided via bulletin board display, emailed instructions with a PDF shelter map attached and colorful door signs posted at NVMHI's seven entrances.

NVMHI deployed its Environment of Care (Safety) Committee members and nursing and risk management staff to 11 of the 14 designated tornado shelter areas. NOAA Weather Radio sounded the alert at the NVMHI visitor entrance.

The switchboard operator broadcast a hospitalwide loudspeaker announcement. Patients and their clinical staff promptly relocated to the interior hallways. Remaining staff promptly walked downstairs to the two basements. Staff participants completed attendance sheets and received candy bowl treats. Patient and staff participants completed evaluation forms.

In total: 283 participants. A rousing success!

*Donald E. White is director of safety and security at the Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute.*



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To request this information in an alternate format, call 571-350-1000, TTY 711.



The Fairfax County Citizen Corps harnesses the power of individuals through education, training and volunteer service to make communities safe, stronger and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues and disasters of all kinds. There are five core programs:

### Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS)

Provides support for the police department by incorporating volunteers so that law enforcement professionals have more time for frontline duty. VIPS includes auxiliary police officers, administrative volunteers, and the Citizen's Police Academy.



[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/vips.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/vips.htm)

### Neighborhood Watch

Brings private citizens and law enforcement together to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods. It brings to life the simple concept of neighbors watching out for neighbors. Volunteers may join an existing group or establish one in their neighborhood.



[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/nw.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/nw.htm)

### Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)

Operated by the Health Department, MRC is composed of medical and non-medical volunteers trained to assist the community in dispensing medication during public health emergencies.



[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mrc/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mrc/)

### Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

Trains people in neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools in basic disaster response skills, such as fire suppression and search and rescue, and helps them take a more active role in emergency preparedness.



[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/cert.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/cert.htm)

### Fire Corps

Volunteers are trained to perform non-operational administrative duties at the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Headquarters and at volunteer fire stations.



[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/firecorps.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/firecorps.htm)

## FEMA and NDRN Strengthen Emergency Collaboration

The Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) recently signed a memorandum of agreement. This further strengthens their growing partnership to ensure that the access and functional needs of people with disabilities are incorporated into all aspects of planning for, responding to and recovering from disasters.

### USFA Releases Fire Risk Reports

The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) has issued three special reports as part of its Topical Fire Report Series. The reports examine the risk of death or injury from fire by various demographics, such as age, race, and gender. They are:

“Fire Risk in 2007” (PDF, 542 Kb)  
[www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/statistics/v11i8.pdf](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/statistics/v11i8.pdf)

“Fire Risk to Children in 2007” (PDF, 371 Kb)  
[www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/statistics/v11i9.pdf](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/statistics/v11i9.pdf)

“Fire Risk to Older Adults in 2007” (PDF, 478 Kb)  
[www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/statistics/v11i10.pdf](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/statistics/v11i10.pdf)

The three reports were developed by the National Fire Data Center, part of USFA. The reports explore factors that influence risk and are based on data from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) and the U.S. Census Bureau. These reports are an update of the previous fire risk reports issued in April 2008 (Volume 7, Issues 5, 6 and 7).

These short topical reports to explore facets of the U.S. fire problem as depicted through data collected in NFIRS. Each topical report briefly addresses the nature of the specific fire or fire-related topic, highlights important findings from the data, and may suggest other resources to consider for further information.

For information regarding other topical reports or programs and training available from the United States Fire Administration, visit [www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov).

While FEMA has coordinated with the NDRN in the past, this agreement will strengthen their relationship to ensure the needs of people with disabilities, young children, seniors and all members of the community are fully integrated into emergency planning efforts.

Specifically, the agreement will ensure that advocates for the NDRN’s 57 state and territory affiliates have access to FEMA disaster response offices, including workspace and logistical support, before, during and after a disaster, to be involved in policy decisions and coordinate directly with the entire emergency management team. This partnership will help FEMA leverage the resources of the entire community, including the resources the NDRN or other organizations can offer, to better meet the needs of the entire population impacted by a disaster.

### FEMA Asks: How Do You Stay Prepared on a Budget?

The economic downturn has made staying prepared more difficult in recent years. Fortunately, many Americans have found creative and inexpensive ways to be ready in case of an emergency.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) wants to know what steps you have taken to stay prepared on a budget.

FEMA is looking for items and their uses, tips, stories and good practices. What items do you keep in your home, car or workspace that help you stay prepared? Have you been involved in a disaster and found a particular yet inexpensive item especially useful? Are there inexpensive ways that help you fulfill the Ready.gov recommendations ([www.ready.gov/america/getakit/index.html](http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/index.html)) for a preparedness kit?

Before April 30, send suggestions to [citizencorps@dhs.gov](mailto:citizencorps@dhs.gov) and put “Preparing on a Budget” in the subject line. And cc: the Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management as well ([oem@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:oem@fairfaxcounty.gov)) so that we can incorporate your great ideas into our preparedness training and presentations to county residents and businesses.

## Make Your Cellphone a Valuable Emergency Resource

- **Store useful phone numbers** – Check the numbers for your emergency contacts to make sure they're up to date. Be sure to save the contact information for your local police and fire departments, as well as your utility companies. That way, you'll be able to quickly report any service or power outages following an emergency.

- **Create a group for your emergency contacts** – Some cellphones allow you to create contact groups or lists, making it easy to send a single text message to a group to let them know your status after an emergency. Many social networking sites allow you to create a list or group of contacts as well, making it easy to share your status with your emergency contacts following a disaster.



- **Stay up to date via Twitter without an account** – Twitter is becoming an important vehicle for information before, during and after a disaster. One of the common misconceptions is that people need a Twitter account to receive updates. In fact, you can receive updates from Twitter simply by utilizing your phone's text messaging capability (normal text message rates apply). For example, if you wanted to follow FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate, text follow [craigatfema](https://twitter.com/craigatfema) to 40404 (Twitter's text message number).

- **Bookmark useful mobile sites** – If your cellphone has Internet access, take advantage of mobile websites that are formatted to display information within a mobile browser. The National Weather Service (<http://mobile.weather.gov>), Center for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://m.cdc.gov>), FEMA (<http://m.fema.gov>) [and Fairfax County (<http://m.fairfaxcounty.gov>)] are mobile sites you can bookmark today.

- **Back up your battery** – This may not be a tip for using your cellphone, but having an extra battery for your phone (or a solar charger) in your emergency kit will ensure you can use your device if the power stays out for an extended period of time.

Reprinted from the FEMA blog: <http://blog.fema.gov/2011/03/using-your-cell-phone-before-during-and.html>

## CERT Basic Training Updates Announced by FEMA

FEMA's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) National Program Office has announced the release of updated materials for the CERT basic training course.

**What are the changes?** The updated course is the same effective training as before, with the units and topics organized in the same way. However, edits were made throughout all of the course materials including the participant manual, instructor guide and the PowerPoint files. The changes are intended to ensure that protocols are up to date and that the content is as clear as possible for those taking the training. Since there are many edits throughout the training, CERT instructors are encouraged to review all of the updated materials.

**Who made the changes?** To update the basic training, FEMA worked with a panel of 12 experienced CERT trainers from across the country, followed by a review by local CERT programs designated by the CERT or CERT/Citizen Corps coordinator in each state. FEMA senior leadership and FEMA's technical review team also reviewed and commented on the updated material.

**Where can I find the new material?** The course files are now available on the national CERT website. Visit [www.citizencorps.gov/cert](http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert) and click on "Training Materials" to access documents in PDF or Word. On the website you will also find the updated participant manual in low-vision format.



Please note that the updated instructor guide references a series of videos that CERT trainers may want to use when they conduct the basic training course. These videos are available on the website by clicking on "Video Material" on the home page.

**What comes next?** Later this year, the CERT national office will post a new CERT Train-the-Trainer course and the new CERT program manager course.

## Coastal Residents Should Always Be Prepared for Tsunamis

Following Japan's tsunami disaster, NOAA is urging Americans who live and vacation at the coast to take the threat of tsunamis seriously. With more coastline than any other country in the world and proximity to several major fault lines, the Pacific, Atlantic, Gulf and Caribbean coasts of the United States are vulnerable.

NOAA's National Weather Service, which operates the U.S. Tsunami Detection and Warning System, says that the key to surviving a tsunami is staying informed and moving quickly to higher ground when a tsunami threatens.

In a message issued by the White House during Tsunami Awareness Week, March 20-26, President Barack Obama acknowledged that although the danger posed by tsunamis cannot be eliminated, NOAA's efforts within the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program to work with local communities on hazard assessment, evacuation planning and educational outreach can help save lives by equipping residents to effectively respond to emergency situations.

Tsunami Awareness Week is a crucial reminder for everyone to take the time to get prepared now, before disaster strikes. Visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) to learn how.

### Warning Signs of a Tsunami

- A strong earthquake, or one that persists for 20 seconds or longer.
- The ocean withdraws or rises rapidly.
- A loud, roaring sound (like an airplane or a train) coming from the ocean.
- Tsunami warnings broadcast over television and radio, by beach lifeguards, community sirens, text message alerts, National Weather Service tsunami warning center websites and on NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards.



Bruce McFarlane Sr., OEM inclusive emergency planner, recently attended an outreach event at the Herndon Senior Center. Over 250 residents registered to attend.

*Supplied photo, courtesy of the event*

## National Survey to Learn About Emergency Calling by Individuals with Disabilities

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has launched an online national survey of individuals with disabilities to determine the most effective and efficient technologies and methods to enable their access to emergency services. The results of the survey will inform the Emergency Access Advisory Committee (EAAC) as it develops recommendations to implement such technologies and methods in a Next Generation 9-1-1 system that will be capable of receiving emergency calls via video, text and voice.

The survey is available online at [www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/EAAC/](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/EAAC/). The survey is provided in English, Spanish and video clips in American Sign Language (ASL).

The EAAC was established by FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski on Dec. 7, 2010, in compliance with the Twenty-first Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010.

To request materials in accessible formats for people with disabilities (Braille, large print, electronic files, audio format), send an email to [fcc504@fcc.gov](mailto:fcc504@fcc.gov) or call the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau at 202-418-0530, TTY 202-418-0432.