

CAPCOG CONNECTIONS



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Basic Telecommunicator Academy Set to Begin

The second Basic Telecommunicator Academy (BTA) is set to begin Jan. 26, 2009. This nine-week course will provide participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to begin a career as a 9-1-1 Telecommunicator. Throughout training, participants will learn ways to calm the caller, take control of the call, and gather pertinent information. Participants will obtain all state-required training, as well as many other certifications preparing them for the difficult job.

Training will be conducted in a classroom environment as well as a simulated dispatch center. (See *TELECOMMUNICATOR*, P. 4)

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CAPCOG Undertakes Strategic Planning Process

CAPCOG conducted its first strategic planning process during 2008 to assess what program areas needed to be expanded or initiated to better serve the region's cities and counties. Hilliard Resources was hired as a consultant to carry out advance benchmarking and survey work leading up to a work session in October.

According to Betty Voights, Executive Director, the primary goal was to learn from the local governments how CAPCOG could do a better job meeting their needs. "We wanted to know if they know what we do now and what else they would like us to be doing in the future," Voights explained. Every city and county official was sent an electronic and written survey in September by the consultants and the response rate was 25 percent, according to Voights. The leadership of several regional stakeholder organizations were also surveyed, and the consultants

benchmarked other COGs in Texas and across the U.S. to help CAPCOG's leadership get an idea of what types of programs were possible.

CAPCOG Executive Committee members were each asked to attend and bring one other elected official with them to the work session where they generated a list of new initiatives to be implemented over a two to three year period. This list, as well as a new vision statement, will be considered for adoption at the regularly scheduled monthly Executive Committee meeting on Dec. 12th. A final copy of the Strategic Plan will be sent to all cities and counties and will be available on the website following adoption.

The Strategic Planning Work Session



CAPCOG CBRNE Strike Team Joint Exercise



Members of Williamson County's team prepare to enter a hazardous environment at LCRA's Wirtz Dam during one of the scenarios included in the November 7 CAPCOG CBRNE Strike Team exercise.

The CBRNE Strike Teams in the CAPCOG region conducted an ambitious, multiple-scenario joint exercise Nov. 7th at four locations

in Burnet County. Scenarios included a release of toxic chemicals inside the powerhouse of LCRA's Alvin Wirtz Dam, the detonation of a "dirty" bomb at the other end of the dam, a shooting and potential hazardous materials incident at the Granite Shoals Airport and a hostage standoff at the new Granite Shoals City Hall.

The exercise brought together personnel from across the CAPCOG region to test their abilities to respond to multiple events and to coordinate their activities with each other. For the first time, Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams were incorporated into the exercise. In addition, the

Burnet County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was fully activated to coordinate activities and requests for assistance.

This was the third year that the four CBRNE Strike Teams conducted a joint exercise. Participants agreed that the scenarios put their joint capabilities to the test. In a media release issued prior to the event, Burnet County Judge, Donna Klaeger, said, "We are very pleased to host the drill. Safety and timely response are high priorities during any emergency situation, but especially near the dam where the work environment calls for more emergency planning than most other situations. We welcome additional opportunities to practice our emergency response plans." (See *CBRNE*, p. 4)

Two BPOC Classes Underway

Basic Peace Officer Class #50 began on Sept. 8, 2008 and is being hosted at the Pflugerville Police Department, with Police Chief Charles Hooker as the on-site coordinator. This is a nine-month, part-time night class that is expected to graduate approximately 17 students in May 2009.

Basic Peace Officer Class # 51 began on Nov. 3, 2008. This full-time class is being held Mon. through Thurs., from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. in CAPCOG's Mesquite Room for 23 weeks. Chief Instructor Randy K. Holmes is conducting the training. Class #51 has a large number of cadets sponsored by local regional law enforcement agencies.

The Austin Police Department Explosive Ordnance Detail's robot prepares to approach the new Granite Shoals City Hall in which a police officer is being held hostage by armed gunmen. The action was part of the November 7 CAPCOG CBRNE Strike Team exercise.



Assistant Director of Community and Economic Development Obtains HomeTown Competitiveness Certification

Michelle Casanova, Assistant Director of Community and Economic Development, received her certification in the HomeTown Competitiveness (HTC) program, a come-back/give-back approach to rural community building. The HTC approach helps community volunteers and planners focus on strategies to strengthen leadership, youth development, entrepre-

neurship, and charitable assets to make a strong positive impact on the future of rural communities. The workshop was sponsored in-part by the Office of Rural Community Affairs, the RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, and the Nebraska Community Foundation, and was conducted by staff from the Heartland Center for Leadership Development.

New Basic Jail Certification Course Planned

CAPCOG's Basic Jail Certification Course (BJCC) graduated 12 new officers for the Bastrop County Jail on Nov. 21, 2008. CAPCOG will continue the BJCC course with the mission to provide training of the highest possible quality to jailer candidates and is in the planning stage to offer a night BJCC course at CAPCOG possibly in January. Regional Training Academy Director, Mike Jennings, will be the primary instructor for this five-week course.

Falls Prevention Grant Extended

In an effort to coordinate and provide more statewide awareness on falls prevention, the Texas Association of Area Agencies on Aging evidence-based best practice fall prevention collaborative (funded by the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services) was extended another year. Several new activities are planned for the upcoming year to enhance the Texas Falls Prevention Coalition and continue the dissemination and implementation of the *A Matter of Balance* program in seven new regions served by area agencies on aging. A total of 24 out of 28 AAAs are currently implementing this program in 216 of the 254 counties in Texas.

CAPCOG has recently entered into an agreement effective Nov. 1, 2008 with the Texas Association of Area Agencies on Aging (t4a) to provide services that build upon the successes of the Texas Falls Prevention Coalition. Reuben Parrish, CAPCOG's Health and Wellness Coordinator for its area agency on aging, has taken on statewide coordinator responsibilities to fulfill the requirements of this grant and contract. He will provide leadership in the development of this coalition by identifying and recruiting key partners, partnering with the core leadership to develop a mission statement and an effective infrastructure to meet coalition goals, collect relevant data to inform future coalition activities, and propose action steps that will lead to a true state-wide coalition and better falls prevention for the citizens of Texas. Reuben is very excited (*See FALLS, p. 4*)

Data in Demand

A steady stream of local governments, engineering firms, and architectural firms are visiting CAPCOG's Information Clearinghouse to download valuable geospatial datasets. The Information Clearinghouse Geospatial Data webpage is averaging over 1,000 hits per month. In addition to the website, visitors are utilizing CAPCOG's public workstation on a daily basis to download some of the larger datasets (*See DATA, p. 4*)

Travis and Williamson Counties Recommended to be Classified Nonattainment for New Federal Ground-Level Ozone Standard

On Nov. 21, 2008 the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Executive Director announced its recommendations for designated nonattainment counties under the EPA's 2008 eight-hour ozone standard. Based on TCEQ's determination, counties in the Austin-Round Rock (A-RR) Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) to be recommended for a nonattainment designation are Travis and Williamson. This recommendation stops short of following EPA's guidance of a presumed boundary encompassing all counties in the MSA. This leaves Bastrop, Caldwell, and Hays Counties in the MSA out of the recommended nonattainment area boundary. The TCEQ staff recommendations are based, in part, on consideration of emissions sources within the county and commute traffic into the core county. TCEQ's determinations and support information can be found on their web site at: <http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/assets/public/implementation/air/sip/hgb/20081615MIS.pdf>

The ozone concentrations monitored at the controlling regulatory monitor in Travis County for the most recent three-year period of 2006-2008 result in a design value of 77 ppb ozone, which exceeds the new standard by 2 ppb. On Dec. 10, 2008 the TCEQ Commissioners are scheduled to consider this recommendation by the TCEQ Executive Director covering potential ozone nonattainment boundaries and designations.

On March 12, 2008 the EPA lowered the eight-hour ground level ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) to 75 parts

per billion (ppb). TCEQ's recommendations for designation as approved at their Dec. 10th Agenda are forwarded to the Governor's office for submittal to the EPA by March 12, 2009. EPA then has an additional year to consider the State's recommendations and make a final determination on which areas are to be ultimately designated nonattainment, along with their severity classifications and compliance deadlines.

The TCEQ held public meetings in July on the new ozone standard to provide an opportunity to receive information and for the public to comment on potential ozone nonattainment boundaries and designations. At the public meeting for the Austin Area, the Clean Air Coalition Advisory Committee (CACAC) presented comments to the TCEQ and then comments were submitted by the Clean Air Coalition to TCEQ by the Sept. 5, 2008 deadline. The CAC comments related to consideration of factors contributing to high ozone in our region but did not take a position on which counties should be included in a nonattainment designation. Some counties in other regions requested to be excluded from the new nonattainment area designations based on factors that are detailed in a guidance memo issued by the EPA (see EPA Memo below) in setting nonattainment area boundaries different than the defined federal MSA. The CAC's comments along with others submitted from other regions in the State to TCEQ can be viewed at <http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/implementation/air/aqps/eighthour.html>. (*See NONATTAINMENT, p. 4*)

TELECOMMUNICATOR (*cont'd from p. 1*) The simulated dispatch center gives participants the opportunity to use their newly-learned skills and familiarize themselves with the equipment before they answer their first real 9-1-1 call.

Many local agencies are sending new Telecommunicators to the BTA before their agency training begins. Additionally, CAPCOG is working with Capital Idea and Texas Workforce Commission to identify possible candidates for the BTA who can attend. One of the goals of the Academy is to create a pool of applicants who already have all the required training and certifications upon hiring and only require training to specific items/issues to that Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP).

CBRNE (*cont'd from p. 2*) Based upon existing hazardous materials response teams and law enforcement special operations units, the CBRNE Strike Teams were formed to ensure the capability to respond anywhere in the ten-county CAPCOG region to incidents

involving weapons of mass destruction (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosive). The teams have worked cooperatively to develop common procedures, ensure common capabilities and training, and obtain compatible equipment. Much of the equipment used by these teams has been purchased with Homeland Security Grant Program funds that are administered by CAPCOG.

For more information about the CBRNE Strike Teams, contact Ed Schaefer at 512-916-6026 or eschaefer@capcog.org.

FALLS (*cont'd from p. 3*) to take on this task, sharing, "I look forward to bringing together all of the key partners throughout the state who play an important role in reducing and preventing falls and creating a productive and meaningful coalition. I also feel fortunate to have this opportunity to represent not only the t4a and the coalition, but also CAPCOG at both state and national meetings."

DATA (*cont'd from p. 3*) Such a high demand for this data illustrates the necessity for geographic information in our region.

The data will be utilized in innumerable ways; marketing, planning, hydrologic analysis, and 9-1-1 addressing are just a few of the many possible applications.

The most sought-after datasets are the 2008, 18" resolution, aerial imagery; LiDAR data (i.e., high resolution elevation data), and many of the larger datasets also available for download from the Information Clearinghouse website.

In order to schedule a session at the public workstation to download any of CAPCOG's geospatial datasets, please contact Linda Crouch (lcrouch@capcog.org). Many of the datasets on the public workstation are also available online at www.capcog.org/information-clearinghouse/geospatial-data/

NONATTAINMENT (*cont'd from p. 3*) EPA's Boundary Guidance Memorandum can be viewed at http://www.epa.gov/ozonedesignations/documents/032800_boundaryguidance.pdf

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