

CTG Online News

Mon, 28 Jan 2008 14:20:00 EST

Donna Canestraro Participates in Panel at Protect New York Conference

This recent two-day conference, Terrorism and Disaster: Taking Stock, Setting Directions, Looking Forward, was hosted by Protect New York at the Levin Institute of the State University of New York in Manhattan. The conference highlighted advances in border security, impacts of crisis on health care workers and first responders, bridging the divide between academic institutions and law enforcement agencies, and the logistical nightmare that emerged in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Donna Canestraro, program manager at CTG, and Dennis Taratus, chief of Telecommunications Network Reliability for the NYS Department of Public Service (NYS DPS), presented Regional Communication Incident Response: A Case Study of New York State, based on the recent CTG project conducted on behalf of NYS DPS. The presentation also drew insight from CTG's report following September 11th, Information, Technology, and Coordination: Lessons from the World Trade Center Response.

The presentation emphasized findings from both the WTC study and the numerous reports generated after Hurricane Katrina that disaster management teams need to know the pertinent details about an incident within a local context. Not only does the information need to be placed in context, but the success of disaster management teams relies upon having granularity of data sufficient in real-time to make decisions about the response.

One important foundational concept stressed was trust, which must exist between the two organizations who are sharing information. This trust is built over time, based on past experiences and sometimes previous relationships. As one member of the audience pointed out, "You can't be trading business cards the day of the event."

The presentation and subsequent discussions reinforced the findings from the New York case study that:

- each level of government has a unique threshold for activation or need,
- granularity and timeliness of data is of the upmost importance,
- contextual knowledge is critical, and
- more work needs to be done clarifying guiding principles for regional information sharing for critical infrastructure incident data.

Their presentation was part of a panel focused on Emergency Logistics for New York State. Additional panel members included Dr. Jose Holguin-Veras, from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and Drs. Natalie Simpson and Phillip Hancock, from the University of Buffalo.

Protect New York, an organization founded at SUNY Downstate Medical Center, in Brooklyn, NY, is dedicated to helping New York State and New York City meet the challenges and risks of terrorism and natural disasters. The membership comes from academic researchers, physicians, emergency responders and other disaster management experts who are interested in protecting New York State from catastrophic losses. The conference was sponsored by MCEER; the New York State Office of Homeland Security; the University Transportation Research Center, Region II, City College; and the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, State University of New York.