





# This Week in Ohio EMA

*A publication of the Ohio Emergency Management Agency, a division of the Ohio Department of Public Safety*

Bob Taft, Governor ♦ Nancy Dragani, Executive Director, Ohio EMA ♦ Kenneth L. Morckel, Director, ODPS  
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## Ohio EMA represented at the Tactical Interoperable Communications Conference in Washington, D.C.

Portions from Department of Homeland Security's printed remarks by Secretary Michael Chertoff - May 8, 2006



Ohio EMA's training officer attended the Tactical Interoperable Communications Conference held in Washington, D.C., on May 8 and 9. One purpose of the conference was held to address the full-scale exercise requirement for the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) cities across the United States.

Achieving interoperable communications for individuals on the front lines of dealing with terrorism or natural disasters is critical to enhancing the country's preparedness and response capabilities. Interoperability has been well known and discussed in the law enforcement and emergency management communities. But since September 11th, interoperability has been vividly raised to the public consciousness.

"Communications was a major issue last year during Hurricane Katrina. But it was not an issue of interoperability; it was an issue of operability," said Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Michael Chertoff. "Whether it's operability or interoperability, one thing that Katrina, 9/11, and in fact, every emergency that occurs every day across this country vividly demonstrates, is that the critical foundation for an effective response is the ability to talk to one another."

The government developed "SAFECOM" which is an interoperable technology established after September 11th to address safety communications challenges. "RapidCom," is an element of SAFECOM, that permits incident managers in 10 of the country's highest threat urban areas to communicate with each other and their respective command centers.



The secretary said that the RapidCom was established to expand with the government's tactical interoperable communications plans which would allow the 75 largest urban and multi-jurisdictional metropolitan areas to use equipment to develop true interoperability.

Chertoff said that interoperability is possible with the proper technology, training, governance (committed leadership), exercising and actual agreement. DHS has published a statewide communications interoperability planning methodology to guide states in creating their own plans. DHS has also implemented two pilot programs in Nevada and Kentucky, called the Regional Communications Interoperability Pilots, for testing and improving.

Since 2003, the Department of Homeland Security has allocated more than \$2.1 billion to states for interoperable communications: equipment, planning, training and exercises.

**Homeland Security Threat Level:**

**ELEVATED**



## Ohio Gas Association Urges Public Officials to Champion Natural Gas Safety

Provided by: Megan Craven, Ohio Gas Association



Every day, Americans use nearly 62 billion cubic feet of natural gas—safely transported to homes and businesses via an “energy highway.” This elaborate pipeline system is buried underground not only for safety reasons, but also to protect it from the weather and ensure uninterrupted service.

Natural gas companies across Ohio work hard to keep this system safe for everyone. “The natural gas member companies of the Ohio Gas Association sponsor safety education programs, meet regularly with public and emergency officials, conduct frequent inspections and have sophisticated leak detection equipment in place...basically everything they can to prevent and detect leaks,” said Roy Rushing, president of the OGA. Natural gas companies in Ohio are also participating in a comprehensive natural gas safety awareness campaign sponsored by the OGA. For more information about the campaign, visit [www.safegasohio.org](http://www.safegasohio.org).

One of the greatest obstacles to our nation’s natural gas delivery system, however, happens in backyards and construction sites throughout the nation: unauthorized digging. Even minor contact with a pipeline, such as a small dent, chip or scratch, can cause major damage down the road if not professionally repaired. If the correct conditions exist, a pipeline leak can result in an explosion or fire and even asphyxiation—causing personal injuries, fatalities and costly property and environmental damage. Ironically, this safety threat is also the most preventable.

As a public official, you can help by promoting safe digging throughout your community. By law, individuals must contact the Ohio Utilities Protection Service (OUPS), 1-800-362-2764, at least two working days prior to any digging, ditching, drilling, leveling or plowing activity. Representatives from the appropriate utility companies will then come to the location and designate nearby pipelines with highly visible markers, free of charge.

Public officials should keep this information in mind when speaking with residents in their jurisdiction and approving new building projects—even minor ones like home additions and decks. “We’re asking public officials to partner with us in this important safety initiative,” explains Rushing.

It’s also a good idea for public officials to familiarize themselves with the pipelines located in their community. Fortunately, government officials and natural gas pipeline operators can access the National Pipeline Mapping System ([www.npms.rspa.dot.gov](http://www.npms.rspa.dot.gov)), a geographic information database that allows users to view natural gas pipelines in any given state and find out the name of the company that operates a particular pipeline.

Everyone, including public officials, should know the signs of a natural gas leak:

- **SMELL**— To help you SMELL a leak from a gas line or appliance, a distinctive, sulfur-like odor, which is similar to rotten eggs, is often added to natural gas.
- **SEE** — Near a gas leak, you might SEE blowing dirt, bubbling water or an unusual area of dead vegetation.
- **HEAR** - A leaking pipeline might make a hissing sound you can HEAR.

If you notice any of the above signs, do not try to stop or repair the leak yourself or use anything that might create a spark, such as a cell phone. Instead, leave the area immediately and call your local natural gas company or 9-1-1 for emergency response.

For more information about unauthorized digging and natural gas safety, visit [www.safegasohio.org](http://www.safegasohio.org). A complete list of natural gas member companies of the OGA is available on this site. Be sure to complete the short online survey that’s just for public officials and learn how legislators can get involved and spread the word about natural gas safety.



### UPCOMING EVENT

**Beaver Valley Power Station Plume/Ingestion Zone**

Dry Run: **June 6 and 7, 2006**

Full-Scale FEMA Evaluated Exercise: **June 26 and 27**





**Safer Facilities: Chemical Security & Hazard Reduction Seminar**  
**Wednesday, May 24th**  
**8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

Baldwin Wallace College  
Strosacker College Union Bldg.  
120 East Grand Street - Berea, Ohio 44017

This one-day seminar will provide important information regarding chemical security and hazard reduction.

Topics will include vulnerability assessment; hazard reduction/inherent safety; security improvement/target hardening; and population protection.

Registration Contact: Amir Soas, M.D.  
Cuyahoga County LEPC  
1255 Euclid Avenue, Suite 102  
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

(\$30 registration fee accepted at the door)

**EMA Updates**

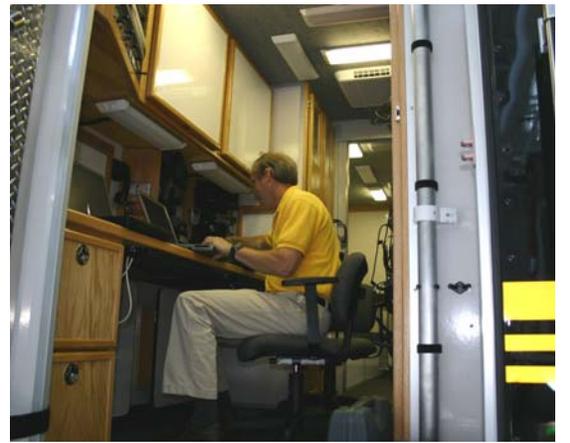
**Hancock County EMA**

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Ohio EMA Radio Technician Dave Ford programs communications radios via laptop computers in the seventh Buckeye State Sheriff's Association (BSSA) Interoperable Communications Vehicle. Ohio EMA received the vehicle on May 15. The BSSA vehicle is expected to be delivered to the Ashland County Sheriff's Office within two to three weeks.



**Komen Columbus -Race for the Cure**

Saturday, May 20, 2006  
Downtown Columbus

Run the Race. Walk the Race.  
Sponsor Someone.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
May 14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Mothers Day	Medical TAC Ohio EMA	Hazardous Weather & Flood Preparedness - Ohio EMA		Water TAC Ohio EMA		
		HazMat TAC Ohio EMA	Incident Mgmt Ohio EMA			
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
	G300/400 Intermediate/Advanced Incident Command System - Ohio EMA (Columbus)					
28	29	30	31	June 1	2	3
	 Memorial Day					
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		Beaver Valley Power Station DRY RUN (Plume Phase 06/06) Ingestion Phase 06/07				

Register for Ohio EMA courses by visiting <http://ema.state.oh.us/training>