



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT NEWS
The Monthly Electronic Newsletter of
Homeland Security and Emergency Management
N.H. Department of Safety, John J. Barthelmes, Commissioner
33 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH 03305
1-800-852-3792
newsletters@hsem.nh.gov

October 2008



Seabrook emergency siren. Photo courtesy of FPL Seabrook Station.

SEABROOK STATION CONDUCTS SIREN DEMONSTRATION – The headline in *Foster's Sunday Citizen* summed it up well: "Nuclear plant's siren test goes off without a hitch." After months of preparation, FPL-Seabrook Station set off all 121 emergency sirens in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. The sirens wailed for three to five minutes beginning at 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, October 25th. Each was staffed by a monitor to ensure that the siren sounded and rotated. The project was intended to demonstrate to the public what the sirens sound like and call attention to what people are supposed to do if they hear them; namely, tune in to local radio or TV stations to find out what is going on and to receive emergency instructions.

Seabrook and emergency management officials from both states conducted an intense public outreach campaign prior to the demonstration to ensure that people knew it was not a real emergency. That campaign included mailings to all residents in the 10-mile Emergency Planning Zone, news stories and announcements in the media and electronic message boards along Seacoast highways.

In addition, a strong planning effort was coordinated with the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, the City of Portsmouth and others because of the christening of the USS New Hampshire, which occurred earlier in the day.

The publicity paid off. New Hampshire's 911 call center received only two calls about the sirens. Massachusetts 911 received three calls. Most other nuclear facilities conduct similar audible siren demonstrations on a regular basis. Seabrook is considering doing the same.

VY SIRENS TO BE TESTED – Towns near the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant will conduct annual tests of warning sirens. The sirens are sounded monthly, but in November they will be operated for a full three minutes, as required annually by Federal Emergency Management Agency. On Saturday, November 1st, sirens will be sounded in Vernon, Vt., at 8 a.m., Brattleboro, Vt., at 12 noon and Winchester, N.H., at 12:30 p.m. On Tuesday, November 4th, Hinsdale, N.H., will sound its siren at 6 p.m.

VY SHUTS DOWN FOR REFUELING – Vermont Yankee nuclear plant shut down for refueling and maintenance on October 19th and will be off-line for several weeks while the work is done. The plant has a scheduled refueling outage every 18 months. VY has operated continuously for 415 days, which plant officials say is its second longest operating run. This is VY's 27th refueling outage.

NRC REPORTS ON VY COOLING TOWER PROBE – The Nuclear Regulatory Commission released a 24-page report on its investigation into cooling tower failures at the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant. The report, which was released on October 10th and presented at a public meeting in Brattleboro the following week, concluded that VY had failed to maintain adequate design documentation of the cooling towers, but the problems did not affect safety at the plant. The NRC issued a “green” finding, indicating that there were no safety issues. VY has experienced two leaks and a partial collapse of one tower in the past two years. Plant officials have said they are improving their inspection and maintenance operations for the cooling towers.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR HEATING ASSISTANCE – The combination of a sinking economy and high fuel prices will create problems staying warm for many New Hampshire families this winter. The N.H. Office of Energy and Planning, the N.H. Charitable Foundation, Volunteer NH! and other organizations have started an effort called “Stay Warm NH” to try help them. It is seeking volunteers to upgrade the insulation for the homes of low-income New Hampshire residents, expanding upon the weatherization program already being carried out by the state's Community Action Programs. Stay Warm NH has a goal of recruiting 400 crew leaders and 800 other volunteers to upgrade the weatherization of 3,200 homes before the coldest days of the winter. Each home would require an average of two days of work. Interested volunteers should contact Volunteer NH! by calling 271-7211 or emailing vista@volunteernh.org.

Additional help is on the way for people having trouble paying heating bill. The federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program will provide \$47.7 million in aid this

winter, which is nearly double the amount of the year before. Anyone needing fuel aid should apply through their local Community Action Program.

WEATHER SERVICE WARNS THAT WINTER IS COMING – The National Weather Service has declared this week (October 27th to 31st) as Winter Weather Awareness Week. The Weather Service says that average snowfall in New Hampshire and Maine is between 50-70 inches near the coast and up to 140 inches in the mountains. Last winter had the second highest snowfall totals on record.

NWS warns that automobile accidents are the leading cause of deaths and injuries during and after winter storms. While snow and ice contribute to the slippery conditions, vehicle speed is a major factor in determining the likelihood of a death or serious injury from an automobile accident. Under certain conditions, roads can get extremely icy from an inch or less of snow, or from freezing drizzle. Patchy black ice, even days after a storm, can be a significant hazard. Many of these hazards are not apparent until it is too late. The best way to avoid weather-related crashes is to SLOW DOWN before your vehicle begins to slip and slide. As the Weather Service reminds us, snow and ice can cause accidents, but vehicle speed kills.

MAJOR EXERCISE CONDUCTED AT NASHUA MALL – There was trouble at the Pheasant Lane Mall in Nashua on Sunday night, October 26th. There was an explosion with a large number of casualties at Joe’s American Bar and Grill and hostages taken at the Target store. Fortunately, it was only an exercise. Twenty-five agencies from New Hampshire and Massachusetts participated. Rescue personnel treated 48 “victims” of the bombing. Officials said they were pleased with the outcome of the exercise.

DHHS SAYS TO GET A FLU SHOT – The state Department of Health and Human Services reminds New Hampshire residents that flu season is approaching and the best way to avoid getting sick is to get a flu shot. Influenza is a respiratory disease caused by a virus that infects the nose, throat and lungs. It is spread from one person to another when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. More than 36,000 people die of complications of the flu in the U.S. every year. People who should get flu vaccinations are: children aged six month to 19 years, people over age 50, residents of nursing homes and similar facilities, pregnant women, people with respiratory or immune system conditions and health care workers.

Many doctors’ offices and workplaces provide flu shots. A list of clinics around the state is posted at <http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/CDCS/fluclinics.htm>.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY GETS DISASTER DECLARATION – Hillsborough County has received a Presidential Disaster Declaration for flood damage during the weekend of September 6th and 7th. Declarations for Merrimack and Strafford counties were also requested, but they were not approved. Rainfall of between five and 7 ¼ inches fell on southern New Hampshire during that weekend, which was a 100-year rain event. Damage was estimated at more than \$2.5 million. Most of the damage was concentrated in the City of Manchester.