

# Northwestern Pennsylvania Emergency Response Group

*Homeland Security: A Return on Our Investment*



Counties

- Crawford
- Erie
- Forest
- Warren

# State-Level Coordination



## PROTECTING PENNSYLVANIA

No one can do it alone. In Pennsylvania, multiple jurisdictions, agencies, and disciplines work together to strengthen our ability to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism and other catastrophic events.

**Pennsylvania Criminal Intelligence Center (PaCIC)** is managed by the Pennsylvania State Police and is the primary all-hazards fusion center comprised of analysts and subject matter experts from local, state, and federal agencies. In 2016, PaCIC fulfilled almost 40,000 requests for information and developed 57,434 products including briefs and alerts ranging from dirty bombs and the increased findings of Carfentanil in heroin, to attacks on natural gas facilities. In 2016, PaCIC completed 43 event assessments for emergency response, public sector and private sector partners.

### Critical Partners

The private sector owns and operates an estimated **85%** of infrastructure and resources that are critical to our physical and economic security. GOHS has mapped over 30,000 sites in Pennsylvania.



Duke Energy's gas-powered plant, Masontown, Pennsylvania.

### Increased Demand, Decreased Funding

Homeland Security Grant Program Funding (HSGP) has dropped 48% since 2010. However, demand for services continues to increase. For example, in 2016, PaCIC received 993 reported cyber compromises, an increase of over 400 since 2015.

**\$58M**

Year: 2010

**\$31M**

Year: 2016

HSGP and UASI funds awarded to Pennsylvania

### How HSGP Funds Support Agribusiness and Food Safety

- Lab systems and equipment which are critical to the safety of Pennsylvania's food supply and agriculture systems.
- Food safety communications and inspection system for approximately 130 local and state agency health jurisdictions with food safety responsibilities.
- Equipment to enhance lab testing for real-world food contamination incidents.
- Pennsylvania is positioned to lessen the devastating effects of a disease outbreak on Pennsylvania's poultry industry through mapping and database investment.

**Governor's Office of Homeland Security (GOHS)** helps to secure Pennsylvania from acts of terrorism and reduce the vulnerability of Pennsylvania's critical infrastructure. GOHS provides training, exercises, and learning opportunities not otherwise available to participants. Since 2012, GOHS has provided more than **30 training courses** to over 4000 public and private partners, **28 tabletop** prevention and protection exercises, and engaged over 7500 participants with **29 seminars**.

**The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA)** is the lead agency for the annual Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and State Preparedness Report (SPR). The result is a comprehensive strategy for funding capability gaps at state and regional levels. PEMA also provides training and exercises Commonwealth-wide.

**PEMA** maintains deployable assets purchased using HSGP funds to support counties during disasters; such assets include trailer-mounted generators, bathroom shower trailers, light tower trailers, non-potable water trailers, and remotely operated camera trailers.



## Vital Statistics

The Northwestern Pennsylvania Emergency Response Group is a model for intergovernmental and multi-jurisdictional cooperation.

- Population: 410,497
- Area: 3,925 Square Miles (Land)
- Area: 801 Square Miles (Water)
- Municipalities: 127
- International Border: 1 (Canada)
- Fire Departments: 84
- Ambulance Services: 36
- Police Departments: 24



## Capabilities

The NWPAERG has the following capabilities:

HazMat: 2 Teams

Bomb Squad: 1 Regional Team

SWAT Teams: 3 Department Teams

Swift Water PA: 3 PA Certified teams

Bomb K-9: 1

US&R: 1 Company

Regional Communication Network:

Northern Tier



## Investment



Based on Federal Fiscal Year 2014 HSGP expenditures

# Regional Coordination

## NORTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA EMERGENCY RESPONSE GROUP: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

The Northwestern Pennsylvania Emergency Response Group (NWPAERG) was organized in 1998. The regional concept brings together local and county assets to strengthen the region's ability to be the 72 hour bridge until federal assets arrive. Through strategic investment of Homeland Security Grant



*Volunteer fire department practicing life-saving skills during an exercise.*

Program (HSGP) funds, the NWPAERG is able to prevent, prepare for, mitigate against, respond to, and recover from counter-terrorism, all-hazards, and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) threats.

## ORGANIZED STRUCTURE: UNPARALLELED CAPABILITIES

The organizational structure of the NWPAERG includes an Executive Board consisting of representatives from each county. Emergency response organizations and agencies within the region are organized into Subcommittees.

Subcommittee	Members
Law Enforcement	Local, county, state, and federal law enforcement agencies meet to share information on terrorism and crime prevention and protection.
Specialized Teams	Firefighting, rescue, and hazardous materials teams discuss and share information related to training, equipment, and exercises.
Communications	County communications and 911 directors from the four counties meet to identify plans and strategies to conduct training for emergency telecommunications specialists.
Health & Medical	Local hospitals, long-term care, assisted living, rehabilitation, and mental health facilities as well as representatives from local EMS agencies.
Emergency Management	Representatives from local and county emergency management agencies collaborate and coordinate all emergency management activities in the region.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Law Enforcement Subcommittee supports one Regional Bomb Squad, and three SWAT Teams, along with Cyber Crime investigation. Over the years, the Law Enforcement Subcommittee has utilized HSGP funds to enhance capabilities in the region:

- Intelligence and Information Sharing
- Access Control and Identity Verification
- Cybersecurity
- Physical Protective Measures
- Risk Management for Protection Programs and Activities



Erie Bearcat Vehicle

### Trained, Equipped and Ready



Bomb Squad Robot

The Erie Police Bomb Squad is a NIMS Type 1 Bomb Squad comprised of technicians from multiple agencies and commanded by the Erie Police Department. Over the last ten years, the Bomb Squad has utilized the equipment and training funded by the NWPAERG through the HSGP, in various local, regional, and national operations.

The Squad has deployed in support of national events such as the G-20 Summit in Pittsburgh, PA, All Star Game in Pittsburgh, PA, US Open in Pittsburgh, PA, Pittsburgh Marathon, in Pittsburgh, PA, and Tall Ships in Erie, PA. The Squad has also been deployed to assist federal partners with investigations involving explosives and improvised explosive devices.

In addition, the Erie Police Bomb Squad has integrated and trained with the tactical units of the ATF, FBI, PSP, Millcreek Police SWAT and Erie Police SWAT on multiple events. The Squad has also responded to hundreds of calls to assist with explosive recoveries, improvised explosive devices, hoax devices, suspicious substances, military ordinance and actual bombings.

## ALL-HAZARDS RESPONSE

In 2003, a homicide case known as the, “pizza bomber case” thrust Erie, Pennsylvania into the spotlight. This unique case involved many twists and turns, resulting in a multi-year investigation. According to news stories, “It was a race against the clock. A ticking time bomb was strapped to pizza delivery man Brian Wells.”

The incident began when Wells, 46, walked into a PNC Bank branch on the outskirts of Erie on August 28, 2003, with a pipe bomb locked onto his neck. He presented a teller with a note demanding money and walked away with about \$8,700.

The bomb was built in such a way that it would have been impossible to remove without detonating it. It was the Regional Bomb Squad, supported by the NWPAERG who responded to secure the area and, using specialized training, ensured there were no additional immediate threats.



A member of the Regional Bomb Squad near the body of Brian Wells after the explosive device detonated, killing Wells. (JANET B. CAMPBELL/AP)

## SPECIALIZED TEAMS

The NWPAERG covers a diverse and unique geographic area including Lake Erie, the Allegheny River, the Kinzua Dam Region, French Creek, Pymatuning Reservoir, and Oil Creek. With this extensive network of waterways comes a demonstrated need for water rescue capability. HSGP funding has supported the development and sustainment of a Swiftwater rescue team, which has responded to incidents such as water rescues, body recoveries, and evidence recovery operations.

The Specialized Team Subcommittee uses HSGP funds to enhance the capabilities in the region relating to:

- Operational Coordination
- Environmental Response/Health and Safety
- Fire Management and Suppression
- Mass Search and Rescue Operations
- Logistics
- Supply Chain Management

In order to maintain the specialized skills and training, the NWPAERG equips the Swift Water Rescue Teams with water rescue boats, dive equipment, foam and foam application equipment, and all-terrain vehicles for rescue in remote areas.

Additionally, the NWPAERG has also provided high-end detection equipment, personal protective equipment, and foam trailers. An equipment life-cycle plan is in place for high-end detection equipment replacement to make sure that all equipment is mission-capable through maintenance contracts for repair, replacement, and calibration.



A search for a missing individual in Erie Bay

## URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE (US&R)

Pennsylvania Task Force 1 and Company 4 from Erie and Oil City formed the US&R team. The US&R team out of Erie is now considered a squad, specializing as a technical rescue team (confined space, high angle rope rescue, etc.) and works closely with wilderness search and rescue teams in the region. This valuable regional asset is instrumental in disaster situations.



As a result of extensive investment in training and equipment, the Swift-Water Rescue Teams have proven to be a reliable resource and can be deployed in a surge capacity. The teams have been deployed during Tropical Storm Lee in 2011 and several in-county and out-of-county mutual aid responses.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The NWPAERG ensures consistent and reliable communication within the region through improving interoperable communications including:

- The 800 MHz and VHF/UHF radio systems
- Incident information sharing through the crisis management application
- Early warning for residents through the Emergency Notification System
- Facilitating emergency communications through the Reverse 9-1-1 System



## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Coordinating all emergency management activities within the region, the Emergency Management Subcommittee ensures operational readiness by providing important Emergency Management training in EOC Operations

& Management, Damage Assessment, Hazardous Weather Emergencies Awareness and Operations, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), ICS/EOC Interface, and Rapid Needs Assessment.

*Cell on Wheels ensuring reliable emergency communications.*

## HEALTH AND MEDICAL



*County Animal Response Team trailer*

The NWPAERG uses HSGP funds to support the health and medical capabilities in the region. They also support Mass Evacuation and Mass Care capabilities through the purchase of electric device charging stations, geriatric equipment trailer, and mass casualty trailers.

In addition, the region supports county animal response team's ability to evacuate and house companion and agriculture animals.

## WORKING TOGETHER , UNPARALLELED TRAINING

The PA US&R Task Force approached the Northwestern PA Emergency Response Group to provide a facility in Northwest PA to support the complicated, highly skilled training needs. Perry Hi-Way Hose Company offered their fire rescue-training field as the foundation for a Specialized Search & Rescue Training Facility.

From there, the concept grew, encompassing multiple grant years and phases of construction. The Specialized Search & Rescue Training Facility will feature seven simulators: structural collapse rescue, wall and floor breaching, crane operations, canine search and agility, confined space rescue, trench rescue, and high-angle vertical breaching and rescue.

