

Fanwood CERT Coordinates Tabletop Exercise

By Mike Prasad | March 2 2011



The Fanwood Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) coordinated a tabletop exercise on Saturday, February 26, 2011 with the Fanwood Police Department and the Fanwood Rescue Squad. This tabletop exercise was organized by the [Disaster Resistant Communities Group](#) and groups from 29 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico participated in this drill

simultaneously that day. A tabletop exercise allows responder team leaders to identify their planning and actions during a disaster scenario. In this case, it was a major flood in a Midwest town. The exercise allowed for discussion amongst the participants around the table.

“Flooding in and around Fanwood is still a possibility, given the right weather conditions,” said Fanwood Police Chief Richard Trigo, who participated in the drill. “This drill, along with other drills, helps our emergency responders better plan for what we need to do ahead of such a disaster.”

The exercise walked through specific actions the CERT and other responders would need to take, and the team around the table answered the questions to the best of their knowledge and ability. The Fanwood CERT, as well as the Fanwood Police Department and Fanwood Rescue Squad, all follow the National Incident Management System (NIMS) – which provides a national standard structure for incident command and control.

“NIMS provides a framework for who’s in charge at a disaster, based on their knowledge and experience associated with that specific disaster,” said Chief Trigo. “The same type of disaster leadership at a flood in the Midwest would be needed during a flood in the Northeast. And our Fanwood CERT, along with all of the other response groups in Fanwood, would have an active role in both preparing Fanwood residents for significant flooding and the potential response if such a flood were to hit Fanwood.”

The scenario had at least two interjects – things that can happen in real life, that would affect the plans already in place. The first was above ground propane tanks becoming unhooked and floating in to neighbor’s property. The second was fencing around a farm being damaged and a herd of cattle getting loose.

“While these two specific interjects may not apply to Fanwood – and neither would be addressed by our CERT members, it was good practice to identify which agencies would be responsible for such an incident,” said Chief Trigo. Major chemical spills have occurred in Union County and recently a herd of horses broke loose and were traveling on Route 22 until they were captured.

The Fanwood CERT regularly participates in both tabletop and live action drills throughout the year. In 2009 they hosted a multi-community CERT and Red Cross drill in Fanwood that simulated a building evacuation and emergency shelter being established.

The Fanwood CERT’s web site - www.FanwoodCERT.org - has more details on what they do for the community. Their web site also has information individuals can use to prepare their families for disasters like flooding and other emergencies. For more information about volunteering with the Fanwood CERT, please go to their web site or call Fanwood Police Chief Richard Trigo at (908) 322-5000.