



**Princeton Emergency Preparedness Task Force
Report to Mayor and Council
July 8, 2013**

Recent severe weather events such as Hurricane Irene and super storm Sandy have dramatically shown that preparation for future emergencies is important to protect the lives and property of our Princeton residents. That is why Mayor Lempert and the Princeton Council unanimously appointed an Emergency Preparedness Task Force on March 11, 2013 to help ensure that our newly unified community is well prepared for all hazards.

Chaired by Councilman Patrick Simon, the task force draws from a broad range of knowledge and experience in our community:

- Councilman Bernie Miller, Princeton Council President and former Mayor of Princeton Township;
- Councilwoman Heather Howard, who served on the White House Domestic Policy Council and as New Jersey's Commissioner of Health and Senior Services;
- Captain Nicholas Sutter, Officer in Charge of the Princeton Police Department;
- Robert Gregory, Director of Princeton's Office of Emergency Management, President of the Princeton First Aid and Rescue Squad, and former Princeton University Fire Marshal;
- Grace Sinden, long-serving former member of the Princeton Regional Health Commission;
- Mark Scheibner, retired Intelligence Analyst and a certified EMT.

The task force is mindful that an emergency can happen at any time. Because of their nature, emergencies such as severe weather events occur with low probability but can be high risk to life and property. But experience has shown that planning and preparedness can mitigate the risks.

The Emergency Preparedness Task Force focused on the following tasks and issues in our first quarter since appointment by the Council:

1. Establishing a Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) for Princeton. An LEPC is the statutory authority in New Jersey for emergency management planning in a community. Here is how that role is described in a course offered by the NJ Office of Emergency Management:

An Emergency Management Council is necessary to the development of an Emergency Operations Plan. By Law, every municipality in the State must create and maintain a Council. It shall be composed of not more than fifteen (15) members who shall be appointed by the Mayor or the Chief

Executive of the municipality. The Municipal Emergency Management Coordinator shall be a member and is also the chairperson.

The Council assists the municipality in determining which volunteer agencies are needed to help in emergency planning. They are also authorized to establish an adequate organization to assist in supervising and coordinating emergency management activities of the municipality.

(Note: NJ state documents use both terms Emergency Management Council and Local Emergency Planning Committee to describe this body. Our understanding is that these are one and the same, and the latter term is currently preferred.)

In the accompanying resolution, the task force unanimously and respectfully submits to Mayor and Council a proposed list of officials and individuals to constitute the Princeton Local Emergency Planning Committee.

Upon approval, the Emergency Preparedness Task Force and its actions will be absorbed by the LEPC as the legal successor and statutory body for emergency management planning in Princeton.

2. Revising the Basic Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) to ensure it reflects the consolidated Princeton. The Basic Emergency Operating Plan is the foundational document for emergency operations, outlining functional responsibilities and authorities. The task force expects to submit the revised Basic Emergency Operations Plan for Council review and approval at the next council meeting in two weeks.
3. Updates to the departmental annexes to the Emergency Operations Plan to ensure they reflect lessons learned and best practices from recent events, especially Irene and Sandy. Meetings with departmental officials and staff have proven most fruitful, resulting not only in guiding the ongoing updates of the attendant annexes of the EOP, but also in focusing the energies and talents of Princeton's employees and community agencies as stakeholders in emergency preparedness.
4. Worked with Municipal Engineer Robert Kiser and PSE&G to identify those parts of our community that most frequently lose electrical service, in order to try and identify actions that might be taken by either PSE&G or the municipality to improve the reliability of electrical service to these areas, especially during severe weather events. This work is ongoing.
5. Met with local doctors and officials from University Medical Center of Princeton at Plainsboro to discuss ways to ensure that the people of Princeton as well as bordering communities have access to medical facilities no matter the severity of a storm. Past storms have impeded road access to the new UMCP campus in Plainsboro. The task force recognizes the difficulties presented by the current location of our regional hospitals, and is diligently working on this issue with a

broad range of officials and individuals. We are all too mindful that public safety must be balanced with the safety of our first responders, as highlighted by the tragic death of PFAR's Michael Kenwood during an attempted rescue in Tropical Storm Irene.

6. Enhanced emergency preparedness, with regards to Princeton's senior and dependent populations, was identified as a priority for the task force by the council in the goal setting sessions at the start of this year. Resource constraints make this a particularly challenging goal. This remains a priority, and we will discuss potential measures the town can take at the first meeting of the LEPC.
7. The Emergency Management Coordinator for Princeton, Robert Gregory, has been holding ongoing discussions with numerous institutions in the community to ensure that they are preparing for the upcoming storm season.
8. The dialog between Princeton University and Princeton regarding emergency management is ongoing and productive. The University is a full participant in the safety of our community. The recent bomb scare at the University highlighted areas for further cooperation and coordination, and these are being addressed through normal channels. The Princeton Police Department and Princeton University Public Safety are currently preparing joint training exercises, and are planning to develop joint protocols to outline responses to incidents involving the university and the municipality.
9. In April, the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management launched Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) programs in each of New Jersey's 21 counties. CERT members give critical support to first responders in emergencies, provide immediate assistance to victims, organize spontaneous volunteers at a disaster site, and collect disaster intelligence to support first responder efforts. Bob Gregory has spearheaded the effort to form a municipal CERT in Princeton, recruiting volunteer members of Princeton's Fire Police to participate in Mercer County's CERT training program this fall.
10. The task force wishes to thank McCaffrey's, the Princeton Public Library, the Princeton Public Schools, and Princeton University for their civic-mindedness in making their facilities available to the public during recent severe weather events. In preparation for similar events in the future, the task force has identified a number of heating/cooling centers for the public to use in the event they are needed.
11. Bob Gregory has prepared applications for FEMA grants to acquire generators at key points throughout Princeton, including Witherspoon Hall, Monument Hall, the SOC pumping stations on River Road and Pretty Brook, the fire stations on Witherspoon and Chestnut Streets, and the parking garage.

12. The task force recognizes that the first level of preparedness for any emergency is the responsibility of the individuals, families and businesses in our community. For this reason, the task force is developing a public information campaign to help residents and business better prepare for severe weather events. The task force has already elicited participation from a broad spectrum of the community, and has received enthusiastic support in full keeping with the public mindedness and generosity of the people, businesses, and institutions of Princeton. The task force is also working to identify locations where information can be disseminated in the event normal lines of communication are disrupted.

The Mayor and Council identified emergency preparedness as a priority this year, setting specific goals to:

- Enhance preparedness, especially among the elderly, disabled, and underserved population of Princeton.
- Build community social infrastructure.
- Improve responsiveness through service and system coordination.
- Update the emergency management plan.

The Emergency Preparedness Task Force has focused our collective efforts on achieving these goals, working diligently to ensure Princeton is well prepared for all hazards that might descend upon our community. The initial focus of the task force has been on severe weather events. All work has been performed in-house or by citizen volunteers, incurring no additional cost to the taxpayers of Princeton.

Emergency preparedness must begin with each individual and family taking responsibility to protect oneself and one's property, but it goes beyond that, as it is also about the care and concern we show for each other in our times of greatest need. In our interactions with the professional staff and with organizations and individuals within the community, the members of the Emergency Preparedness Task Force have been reminded of this time and again. We have witnessed first-hand the focused resolve of so many of those who serve the Princeton community in these endeavors. Their efforts individually and collectively express the highest values of our society and reflect the core strength of our community, and on behalf of our community, we express our deepest gratitude to all those who serve, in ways great and small, in helping to prevent or mitigate potential disasters where possible and better prepare for them where necessary.

Respectfully Submitted,
Patrick Simon, Chair
Princeton Emergency Preparedness Task Force