



Office of Emergency Services

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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Department of Emergency Services Year in Review

COVID-19 Pandemic Response

2020 was a year that was unprecedented in the world of Emergency Management and Emergency Services (The Office). The year began as normal but soon changed when the COVID 19 Pandemic presented itself to us all. Our priorities and daily duties were quickly redirected as we adapted to meet the new demands created by the pandemic. Our office focus was primarily on the challenges of supplying personal protective equipment (PPE) to emergency service providers, municipalities, schools, nursing homes, and home health care providers. As normal supply chains were depleted the need to draw from state and federal stockpiles became necessary and emergency supply plans placed into service. Our office took on the Emergency Management duties of acting as a liaison to the NYS Emergency Operations Center 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Daily conference calls were conducted several times daily with State Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Officials where situation reports were shared between local emergency management personnel, state, and federal officials. Orders were placed with the state for PPE supplies and equipment daily which were filled and then delivered to the Public Safety Building anytime during the day or night. Members of the Sheriff's Office assisted unloading supplies from trucks operated by state office personnel or National Guard personnel. Thousands of isolation gowns, masks, gloves, Tyvek suits, were received and distributed along with hundreds of gallons of hand sanitizer. Donations were also received from residents and businesses which were distributed where needed.

Communications

The Office supervised repairs and/or maintenance of shelters, towers, backup generators, microwave, phone and radios for the eight tower sites located throughout the county. Despite the ongoing difficulties associated with sustaining the operations of obsolete electronic and computer equipment that no longer has technical support, as well as little to no access to parts for necessary repairs, we were able to keep most of our communications systems operational, although with some reported degradation in overall radio performance.

In addition to the maintenance of the existing systems, planning has continued for the project to replace the current communications system and active meetings have continued throughout the year. The new system being developed will replace the current, obsolete, system with an Interoperable Trunked UHF system with nine tower sites along with new dispatch equipment to support current and upcoming requirements for the 911 center. Planning efforts were conducted with teams from New York State (NYSTEC) and Motorola Solutions.

Emergency Management

In addition to providing support in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, The Office continued to provide the normal functions necessary to support county emergency management. The office provided assistance to local municipalities filing for FEMA funding for several 2019 flooding events that had

received federal disaster declarations. In 2020 the county experienced several significant storm and flooding events but none received federal disaster declarations.

During the year, the State Office of Homeland Security conducted a periodic County Emergency Preparedness Assessment (CEPA). County agencies, along with local and state agencies participated in the assessment to determine the natural and manmade vulnerabilities the county may face, along with the preparedness and response capabilities that exist utilizing county resources.

The office continued to support the Local Emergency Preparedness Committee (LEPC). Despite the difficulties created by the COVID-19 Pandemic periodic meetings were conducted utilizing Zoom® meetings over the internet. The committee participated with guest speakers and discussions regarding the threats and preparedness activities in the county.

Planning efforts in conjunction with New York State Electric and Gas Corporation's Blue Sky program proved successful in developing plans to more quickly identify power line emergencies, prioritize responses to electrical emergencies, and restore power as quickly as possible. It also allows us to cooperatively maintain lists of electric customers who have special needs requiring attention during an outage.

Fire and Emergency Medical Services

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic both Fire and EMS trainings were greatly reduced as compared to other years. Due to restrictions enacted by the State Department of Health, the Office of Fire Prevention and Control, and the County, it was determined that the majority of classes could not be safely conducted in a manner to avoid the potential spread of the virus. On-line classes were offered whenever possible by those agencies and fire classes that did not require skills participation were conducted near the end of the year.

Calls for County specialty teams were less than other years with the exception of the County Fire Investigation Team who responded to approximately the same number of calls as previous years. The Search and Rescue Teams had one call and Hazardous Materials Team responded to four calls. The Fire Investigation Team responded and investigated to over 30 calls. The Fire Investigation Team has continued to operate and meet new state requirements for training and certification despite the issues caused by the pandemic. Tioga County has one of only a few all volunteer fire investigation teams that have met all new requirements for training and certifications.

Goals and Objectives for 2021

- Hire a consultant to complete a study of the EMS system in the County
- Complete the planning stage of a new communications system and begin installations
- Implement periodic meetings that include Fire, EMS, Police
- Appoint a Chairperson to manage the LEPC
- Procure grant funding to support interoperable communications