

Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness

SUCCESS STORY

LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK

Realizing it took a Village (or Meta-Leadership) to respond to Hurricane Irene on Long Island

Contributor: John Maguire

“Meta-Leadership is important because none of us are as good as all of us.”

When John Maguire attended the Long Island Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness in June 2011, he was unaware of the future, personal impact the lessons from the Summit would have on him. Months later, Maguire, serving as the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Manager for the Nassau County Office of Emergency Management (OEM), found himself practicing “Meta-Leadership.” The concepts he learned at the Summit resonated soundly as he and a team of many others including partners intrinsic to the overall preparedness and response efforts, were putting in long, taxing hours together to prepare for and respond to Hurricane Irene.

The Challenges of a Sensitive Response Operation

As EOC Manager, Maguire reported to the OEM Commissioner Craig Craft as well as Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano and was responsible for the oversight and coordination of the multiple agencies that were needed to help in the response to Hurricane Irene. One specific duty included monitoring the evacuation of nursing homes and healthcare facilities, which was the responsibility of the Nassau County OEM partner, Nassau County Department of Health. Maguire described this responsibility in particular as daunting and stressful, as the mobilization of such a vulnerable population could have life or death implications. “It was an experience that aged me,” described Maguire. Over the course of the response - from prior to the storm hitting to the days following Irene's landfall - Maguire and his colleagues worked long hours in a supporting role to the Department of Health. The effectiveness of this partnership was critically important to ensuring the county was prepared and citizens were safe. In the end, no lives were lost and all those who were evacuated were later returned to their permanent residences.

Realizing Meta-Leadership is a Tool to Use to Face the Tough Challenges

“During Irene, I had no time to stop and reflect on what I was doing and the reasoning behind why I was doing it. In the aftermath, I was able to see the clear alignment between my actions and those principles taught at the Meta-Leadership Summit,” noted Maguire. Maguire described how he recognized that he “went to the basement” at times during the response, but was able to resurface and “access his tool box” to execute plans and effectively respond. Maguire credited the Summit for providing a framework and language to describe one's role in preparedness and response. The process has assisted Maguire in reflecting on his experience with Hurricane Irene, identifying what worked, and ways to improve practice in the future.

Continuing the Lessons of Meta-Leadership to Build Relationships

In the aftermath of Irene, Maguire has committed himself to further strengthening existing partnerships with the private sector. The Meta-Leadership Summit reinforced the need to maintain close working relationships with business and industry partners and Maguire plans to work on these relationships, and also



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build a comprehensive resource database to better serve the many cities, towns, and villages that comprise Nassau County, Long Island. When looking back, Maguire is reminded of the necessity of the Meta-Leadership Summit and the impact it had on him personally. He noted, “none of us are as good as all of us.”

The Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness empowered business, government and nonprofit leaders to act together in times of crisis. The five-year initiative connected 5,000 business, government and nonprofit leaders in 36 communities. For resources and more information about Meta-Leadership visit the [CDC Foundation Meta-Leadership Website](#).



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