

First Tri-State Partners in Preparedness Conference

The first annual "Emergency and Environmental Tri-State Partners in Preparedness" conference was held recently at Hollywood Casino Resorts in Tunica, Mississippi.

This unique conference provided an opportunity for hundreds of first responders, the business community, educators, medical professionals, crisis management coordinators, and local, state and federal government officials from Tennessee, Mississippi and Arkansas to share information about preparedness and emergency responses in the MidSouth.

The organizers for this event were the Memphis and Shelby County Local Emergency Planning Committee, the Midsouth Chapter of the Academy of Certified Hazardous Materials Managers, Crittenden County Local Emergency Planning Committee, Regional Hospital Disaster Council, the American Society of Safety Engineers, Memphis/Shelby County Emergency Management Agency, the American Industrial Hygiene Association and the Mid-South Association of Contingency Planners.

The educational partner for the event was Southwest Tennessee Community College's Department of Continuing Education.

The dramatic keynote address, "Minnesota K-35W Bridge Collapse", by Kurtis Bramer, EMT-P, CEM-MN, set the serious tone for the event. Powerful explicit photos of the aftermath of the bridge collapse were presented as "lessons learned." When Bramer first learned of the bridge collapse, he said, "At first we couldn't even process what had just happened. But then you just get to work and do what you do best. We learned that a unified command post was most important in this type of disaster. Knowing who to call and where your resources are saved valuable time. In the end, crisis management is all about relationships and working together."



Event organizers at the Hollywood Casino

Sitting Left to right: Erik Tyge, Debra Luna, Tamera Hickox, Karen Birkenstock, Rachel Wade, Tyler Zerwekh. Standing Left to right: Herb Nicholson, Jim Logan, Katherine Miller, Starr Fennes, Toleda Burton, Andrea Merriweather, Terri Gray, Butch Pennington. Event organizers not pictured: Angela Horton, Peter Henige.

Various tracks and workshops ran simultaneously throughout the three-day event giving attendees a chance to pick and choose which lecture or workshop they wanted to attend.

Some of the workshops presented included "New Madrid Seismic Zone Catastrophic Planning," "Emergency Response and Homeland Security," "Fall Protection and Extraction Devices," "Business Continuity Disaster Recovery Planning," "Navigation of OSHA Web Site and Evacuation Planning", and "Environmental Health and Safety,"

"This is the first time these organizations have joined forces to sponsor a conference of this magnitude. The goal is to continue the effort annually and grow it, reaching deeper into the states to further our larger goal of preparedness," stated Karen Birkenstock, executive vice president for 5R Processors, LTD and chairperson of the Memphis/Shelby County Local Emergency Planning Committee.

Article and Photo by Sandra Mathias, EMA Reserve