

Jan Sotirakis, Town of Chittenden Emergency Management Director, 775-9633

I am here to discuss two issues regarding the PSAP consolidation plan.

First, as Emergency Management Director, I am responsible for identifying potential hazards in my community and developing mitigation strategies to address them. A breach of the earthen dam at Chittenden Reservoir, identified as a state high hazard dam, is our most serious threat. Catastrophic flooding and the fluvial erosion that it would cause in Chittenden, as well as several downstream communities, would be devastating. Our town has been working hard to develop emergency action plans to deal with this situation. Though the likelihood is low, the result could be catastrophic in loss of lives and property.

I bring this up because I do not understand why the Rutland State Police Barracks is not identified as a high priority hazard and why there is such a delay in mitigating this risk. According to flood inundation maps for the Chittenden Reservoir, a total dam breach would cause as much as a 20 feet wave of water at the McKinley Avenue site. We all are familiar with what happened there during Tropical Storm Irene. We have learned the hard way, in some cases, that advance planning is absolutely necessary for critical infrastructure lying in a flood zone.

The severity of this situation would seem to be enough to place the relocation to a safer site higher on the priority list than retrofitting two other barracks to accommodate PSAP consolidation and then building a new barracks in Westminster in two years. I understand that this plan has been in the works for some time but did we not learn anything from Irene? Common sense should guide this decision. Why is it not possible to build a new barracks in Rutland and keep the PSAPs open with funding that has been earmarked for Westminster? Perhaps the capital plan was made before TS Irene? Is it time to relook at how and why this decision was made and use what we learned from Irene?

Secondly, the Rutland County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC #2) is a sub group of the state emergency planning committee. Our membership has been very active and committed to planning and preparing various emergency situations. Our emergency communication dispatchers are regular participants. Tabletop scenarios are developed and then "walked through" as a teaching tool for the entire membership. Every tabletop involves our Rutland PSAP dispatchers as the initial point of entry. They truly are the hub that keeps all the spokes on track and moving ahead.

Losing these experienced dispatchers and not having their local participation will have a negative impact on the strength of our LEPC. This feels like we will be taking several steps backward in protecting our emergency responders and the public who relies on us to be prepared to do this job.

I appreciate how difficult the job before must be. Please listen to what those who have "walked the walk" have said. Thank you for your time and attention.

Jan Sotirakis

