

# TRANSPORTATION AND EVACUATION WORKSHOP A SUMMARY

February 24, 2009  
2009 National Conference of Regions  
Washington, DC

The **National Association of Regional Councils** (NARC) held its first *Transportation and Evacuation Planning Workshop* to examine the cross-linking and coordination of multi-modal transportation and evacuation planning for special needs populations during the 2009 National Conference of Regions in Washington, DC on Tuesday, February 24, 2009. Three critical components were highlighted:

1. Cross-coordination with relevant local and regional agencies during the planning process;
1. Effective communication techniques used to make plans accessible to special needs populations; and,
2. Efforts for multi-regional coordination of multi-modal evacuations.

*The featured speakers were:*

**The Honorable Patti Kay Clapper, Pitkin County Commissioner and NARC Board Member.** Commissioner Clapper shared her experiences as a Board Member for the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG) in Silverthorne, CO, serving a five county region. Her recommendations for multi-modal evacuation planning focused on the challenges facing a rural, land-locked region with a highly variable population composition and size.

**Mr. K.J. Hertz, Associate Director of Public Policy and Legislative Affairs at the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A).** Mr. Hertz described the efforts of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) throughout the country and their involvement to improve the planning process. He recommended that metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and councils of governments (COGs) focus on outreach to their local AAA in order to better incorporate special needs populations into their planning.

**Mr. Shaun Davis, Executive Director of the South East Texas Regional Planning Commission (SETRPC).** Mr. Davis shared his experiences and lessons learned from planning and carrying out evacuations from Hurricanes Rita, Humberto, Edward, Gustav and other similar natural disasters in his three-county region. Mr. Davis focused on the region's planning improvements for special needs populations, their medical considerations and their pets.

**Mr. Jack Steele, Executive Director of the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC).** Mr. Steele's organization represents the 13-county Gulf Coast region, serving 12,500 square miles and more than 5.7 million people. He discussed the improvements that the region made in evacuation planning between Hurricanes Rita and Ike, particularly in better identifying the populations and specific communities that should be evacuated versus sheltering in place.

**Mr. Brewster Thackeray, Portfolio Director for Livable Communities, Mobility for the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP).** Mr. Thackeray focused on the importance of identifying special needs populations without access to automobiles and determining the equipment needs they may have in an evacuation.



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*Building Regional Communities*



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*Several common themes were discussed, including:*

**The importance of a planner's knowledge and access to regional data on special needs population(s).**

Commissioner Clapper noted that NWCCOG uses a reverse 9-1-1 system, encouraging visitors to the region, which includes the tourist destination of Aspen, CO, to register upon arrival. This system allows for an exchange of information – visitors and residents can be notified and instructed during an emergency situation, while planners and local responders can effectively plan by knowing the location and needs of their population at any given time.

Mr. Davis (SETRPC) noted that his region uses a 2-1-1 system that allows planners and emergency operations centers to identify the location and specific needs of special needs residents of the region. Through this system, the planners can be prepared with any specialized equipment needed to evacuate certain residents.

Mr. Davis (SETRPC) and Mr. Thackeray (AARP) both emphasized the importance of planning to use and transport the equipment for people with special needs. This is particularly relevant to ensure safe mobility and effective communication during and after the evacuation.

**The importance of fast and effective communication with special needs populations.**

Beyond simply identifying special needs populations, their location and individual needs, regions must plan to communicate effectively with the population. Programs such as the reverse 9-1-1 and 2-1-1 registration initiatives are helpful, as they provide an avenue and contact information for localities to communicate with people during the emergency.

Mr. Davis (SETRPC) noted that information provided through the 2-1-1 registration program is provided to first responders who can then reach out to individuals and assist them in their evacuation. He also noted that the region assists in coordinating between first responders and social service agencies (see below) prior to the time an evacuation is called, allowing for seamless and expedited communication to assist in special needs evacuations during the emergency.

**The importance of coordinating with regional and local social service agencies.**

Mr. Hertz (N4A) emphasized the importance of not only communicating directly with the special needs populations, but also communicating with other planning and social service agencies. As was noted in several presentations, it is essential to build relationships and eliminate language/terminology barriers that may exist between planning and social service agencies prior to an emergency.

Mr. Hertz (N4A) also noted that while many AAAs are becoming more involved in emergency planning, very few have a dedicated planner on their staff. Therefore, it is increasingly important that COGs and MPOs reach out to their AAAs in order to coordinate more effectively.

Commissioner Clapper noted that NWCCOG has established voluntary driver programs for assistance in evacuating special needs populations through existing Meals on Wheels volunteers, while Mr. Steele (H-GAC) described a volunteer program in which AAA volunteer drivers assist in evacuating those without access to a vehicle early enough so that they are able to return from the evacuation point to pick up their own families.

Through presentations by urban and rural, coastal and interior, and large and small regions, as well as by associations representing both individuals and discrete populations of those with special needs, the workshop emphasized that while there are differences in planning for different situations, there are many common needs. Each presentation emphasized the importance of access to data, effective communication, and coordination and outreach for any successful regional transportation-evacuation planning initiative.

**Resources recommended to learn more about this issue and their organizations include:**

Northwest Colorado Council of Governments - [nwc.cog.co.us](http://nwc.cog.co.us)  
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging - [www.n4a.org](http://www.n4a.org)  
South East Texas Regional Planning Commission - [www.setrpc.org](http://www.setrpc.org)  
Houston-Galveston Area Council - [www.h-gac.com](http://www.h-gac.com)  
American Association for Retired Persons - [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)  
National Organization on Disability - [www.nod.org](http://www.nod.org)  
National Center for Accessible Transportation - [oregonstate.edu/~hunterzk/ncat](http://oregonstate.edu/~hunterzk/ncat)  
Easter Seals Project Action - [www.projectaction.org](http://www.projectaction.org)  
National Center on Senior Transportation - [www.seniortransportation.net](http://www.seniortransportation.net)  
Houston Transtar - [www.houstontranstar.org](http://www.houstontranstar.org)  
FHWA Office of Operations - [http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/program\\_areas/mobility\\_security.htm](http://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/program_areas/mobility_security.htm)