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THIRD ANNUAL ALL HAZARDS FORUM CONCLUDES

***More than 800 Mid-Atlantic State and Local Homeland Security
and Emergency Management Leaders Meet in Baltimore***

Baltimore, MD – Over eight hundred regional emergency response leaders and private sector technology representatives attended the third annual Mid-Atlantic All Hazards Forum in Baltimore, Maryland. The only regional state-endorsed homeland security and emergency management conference of its kind welcomed government, academic and private sector professionals from Maryland, Virginia, D.C., Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, West Virginia and North Carolina.

The Mid-Atlantic region is considered a hotbed for homeland security and emergency management issues. New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the nation, Washington D.C. is considered a target for international terrorism, and West Virginia has concerns over massive urban rural evacuation (like Texas and Arkansas dealt with in the wake of Hurricane Katrina).

The conference kicked off on October 11 with a the second annual summit of Homeland Security Directors discussing concerns, solutions, and strategies for homeland security issues they share regionally and those unique to their state. Attendees were able to hear firsthand the challenges the states face with dwindling funding from the Department of Homeland Security and increased demands jurisdictionally.

Other highlights of the conference included:

- Discussion of preparation and planning for health pandemics like the avian flu;
- A review of public crisis communications surrounding the Sago mine disaster in West Virginia;
- An in-depth discussion of regional fusion centers and their role in community preparedness;
- Mid-Atlantic evacuation planning;
- And, the unveiling of a new tool for risk assessment for critical infrastructure protection.

The conference ended with a keynote address by Maryland Lt. Governor Michael Steele, who discussed the seven key elements of homeland security – law enforcement, border control, emergency preparedness, health and medical, critical infrastructure preparedness, public safety and communications, and intelligence and information sharing. He also noted the need for all citizens to “get to work” in the defense of our homeland. Lt. Gov. Steele told the audience, “We face the threat of terrorism, and it’s not a matter of if, but when.” He added, “It is the responsibility of leadership to not only identify threats, but to implement smart policy strategies against terror threats.”

The AHF is considered an annual summit for homeland security and emergency management leaders on the state and local level who meet during the conference to discuss issues, solutions, technology, best practices and equipment as well as challenges for the year ahead. In the months following the conference, a series of meetings will be facilitated through the All Hazards Consortium, which will focus on the development of regional initiatives to satisfy the emerging needs for state government, education and private sector technology solutions.

“Over the years, AHF has been the starting point of a defined process of issue identification, solution development and procurement for stakeholders,” said John Contestabile, Acting Assistant Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation and a member of the Strategic Advisory Committee to the All Hazards Forum. “We are now seeing the development of a unique model of cross-border cooperation and multi-jurisdictional action that we believe leads, ultimately, to a much more prepared and safer region for our citizens. It is truly a one-of-a-kind process that allows the all interested parties – government, private sector, and academia – to participate in every aspect of the process, from the initial idea to bids, grants and procurement.”

A report on the 2006 All Hazards Forum will be produced by IBM in the next month. Findings from the conference and identification of issues and opportunities for future action will be outlined in the report.

For more information on the All Hazards Forum, go to www.allhazardsforum.com. Dates for next year’s event are November 7-9, 2007 at the Baltimore Convention Center.

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