



EMA Command Staff Informational Guide

History of Porter County EMA



Phil Griffith was hired by the EMA Board and Approved by the County Commissioners in December of 1999. He was the first actual EMA Director for Porter County, as the County was transitioning from what was previously known as “Civil Defense” to “Emergency Management”. Ron Stevens had been the Civil Defense Director for many years and he was preparing to retire. The new structure was intended to follow the All Hazards Management and Preparedness mindset.

At the time, the EMA Office was located on the lower level of the County’s Administration Building (Suite 103). The EMA Office Staff consisted of The Director and the Secretary from the old ‘Civil Defense’ Department. There was no real Job Description, except for what the State of Indiana presented. At the time, Director Griffith had to rely on his past experiences and training. This consisted of working as a Firefighter, EMT, Fire Officer, and Fire Chief, as well as his 13 years as a Reserve Deputy Sheriff for Porter County. At the time, Director Griffith had no volunteer base to work from.

Director Griffith was assigned, by the EMA Board, to establish a county “Comprehensive Emergency Disaster Plan”, work to provide an “Emergency Operations Center” and develop “Educational Programs”. The educational programs were to be geared towards county employees as well as the public.



These monumental tasks were complicated by a very limited budget. Director Griffith was working with 2 older computers, a \$500.00 budget for supplies, a 1990 Chevy Sedan for transportation and no portable emergency radio. Director Griffith had his own portable radio at home and utilized that for work. At the time, there were no uniforms available and there was only \$300.00 in the training budget. He relied on the connections he had made during his 30 years in the Fire Service to obtain upgrades on used computers and used radios to assist in his efforts.

He also recruited several of his friends (all retired First Responders) and some Sky Warn (weather watcher) members to form a volunteer base. He was able to bring in some First Responders to start developing the Comprehensive Disaster Action Plan, utilizing a copy of the old Civil Defense Plan that he found. This plan was modified and expanded to cover all types of disasters.

In September 2001, the Terrorist Attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon occurred. On that day, Director Griffith met with the Porter County Sheriff as well as Fire, Police, Airport and EMS Chiefs to work on an immediate “Plan of Action”.

The Emergency Management Programs then became the ‘First Burner Programs’. The States and Federal Government placed a pressing need for all cities, states, and agencies to update plans, procedures, training, and equipment. At the same time, the first of several Federal Grants were offered. This made getting needed financial assistance easier than it had been in the past.

After 9/11/01, Federal and State Grants were released for Emergency Response and Preparedness training programs being held throughout the State. Additional Grants helped with acquiring much needed equipment, while the free training allowed for EMA to send volunteers to classes throughout the state at no charge.



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The Porter County Emergency Management Agency has grown a great deal since those first days. Director Griffith, considered by our agency to be the Godfather of Emergency Management for Porter County, paved the way for those who have followed. Keeping people aware and vigilant for disasters that can befall us is always a constant battle. Human nature causes us to forget the reason why we have taken this journey as well as the work it took to get us to here. People must always remember that,

Preparedness is always better than Reaction After the Fact.