



Partners in Prevention

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New Ready Business Workshop Sheds Light on Power Outage Preparedness

There was no shortage of enlightenment at Indiana's *Ready Business Power Outage Workshop* in November for corporations, farmers, and service organizations alike. As one Fair Oaks Farms employee said, it was "very eye-opening and informative."

Representatives from Business Resiliency Alliance of Indiana, ComEd, Fair Oaks Farms, Northwest Indiana County Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD), South Newton School Corporation, Williams Eye Institute, and more attended the workshop to learn more about power outages. The lessons learned were valuable for ranchers with 30,000 cows and electric milking machines as well as optometrists and volunteer coordinators.

Mike Chesney, Federal Preparedness Coordinator for FEMA Region V, and Ray Chambers, Newton County Emergency Management Agency Director, started the day discussing why risk assessment and plan development is critical for business continuity in potential disaster scenarios. Guiding them in risk analyses associated with the physical space, staff, and systems of their respective businesses, Chesney assured attendees, "[T]hese steps will help your organization protect your investments, take care of your people, and maintain your customer base after a disaster."

Robert Fournie, Director of Emergency Preparedness for the Exelon company ComEd, helped participants understand utilities infrastructure, system operations, emergency preparedness, and business readiness for ComEd and its 3.9 million customers, 5,853 miles of transmission line, 3,400 substations, 1.5 million distribution poles, and 460,000 transformers.

Angie Cloutier from the Indiana Department of Homeland Security found ComEd's capabilities impressive, while FEMA Region V Emergency Analyst Tom Mefferd emphasized the added concern of employee home safety, since those who are confident about family safety are free to focus on job performance in challenging scenarios.

After attendees assessed risks, FEMA Region V Community Preparedness Officer Kim Hayward and Scott Sears, Director of Engineering and Operations at Kankakee Valley REMC joined Melanie Tydrich, Senior Channel Manager at the Kohler Company and Sharon Kish of the Northwest Indiana COAD to guide participants in customizing a Business Continuity, Preparedness and Mitigation Plan.

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As the day wrapped up, Sharon Kish shared her unique ideas for being of service to the community following a disaster, and announced her intention to encourage all COAD members to become Ready Business recognized organizations by the end of 2017. While sharing personal stories about ice storms, tornadoes, and other power-outage-causing disasters in the history of northwest Indiana, Ray Chambers warned, "It can happen to you, so plan for the unexpected."

FLASH joined FEMA Region V, FEMA HQ, and the Newton County Emergency Management Agency to present this Power Outage Ready Business Workshop at the Newton County Government Complex in northwest Indiana. If you would like additional information on the Ready Business workshops, contact info@flash.org.