

IEMA Facilitates Flood Exercise in Grafton

by Submitted by City of Grafton
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GRAFTON - On November 3, various city, county, and state agencies came together at Grafton City Hall in an exercise designed to analyze and coordinate their proposed actions in response to a flood emergency. Doug Downing, Coordinator for Region 8 of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA), created and led the exercise

which allowed the various groups to hear responses from all participants during the forecast, flooding, and recovery stages of a major flood scenario.

IEMA developed the exercise based on a request from the Grafton mayor after a meeting they had in Springfield last year. “It’s rare that a municipality requests this type of help, so we were glad to come and conduct this exercise for Grafton. IEMA has responded here in the past and that history was helpful, but the real benefit of this exercise is that we all now have a plan at the city, county, and state levels. We can respond efficiently to future flooding events and minimize coordination efforts with a more streamlined process concerning possible evacuations, restrictions or needed resources,” Mr. Downing said. “With a plan in place such as the one Grafton is developing, we can better pre-deploy assets and personnel to meet the unique needs of the city as flood levels rise.”

Hosted by Mayor Morrow, attendees included City aldermen, City employees and resident survivors of past major floods as well as representatives from Madison County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) and City of Alton Public Works personnel. Rounding out the team of experts were representatives from the Corps of Engineers, St. Louis Office, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Jersey County Emergency Services (ESDA), and the QEM fire department. Law enforcement agencies were well represented and included Grafton police chief Eric Spanton and Officer Mike Angel, Officer Michael Goetten of the Conservation Police, and Jersey County Sheriff Mike Ringhausen.

Sheriff Ringhausen spoke about law enforcement efforts during the 2019 flood. “This exercise brought an opportunity to recall events of that flood and to spark ideas as to how our response efforts might be improved. The meeting allowed us to discuss how our separate agencies can better work together at all levels to provide the best possible help to Grafton’s citizens and businesses.”

Keith Norman, the Jersey County Emergency Manager, Doug Downing and Mayor Morrow have worked closely together at previous meetings and have taken tours of their respective agencies. “We have developed a smooth working relationship,” said Mr. Norman. “Actually knowing the person who answers your call enables us to interact smoothly and quickly to facilitate the needed help.”

IEMA designed the Table Top Flood exercise around three modules using actual flood data with scenarios designed to energize and drive the discussions. The mayor’s goal was to validate and update Grafton’s emergency plan that was developed last year by the Grafton Emergency Committee. “The time to plan for an emergency is before it occurs,” said Mayor Morrow. “We are grateful to IEMA and Jersey County EMA for

developing this exercise and to all the partners, participants and citizens who came today to make this event a success for Grafton.”

Photos provided by Dave Sanford, Grafton City Photographer.