

Town beefs up emergency preparedness

By [Steve Smith - Staff Writer](#)

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William Turley is the new Emergency Management Coordinator for the North Central Health District. Photos by Steve Smith.

The Town of Vernon has taken steps toward bolstering its public safety services in a variety of ways, both local and regional. At its meeting on Oct. 4, the Vernon Town Council was introduced to William Turley, the newly-appointed emergency management coordinator to the North Central Health District.

Vernon Emergency Management Director Michael Purcaro said Turley will bring a wealth of experience to the position, including more than 30 years with the East Hartford Police Department. For 20 of those years, he held the rank of detective.



Turley has worked in conjunction with the FBI, DEA, ATF, Statewide and East Central Narcotics Task Force, and the Hartford Police Department. He has also trained and handled a narcotic-detection K-9. Turley has been deputy coordinator of emergency management for East Hartford since June of 2010.

"I look forward to working with the community and all of the public safety professionals," Turley said, adding that his new title entails working with the public safety officials, and coordinating preparations for potential large emergencies in the area, as well as during such an event.

The council also approved a motion authorizing the mayor to sign a memorandum of agreement which allows the use of federal grant funding for custodial ownership of regional assets for the state's Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

Purcaro explained that the department has strategically-placed equipment across the state, which is typically housed by local municipalities. Vernon is home to one of the state's decontamination trailers, and its "prime mover" vehicle (which pulls the trailer). The trailer was used recently in support of the shelter for victims of tropical storm Irene.

The agreement, Purcaro said, indicated that Vernon will safeguard and maintain the asset, and deploy it when needed for local, state, or federal emergencies. He added that the agreement provides some funding from the state, on an incident by incident basis, but essentially keeps Vernon available to house and utilize other equipment and assets in the future.

Purcaro said the motion helps make Vernon a better part of the larger community. "It puts us outside the walls of the town of Vernon," Purcaro said. "It's something that the volunteer fire department takes on, as part of its duties and responsibilities, not only to provide that asset for the protection and response to citizens here. Other towns do it, and we feel that it's us being part of the community outside of the town of Vernon."

Councilman Dan Champagne, a sergeant with the Vernon Police Department, said the program works similarly to regional programs used by law enforcement, such as the Capitol Region Emergency Services Team (CREST).

"We have one part, somebody else has another part," Champagne said. "When things happen in Vernon, we bring all the parts together. It all works out in the end."

"We can use equipment from other communities that we don't have to buy, because we know where it is,"

said Councilwoman Marie Herbst. "I think that's the part we sometimes forget."

After passing that motion unanimously, the council also voted on an application for a FEMA fire grant for fire equipment worth \$471,675. The grant, if approved, would fund 90 percent of that cost, leaving \$47,165.50 for the town to fund. Town Finance Officer James Luddecke said that, since those funds are not in the budget, it would have to come back to the council as an additional appropriation.

Fire Chief William Call said the TVFD is trying to replace all of the breathing apparatus on its fire trucks, some of which are outdated. The department is also seeking to upgrade its firefighter location devices from the current ones that must be activated manually before a firefighter goes into a building with ones that are fully-automated.

Call added that there is a possibility that some of the used equipment will likely be donated to other fire departments.