

# The Sit Rep

Newsletter of the NYC Office of Emergency Management

OEM

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## OEMer at Large: Dispatches From Tokyo

by Amy Schultz



Closing ceremony of the C40 Large Cities Climate Leadership Group in Tokyo

From October 20–24, Amy Schultz, along with three representatives for the Mayor's Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability, represented New York City at the C40 Large Cities Climate Leadership Group in Tokyo, Japan. A grant from the Rockefeller Brothers' Fund allowed them to join officials from 40 other cities from around the world to discuss climate change and its effects on major cities. The conference focused on issues like rising temperatures, water shortages, food problems, and natural disasters. Schultz, the *Sit Rep*'s new foreign correspondent, reported from the scene.

As soon as I got off the plane in Tokyo, I saw three members of the Tokyo municipal government holding a sign with my name on it. They asked how my flight was, helped me get a bus ticket, and walked me to the bus I needed. When I arrived at my hotel room, all the conference materials were waiting for me. I soon learned that this level of attention to detail would characterize the entire conference.

Throughout the four-day conference, there was always someone (or many people) available to show me where to go or answer my questions. Translation services were provided through earpieces and attendants, identifiable by their matching white suits, were ready with microphones in case anyone wanted to ask a question. There were even escorts waiting in the hotel lobby to

walk me to the conference, which was just three minutes away. The amount of planning that went into this conference demonstrated how seriously the Tokyo government took its role as host city.

Most of the conference was held at the Tokyo municipal government building. Representatives from 32 cities gave presentations on adapting infrastructure for heat waves, water shortages, and floods. The presentations focused on both structural solutions, such as storm barriers, levees, and green roofs, and non-structural solutions, like improved flood hazard mapping, flood forecasting, and real-time disaster information dissemination. The number and quality of the solutions proposed made it clear cities are not waiting for policy change at the national level, they are taking the lead in tackling these problems.

Climate change has already produced irreversible impacts all over the world. Extreme weather, including more frequent and severe droughts, floods, and heat waves, is a reality scientists, urban planners, and emergency managers must all confront. The success of this conference demonstrates that more and more cities are beginning to realize and address the link between climate change and emergency management.

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### Editor's Note

The microcosm of emergency management has remained relatively quiet this fall, but New York City and the U.S. have had a frenetic season. A financial crisis shook the country. Bloomberg won the right to run for a third term. And Barack Obama was elected the 44th president of the United States.

The long term effects of the financial crisis cannot be predicted, but in the short term the City was forced to scale back its budget for the next two years. In light of these budget cuts, *The Sit Rep* encourages OEMers to make some positive energy saving changes in the office and at home.

**Lighting:** Turn off lights that are not in use. If you are the last person to leave the lunchroom or the bathroom, turn off the lights and TVs to save energy.

**Printing:** Remember to always print on both sides if possible.

If you want to share any more energy saving tips with *The Sit Rep*, email [cvarley@oem.nyc.gov](mailto:cvarley@oem.nyc.gov). As always, stories, photos, and milestones are welcome. Enjoy and be part of the next one.

## Dispatches From Tokyo (continued from page 1)

It wasn't all floods and heat waves, though. I had the opportunity to see some of Tokyo and most importantly, try the food.

Being New Yorkers, we rode the Tokyo subway without hesitation. Although Tokyo's subway appears more complicated than New York's, the logic behind it is the same: colored lines and named stations. I didn't ride during rush hour and so didn't experience the legendary Tokyo "subway pushers." These station attendants "help" during rush hour by physically pushing more people into the trains. And we think the 4/5 during rush hour is bad!

I visited Sensoji Temple, an ancient Buddhist temple dating to 645 AD. The

buildings were largely destroyed in WWII. Since then, the temple was rebuilt and has become a symbol of peace and rebirth. Although many visitors at the temple were tourists, the temple is still an important religious center for the people of Tokyo.

I also went to Tsukiji Market, one of the world's largest fish markets. A small group of us from the conference, most notably the mayor of Toronto, visited the bustling site early one morning. Avoiding being run over by the motorized carts hauling large tuna quickly became the main objective of the visit.

Most people visit the fish market with the intention of trying out one of the nearby sushi bars. Sushi is Japan's most famous contribution to global food culture and I'm certain no sushi will ever quite live up to what I had in Tokyo. The best meal I had there was a 6 AM sushi breakfast at a restaurant next to the fish market. The tuna was so fresh I thought it might jump off the plate.

I also enjoyed sukiyaki, a dish of thinly sliced beef, vegetables, mushrooms, and tofu that you cook for yourself in a hot pot at the table. Pieces of food are cooked in a bubbling combination of lard, water, and soy sauce and then dipped into raw egg before eating. The sukiyaki restaurant we ate in had a rock garden with private dining alcoves and sunken tables.

As for desserts, I recommend manjū, a sweet cake or donut-like treat filled with red bean paste. At the time, I had no idea what I was eating, but after little internet research, I discovered what it is called. I'd never have guessed I'd find red bean paste so tasty!

No trip to Japan would be complete without karaoke. What began as a karaoke-off between the American and British conference delegates, ended up as a multi-city, international sing-along because really, music brings us together. "New York, New York" and "London Calling" were crowd favorites.

I was honored to represent both OEM and New York City at this conference and look forward to future collaborations.



## Baby Boom



Brendan Mark Farrell

7 lbs. 9 ozs.

August 1, 2008

Christina and Timmy Farrell



Samantha Riley Samonte-Brezinski

7 lbs. 4 ozs.

August 20, 2008

Jill Samonte and Jeff Brezinski



Shyloh Christian Scott

7lbs. 12 ozs.

August 23, 2008

Melody Torres and Troy Scott



# OEM Helps Texas Two-Step its Way to Recovery



*Bolivar Peninsula, Texas after Hurricane Ike*

On September 16, 2008, Alex Markowski, Kelly McKinney, and Brad Gair flew to Harris County, Texas, to help local emergency managers in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike. The team arrived three days after the hurricane, at which time recovery efforts were focused on restoring utilities. Half the county – more than 1.2 million people – was still without power. Officials imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew and encouraged evacuees to remain in shelters until utilities could be restored.

The high voltage cables that carry electricity to the county were intact, but broken limbs and fallen trees had taken down neighborhood lines all across the grid. “Sometimes power was just out on one side of the street. Sometimes it was an entire neighborhood,” Markowski said. “From above, the blackouts made the city look like an unfinished puzzle.”

Hospitals, police and fire, and municipal service agencies needed generators and fuel to sustain recovery efforts and re-establish services. Markowski, OEM’s logistics director, worked with local officials to prioritize requests and manage resources. The absence of a local disaster assistance center complicated his task, however, as requests from individuals flooded into the Harris

County EOC alongside official requests.

To further complicate matters, the organizations that provide residents with water, power, sanitation services, debris removal, and highway maintenance, were highly fractionalized. Each neighborhood relied on different providers. McKinney, OEM’s deputy commissioner for preparedness, helped coordinate recovery efforts across this kaleidoscope of municipal players. “New York City is lucky. We have one police department, one fire department, a simple utility structure, and the City makes all the decisions,” McKinney said.

A lack of basic utilities was not the only thing keeping the public in shelters. Many houses were too damaged to re-occupy. Gair, OEM’s deputy commissioner for operations, helped local responders develop a housing damage estimate plan to determine how much of the local housing stock had been lost.

“We used a combination of aerial photography, windshield surveys, and block-by-block assessments on foot to determine the gap between the available housing stock and the demand,” Gair explained.

Windshield surveys, which are assessments done by car, and foot patrols are standard damage estimate techniques, but aerial photography is relatively new

to emergency management. Digital zoom cameras can provide detailed images of entire neighborhoods or a single house.

“There is lots of technology out there to capture detailed photos, but there is no formal way to interpret the data,” McKinney said. “If we can extract damage estimates from these images, we can reduce the resources we have to put on the ground to find out what we need to know.”

One thing that worked in Harris County’s favor was the recent housing boom. The Houston suburbs contained a large supply of empty houses. As utilities were restored, officials re-located evacuees from shelters into these houses. The system worked well for the locals, but as more and more evacuees arrived from the coast, officials scrambled to find alternatives.

“Both Houston and Harris County had permanent OEM staffs of 10 or less. Those individuals coordinated the recovery for more than four million people,” Gair said. “If New York City’s OEM was proportional to the one down there, we’d have 20 people working here.”

Harris County’s patchwork recovery challenged the NYC OEMers, but it also taught them valuable lessons about post-storm attitudes and messaging. The team praised the resiliency of the Texans and marveled at how quickly local stores and services re-opened. “Texans are resourceful. After the storm, they picked up the pieces and went back to work,” McKinney said.

“[The Texans] never thought of themselves as victims. We have to be careful in New York City not to heighten the public’s sense of victimization,” McKinney said. “Even though the City will be offering shelters and distributing water and ice, people need to realize that we are going to need everyone’s help to put the city back together again.”

## Milestones

On November 1, Jake Cooper, Rich Wilde, and Kelly McKinney joined thousands of runners from around the world in the 2008 New York City

Marathon. Jake, OEM’s answer to Steve Prefontaine finished 90th with a time of 2:36:54. Rich ran for the FDNY team and finished with a personal

best of 3:31:00. Kelly, meanwhile, proudly finished the grueling race just seconds behind a double amputee. Congratulations to one and all!



## OEM NEWS

### National Preparedness Month

On September 4, 135 volunteers from across Citizen Corps Council and 40 OEMers distributed 78,000 preparedness guides and 1,000 Go Bags to residents in all five boroughs. Local media covered the event, and turnout, as well as demand for Go Bags, exceeded expectations.

### What if NYC...

On October 27, Commissioner Bruno, DDC Commissioner David Burney, Kelly McKinney, Seth Cummins, Dina Maniotis, Jim McConnell, and Thomas Pollman, met with FEMA Chief Operating Officer Admiral Harvey Johnson and representatives from FEMA's Joint Housing Solutions Group in Washington, DC. The team

from OEM presented the results of the What if NYC... Design Competition and proposed partnering with FEMA to integrate an urban housing prototype into their current post-disaster housing initiatives. FEMA agreed that Hurricane Ike's impact on Houston exposed the lack of an urban solution in current initiatives and plans to assemble a team to work with OEM to develop a solution.

### Sesame Workshop

On Thursday, October 30, OEM, New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell, and the Sesame Workshop introduced Let's Get Ready! Planning Together For Emergencies. The bilingual initiative



*Commissioner Bruno poses with Grover at the New York Presbyterian/Weill Cornell hospital.*

encourages families, especially those with young children, to prepare for emergencies. Sesame Street's Grover posed with OEM Commissioner Bruno, Sesame Workshop President Gary Knell, and Doctors Laura Forese and Gerald Loughlin of New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell hospital.

### Awards

On October 6, the NYC Law Department awarded Commissioner Bruno the Corporation Counsel Alumni Award in honor of his career in public service. Michael Cardozo, Corporation Counsel president presented the award at the Law Department's bi-annual dinner at Tavern on the Green.

On November 6, Eric Smalls received the Staff Award for Excellence in IT Support and Service during DOITT's 2008 Excellence in Technology Awards Program. Gary Johnson and Henry Jackson also received awards for their contributions to the NYCWIN project, the NYC wireless network for the public safety and first responders.

## OEM Shows It Cares on New York Cares Day



*Volunteers paint a mural on P.S. 169 in Sunset Park, Brooklyn*

On Saturday, October 18, eight OEMers spent the day painting and gardening with elementary school students from Public School 169 in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. The volunteers painted murals, both inside and out of the school, weeded gardens, planted flowers, painted fences, and played with students during the 17th annual New York Cares Day.

New York Cares Day, organized each year by New York Cares and the NYC Department of Education, is part of an on-

going effort to reach out to students and invoke a sense of pride in their surroundings. More than 8,000 volunteers assisted at 119 schools, making 2008's New York Cares Day one of the largest on record.

The projects varied from school to school, the added time and skills of the volunteers allowed the schools to take on projects that they could not otherwise manage.

At P.S. 169, site managers Herman Schaffer and Erin McLachlan coordinated

the day's activities. Al Villacara designed 10 murals for the school's gym and lunchroom. Elizabeth Rothstein, Ashley Kolberg, Ricardo Fernandez, Kiran Dhanji, and Megan Pribram painted murals, the teachers' lounge, and the school's exterior fence. Before the day's end, volunteers also weeded and planted two gardens outside the school.

"We were happy to spruce up the school and brighten children's lives," Villacara said.

If you'd like to get involved and help strengthen NYC's communities, learn how at [www.nycare.org](http://www.nycare.org).



*Al Villacara shows he cares*



# OEM Golf Outing

Finally a game for Felix: lowest score wins.

