

The Sit Rep

Newsletter of the NYC Office of Emergency Management

OEM
New York City Office of Emergency Management
February 2009

Miracle On The Hudson



NY Waterway ferry rescues passengers of US Airways 1549 after an emergency landing on the Hudson River.

At 3:31 PM on Thursday, January 16, US Airways flight 1549 performed an emergency landing on the Hudson River after a collision with a flock of birds destroyed the aircraft's engines. The plane hit the water just seven minutes after takeoff.

Ferry boats from New York Waterways reached the plane within minutes and began pulling the waiting passengers off the wings. OEM responder Rich Wilde was at the NY Waterways pier when the first ferry pulled in with 22 survivors on board.

"The ferry captains go there so fast, I couldn't tell who had been in the accident and who might have just been on the ferry," Wilde remembered. "Everyone was smiling and their clothes were barely even wet."

Wilde boarded the ferry with eight other responders and headed out to the floating plane as the last of the survivors were ferried to either Manhattan or New Jersey. Wilde moved to a smaller police boat near the crash site to confer with the police divers and send information back to OEM.

Back at headquarters, EOC staff coordinated with local hospitals, closed sections of the West Side Highway, requested a barge and crane from the Army Corps of Engineers to recover the plane, and established a Family Assistance Center at the Crown Plaza La Guardia Hotel.

A Family Assistance Center, or FAC, provides support services to families, friends, and survivors of a mass-casualty incident, any incident with more than 10 deaths or the possibility thereof. Though everyone survived the flight 1549 crash, airlines are required to open a FAC after any crash.

"Normally a FAC is a very somber place," Human Services' Aaron Belisle explained. "It is designed to be very sensitive to the grieving process and respect the privacy of family and friends of victims. This FAC was different because everyone survived. It was high-spirited and positive and everyone wanted to talk to the press."

OEM's Human Services unit staffed the FAC for the next two days along side representatives from US Airways to ensure that every passenger received the practical and emotional assistance they required.

Back in the field, the Hudson River's swift current created a serious challenge for the City's first responders. After splashing down near the Intrepid at West 44th street, the currents carried the plane more than 50 blocks before it was finally secured to the pier on Murray Street. First response agencies spread their resources thin as they continually tried to reestablish incident command posts close to the drifting plane.

(continued on page 2)

Editor's Note

It's been a cold, wet winter in New York City, but accidents, and not weather, have prompted the agency's recent activations. The dramatic scene pictured to the left was heralded as one of the City's finest moments. Get the inside scoop from the OEMers in the field.

This issue of the Sit Rep also features an article about a new orientation program with Watch Command, a recap of GIS Day, and some sizzling photos from the holiday party.

We've introduced a new feature in this issue called the Commissioner's Corner (page 2). It's a question and answer column designed to facilitate candid and anonymous discussions between the commissioner and the staff. Topics range from agency goals to favorite movies.

If you have a question you'd like answered, drop it in the Commissioner's Corner Inbox in the cafeteria. Each quarter he will select a few to answer. Enjoy the stories, babies, and the accomplishments of your friends. Happy 2009!

Miracle on the Hudson (continued from page 1)



On January 16, Mayor Bloomberg thanked New York's City's first responders for their work during the rescue of passengers from flight 1549. OEM's Erin McLachlan was recognized for her work as the Family Assistance Center Coordinator.

Spirits soared as Mayor Bloomberg confirmed zero fatalities from the crash. The bobbing plane tied up near Murray Street became a tourist attraction and symbol of the prestige and power of New York City's first responders.

Two days later, the Army Corps of Engineers pulled the plane from the icy Hudson River. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) retrieved the flight data recorder

and confirmed that the engines were functioning properly until Captain Sullenberg reported striking the birds.

After finding organic bird matter in both engines, the NTSB sent DNA samples to the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History to determine the guilty species. Since the announcement, a large number of geese have been seen fleeing south.

Commissioner's Corner

Q: How do you feel about your name being tossed around as the next head of FEMA?

A: I know there was quite a bit of interest when my name appeared in the Washington Post as one of the two finalists for the FEMA job. That was actually a surprise to me since no one from the President's office or DHS spoke directly to me about the possibility. It's flattering to be considered for such an important job. However, considered or not, I have a great job at NYC OEM and I intend to serve out the remainder of my term on the job. Thanks to all who got excited and a few who thought I could do a good job if I travelled south to DC.

Q: It's Oscar time, what do you think was the best movie of 2008?

A: There are some terrific movies out there. *Milk*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Nixon-Frost* were great. But, my favorite is *Doubt*!! Meryl Streep, the nun, was outstanding as was Phillip Seymour Hoffman, the priest. *Doubt* is my favorite as it captures the relationship between priests and nuns in the Catholic Church at a time when these folks had substantial power over lots of lives. Meryl Streep was dead-on in her portrayal of a nun who showed no doubt in anything she said or did but who harbored a lot of it just below the surface. Great movie – whether you are Catholic or not.

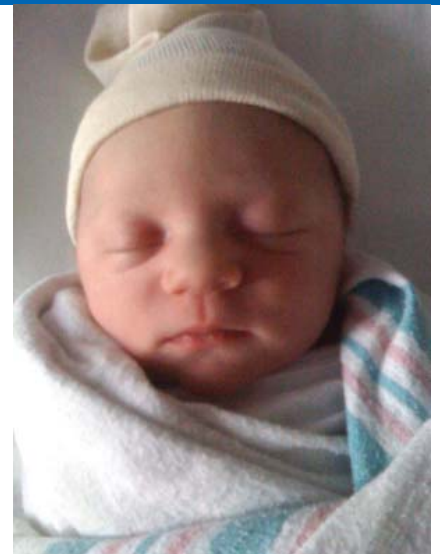
Baby Boom



Khoren Emerson Andrews
8 lbs 11 ozs, 23 inches
Born December 18, 2008 to
Araks and Seth Andrews



Hugh Frederick Grimm
8 lbs, 21 inches
Born December 22, 2008 to
Lesley and John Grimm



Cecelia Themba Kane
6 lbs and 15 ozs, 20 inches
Born February 5, 2009 to
Judith and Timothy Kane

The Watchers Speak



Mayor Bloomberg visits OEM's Watch Command on Christmas Day to thank the staff for their service to NYC.

On February 5, Training and Exercises and Watch Command introduced a comprehensive and experiential orientation program to familiarize OEM staff with Watch Command.

"It is a full-day program that will provide insight into the critical function and role that Watch Command plays for OEM and teaches staff how to assist them during an emergency," Assistant Commissioner for Training and Exercises Virginia Mewborn explained.

The program is part of an effort to speed up the integration of new employees and familiarize them with aspects of emergency management outside of their specialties. The orientation will target employees who have started with OEM within the last six

months and then become available to any staff who are interested. Adam Morrow was the first "student" of the orientation.

"It was a great experience, but a little overwhelming," Morrow said. "Watch Commanders sit in front of five active screens and up to eight active radio channels. It's total information overload. Years of experience with the City has taught them how to filter and track important information. It's not anything you could just do. That's why this orientation is so important."

Due to the one-on-one nature of the course and the full-day commitment required by both trainer and trainee, only one person may participate at a time.

"There are advantages on both sides

of this program," Deputy Director of Watch Command Marzio Penzi explained. "While the rest of the agency gains a better understanding of what Watch Command does and how it functions, Watch Commanders learn about planning protocols and how to request the information they need to support responders in the field. It's a cultural exchange that creates a new level of synergy between the agency's operations and non-operations staff."

The seven-hour orientation includes an introduction to Watch Command operations, an overview of the various monitoring equipment, a one-on-one information session with a Watch Commander, an overview of a Watch Commander's daily tasks, and an overview of the Watch Command Supervisor's tasks and responsibilities.

As the program matures, Watch Command plans to tailor orientation activities to an employee's specific area of interest. For example, Health and Medical staff will focus on jobs with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene as well as routine Health and Medical related Watch Command notifications and tasks.

A mandatory evaluation opens the orientation program to ideas from all participants. If you are interested in participating contact JoAnn Spreen.

Milestones

On February 26, Lieutenant **Jim Kerley's** of the FDNY will retire after serving New York City for 20 years. He spent the last three years in the Training and Exercises unit, splitting his time between running drills for NYC's first responders and pestering Paula.

On February 6, **Thomas Pollman**, of GIS, passed the last of nine divisions of the National Council of Architectural Registration Board's Architectural Registration Exam. Once issued a license by the state board, he will be a registered architect and certified to practice in the state of New York.

In December 2008, **Kit Lee**, **Mordy Goldfeder**, and **Nicole Wallen** completed their master's degrees in public administration at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. While their specialties varied, they all focused on building a better, safer, and more prepared New York City. They will attend the graduation ceremony together in May 2009.

Promotions

Jake Cooper and **Christina Farrell**, have been promoted to Deputy Commissioners of their divisions.

Jim McConnell, **Virginia Mewborn**, and **Stacy Rosenfeld** were promoted

to Assistant Commissioners of their respective units.

Joe Fino was promoted to Lieutenant with the NY State Courts.

Fran Kerivan was promoted to Assistant Chief of Security.

Ashley Kolberg and **Herman Schaffer** were promoted to directorial positions in their units, and **Annette Santiago** became the agency's first Director of Human Resources.

Joe Pupello joined Ready New York as a full-time employee.

John Thornton was promoted to a Second Grade Detective in the NYPD.



OEM NEWS

Watch Command

Obama's Inauguration

three days in DC and found the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMA) staffers were extremely welcoming, even providing sleeping quarters complete with Red Cross cots and blankets.

New York video

CERT Graduation

Department of Buildings

In January, two field inspectors from the Department of Buildings (DOB) joined the ranks of OEM's Watch Command (WC). The DOB inspectors will provide immediate technical assessments of engineering issues and a link to DOB's database, which houses NYC building information like occupancy and ownership records, construction schedules, and the locations of hazardous materials within a construction site.

The DOB desk expansion is part of a new drive to permanently increase WC's situational awareness by tapping into the expertise of other City agencies. WC has begun similar discussions with the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Mental Health and Hygiene.

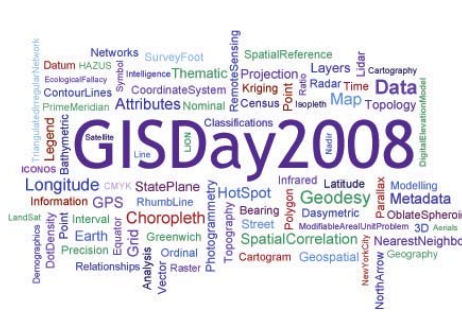
Hooray, it's National GIS Day!

GIS links location information and database information to illustrate patterns, relationships, and trends. In addition to contributing to real-time incidents, planning and preparedness, and recovery, GIS obtains and develops data for the Public Safety GIS Data Development Center, Critical Infrastructure, Hazard Modeling, and Application Development projects.

on the exhibits, including the OEM GIS portfolio, reference library, application demos, interactive games, and the OEM staff favorite, the restaurant map.

GIS Day had two winners for the Guess the Landmark game (close-up aerial photos of NYC landmarks): first-place winner Judith Graham Kane won a square foot canvas aerial photo of her neighborhood, and second-place winner Lisa Schulman won a business card holder.

The biggest winner, however, was the lunch crowd, as GIS used staff suggestions to compile a map of the best places to eat around the office. Check it out [here](#).



OEM Holiday Party 2009

Shake it like a polaroid picture.

