

FRANKLIN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

425 Main Street, Suite 20, Greenfield, MA 01301-3313
Telephone 413-774-3167 • Fax 413-774-3169 • www.frcog.org
Executive Director • Linda Dunlavy



NEWSLETTER

MAY 2007

Outbreak of Meningitis at UMass? An Emergency Preparedness Drill

Hundreds of students and public health professionals converged at the Mullins Center at the UMass Amherst on April 12 to test their skills against an imaginary outbreak of bacterial meningitis. The exercise, the first and largest of its kind in Massachusetts, also assessed the response and communication system (including the Health and Homeland Alert Network) among all 98 local boards of health, 13 Medical Reserve Corps units, 16 area hospitals and 98 emergency management directors.

The April 12 exercise incorporated a set of deliverables for local health boards issued by the Centers for Disease Control and evaluated the Mullins Center as an Emergency Dispensing Site. A follow-up exercise is scheduled for July 12 that will focus strictly on the communications system. Between now and July 12, modifications or improvements to the system will be made based on the April 12 exercise. The exercise was funded in part by grants from the Western Homeland Security Advisory Council and the MDPH. For more information please contact Western Mass Medical Reserve Corps Coordinator, Roger Brechner at 413-775-3737 or rogerb@wmmrc.org or Regional Preparedness Program Manager, Ben Wood at 413-774-3167 ext. 117 or bwood@frcog.org.

Enjoy the Ride in the Connecticut River Valley Video to be Released

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) is pleased to release the *Enjoy the Ride in the Connecticut River Valley* video. The FRCOG worked with Paul Hake Productions and

the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) to produce a four-part media campaign to promote bicycling as transportation in the Connecticut River Valley. The media campaign includes a thirty minute documentary film, a thirty second public service announcement for television, a thirty second public service announcement for radio and versions of these video to be viewed on the internet.

The videos are intended to encourage people to use their bicycle as a fun and rewarding means of transportation whenever they are able. The film and public service announcements feature local cyclists from Franklin, Hampshire and Hamden Counties who tell their stories of how, when, and why they choose to bicycle instead of driving. The thirty minute documentary also includes some educational information about bicycling including proper equipment, rules of the road and tips on how to handle the challenges that often face those who commute by bicycle.

A special public screening of the video will be held on Monday, May 14th at 5:30 p.m. at the Academy of Music in Northampton. The documentary is also being distributed throughout the Connecticut River Valley for airing at local bike commute week events, on local cable access channels, and any other venues as appropriate. The public service announcements are being submitted to local television and radio outlets for airing. A special website www.enjoytheridebybike.com has been established and contains additional information on bicycling in the region.

For further information or if you are interested in airing the videos at a local bicycling event, please contact Senior Transportation Planner, Elizabeth

Giannini, at 413-774-1194 ext. 104 or giannini@frcog.org.



Community Coalition for Teens Awarded Tobacco Grant

The Community Coalition for Teens is one of five organizations in Massachusetts to be awarded a **Community Smoking Intervention Demonstration** project grant by the Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program (MTCP) of the Department of Public Health. This grant provides for an initial 6-month planning, media, and outreach phase, followed by two years of implementation of the developed strategic plan. The Community Coalition for Teens will be working in collaboration with the Communities That Care Coalition, other partners in the Franklin County/North Quabbin region, and current recipients of other MTCP grants, including the Tobacco Free Network, Greenfield High School students, Community Action Youth Programs, and the Greenfield Board of Health.

During its first six months, the Franklin County/North Quabbin Community Smoking Intervention Demonstration Project will implement a media campaign focused on preventing youth smoking, using data from the 2006 Regional Teen Health Survey. Community Action will provide outreach services to its clients, through its existing programs to encourage them to access smoking cessation programs (particularly the MassHealth smoking cessation benefit) and to inform them of the advantages of smoke-free environments for children and adults. The Community Coalition for Teens will bring together partners for a strategic planning process,

facilitated by the Western Massachusetts Center for Healthy Communities, to assess needs and identify strategies to reduce and prevent smoking in our region.

A core group of partners has begun to meet, and we are seeking additional people to join a small planning group prior to convening a larger strategic planning session. The next strategic planning meeting is Monday, May 14th from 3-5 p.m. in the 1st floor conference room of 278 Main St. in Greenfield. If interested in getting involved, please respond to Prevention and Intervention Specialist, Sarah Stayman at 413-774-1194 ext. 117 or sstayman@frcog.org.

Brochures, palm cards and posters about the MassHealth smoking cessation benefit are available through Brian Eno at Community Action (beno@communityaction.us) or the Community Coalition for Teens (rstoler@frcog.org).



Monitoring High Blood Pressure

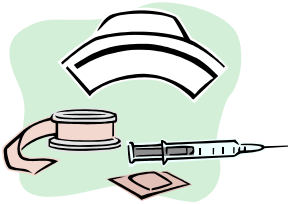
When blood pressure stays elevated over time, it's an important health issue. High blood pressure causes hardening of arterial walls and increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and blindness. Readings over 120/80 could indicate a problem, and if you have readings 140/90 or higher you should seek medical attention.

Risk of high blood pressure increases with age and is a condition that most people will have at some point in their lives, but it can be controlled. These steps should be taken to decrease risk and lower high blood pressure:

- maintain a healthy weight;
- be physically active;

- eat more fruits, vegetables, and lowfat dairy foods;
- choose and prepare foods with less salt and sodium; and
- if you drink alcoholic beverages, drink in moderation.

For more information and resources on blood pressure visit www.nhlbi.nih.gov, written originally for the Town of Conway newsletter by Public Health Nurse Lisa White, RN, BSN, serving the Towns of Buckland, Conway, and Deerfield through contract with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, at 413-774-3167 ext. 106 or lwhite@frcog.org. For information on joining the Regional Public Health Nursing Program contact Regional Preparedness Program Manager, Ben Wood at 413-774-3167 ext. 117 or bwood@frcog.org.



How Do Towns Receive Funding for Disaster-Related Costs?

Most Franklin County Towns have the infrastructure in place to handle emergencies through the creation of the Franklin County Regional Emergency Planning Committee. But when the local resources become exhausted in responding to or recovering from an emergency, the event begins to cascade; first into a disaster and, in some cases, the event reaches a level of catastrophe. The table below summarizes the differences between emergencies, disasters and catastrophes:

| Emergencies | Disasters | Catastrophes |
|--|---|---|
| Impacts localized | Impacts widespread, severe | Extremely large physical impacts |
| Response mainly local | Response inter-jurisdictional, but bottom up | Response requires federal initiative, pro-active response |
| Standard procedures used | Disaster plans put into effect, but challenges remain | Massive challenges exceed those envisioned in standard plans |
| Vast majority of response resources unaffected | Extensive damage to and disruption of key services | Emergency response system paralyzed at local and state levels |
| Public generally not involved in response | Public extensively involved in response | Public extremely involved in response |
| No significant recovery challenges | Major recovery challenges | Long-term effects with massive recovery challenges |

What is the Role of Planning in Disaster Response?

When local response resources become exhausted local governments often need to turn to the private sector for help. Private businesses can make available many resources in the form of equipment, expertise, and experience. In order to ensure that local governments can pay for these services, municipal officials need to follow procurement guidelines defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). If done properly local governments will qualify for funding. Pre-disaster planning is essential because it identifies the additional resources that are available to communities and the federal and state funding protocols. An important pre-disaster planning function is to ensure that local officials are trained in how to conduct the proper disaster accounting and reporting. The ability to respond to disaster events rests solely with local governments and the effectiveness of the professionals and volunteers available to them.

What Happens After a Local Disaster Declaration ?

When a local government contacts MEMA to request assistance, they will respond by dispatching a field official and begin the Preliminary Damage Assessment. Once a disaster is declared, local governments and other eligible applicants will be encouraged to submit a Request for Public Assistance form. Upon receipt of this request, a Public Assistance Coordinator (PAC) will be appointed to work with each applicant to

receive funding. It is important to note that the process of funding described here is for public impacts due to disaster events. Private residences and businesses have a different and usually parallel damage assessment process.

What Qualifies as a State Disaster?

For an emergency to escalate into a disaster declaration, FEMA requires the State to meet a statewide dollar threshold. For Massachusetts to qualify for Federal Funds, the damage indicators must determine that response and recovery costs exceed \$1.22 per capita statewide or \$7.8 million. Once the Statewide threshold is met, each affected county would need to meet their own individual dollar threshold of \$3.05 per capita. This threshold for a disaster declaration in Franklin County would be \$218,181 (pop 71,535).

What Happens if it is a Local Disaster?

There are many examples of localized events that go beyond a local government's resources and yet do not meet the thresholds to qualify for funding. Recent examples in Franklin County include the 2006 microburst in Wendell and the 2007 ice storm in Heath. In these cases, local governments may ask their state legislators to help them secure state reimbursement for public damages. MEMA has in the past administered State assistance approved by State Legislators (no FEMA involvement); and no dollar threshold is set for this type of funding. Should the legislation be approved, MEMA will advise the communities of the available state funding and will conduct an applicants briefing explaining the reimbursement process. Because the legislation is approved for a finite dollar amount, each community has reserved the estimated amount they originally reported. All expenses are certified and reimbursed by MEMA. Any overrun amounts are held until all projects for all communities are complete and if there is a balance remaining in the appropriation they may reimburse them for their cost overruns at that time. For Questions about Disaster Reimbursement contact Debris Management Coordinator, Michael Pattavina at 413-774-3167 ext. 115 or mpattavina@frcog.org.

For more information on the FRCOG's Emergency Preparedness Program go to: www.frcog.org/services/emergency/index.php



Expedited Local Permitting

In August 2006, Massachusetts General Law Chapter 43D was enacted for the purpose of supporting an expedited and streamlined municipal permit process for targeted economic development projects. For towns that choose to enact Expedited Local Permitting, they will have access to technical assistance to facilitate the implementation of a transparent and efficient process for municipal permitting of priority development sites. Eligible "Priority Development Sites" are sites that have been identified and approved by the town with permission by the property owner(s), and are in a commercial or industrial zone and can accommodate the development or re-development of a building(s) at least 50,000 square feet. In addition, participating towns will have priority consideration for select grant programs for state-approved Priority Development Sites, online state marketing of the sites, and the ability to collect special fees for Priority Development Sites' permit applications. Through a state grant, the FRCOG will provide technical assistance to up to six communities to help towns identify possible Priority Development Sites and apply for a Technical Assistance Grant from the state for up to \$150,000.

At the same time, the FRCOG has been working with the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies to conduct a survey about the local permitting process. These survey results,

along with additional information gathered through research and focus groups, will be used to develop a “best practices” guide that municipalities can use as a tool to make permitting more predictable, consistent, and efficient without compromising local jurisdiction or encouraging imprudent projects. The survey was mailed to every Select Board and Mayor, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission and Board of Health in Franklin County in late March. More information about Chapter 43D will be available at upcoming public information sessions to be held on May 8 at 5:30 pm in the Orange Town Hall, and May 16 at 5:30 pm in the Buckland Town Hall. A presentation will also be featured at the May 17th CEDS Committee meeting at 6:15 pm in the FRCOG Planning Department Conference Room. For more information, please contact Economic Development Planner, Jessica Atwood at 413-774-1194 ext. 101 or jatwood@frcog.org or Director of Planning & Development, Peggy Sloan at 413-774-1194 ext. 105 or psloan@frcog.org. For additional information about Chapter 43D, go online to: www.mass.gov/mpro.

Connect Wireless Beta Test Program

This summer, Berkshire Connect and Pioneer Valley Connect will implement a test of wireless broadband network technologies in three areas unserved by DSL or cable television broadband. Through a very competitive application process, nine areas in Western Massachusetts were selected as semi-finalists for consideration. In Franklin County, areas in Leverett, Leyden, New Salem and Warwick were identified as semi-finalists. The three areas selected as finalists for the Wireless Beta Test Program will be announced on May 14, 2007. The goal of the Program is to evaluate the process and technologies to create wireless networks in underserved areas of the region, and share the lessons learned with other underserved areas. In addition, the results of the Beta Test Program will be incorporated into the Underserved Communities Project, an effort to build a sustainable, robust broadband network throughout Western Massachusetts. Program updates will be available on the Connect websites

(www.pioneervalleyconnect.org and www.bconnect.org). The Program is part of The Underserved Communities Project, funded by a grant from the John Adams Innovation Institute of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative. The Pioneer Valley Connect Steering Committee is co-chaired by FRCOG Executive Director Linda Dunlavy and has staff support by FRCOG Economic Development Planner Jessica Atwood.



Purchasing Department 2007-2008 Cooperative Highway Services

The Cooperative Fuel Bids are due in at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, May 7, 2007. The bids will be collated and the information sent/faxed to all participants on the same day. These contracts will be effective July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008.

Most of the cooperative Highway Bids have been issued. They are due on Friday, May 18, 2007. Some are due in at 11:00 a.m. and others are due in at 1:00 p.m. All information will be sent to participants the following week. Participants need to respond back to me quickly so Awards can be issued and contracts can be drawn up, signed, and be in place and effective for July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008.

I want to thank all the communities who continue to participate in any of the FRCOG Cooperative Bids and Contracts. For other information or questions, please contact Chief Procurement Officer, Margaret Sullivan at 413-774-3167 ext. 104 or bids@frcog.org.



A Test of Franklin County's 24/7 Public Health Emergency Response

Background:

Every year the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) issues a set of objectives geared towards building public health emergency preparedness at the local level. The Mohawk Area Public Health Coalition (MAPHCO) is the regional entity that responds to these objectives with assistance from FRCOG staff. MAPHCO represents all Boards of Health in Franklin County with the exception of Orange and New Salem and including Williamsburg and Goshen in Hampshire County. One critical objective that DPH is requiring of all 351 municipalities is to improve their BOH's ability to communicate with their response partners (fire, police, EMS, state DPH, etc.) on a 24/7 basis. During a simulated outbreak of Bacterial Meningitis at UMass, Amherst on April 12th, Franklin County's Board of Health response capacity was tested for the first time. Parallel efforts were underway for Medical Reserve Corps units (see the article on the Franklin County MRC in this newsletter) and BOHs across Western Mass.

Emergency Communication for Public Health Emergencies in Franklin County:

Two communication systems were tested in this drill. The first is an internet-based system developed by MDPH called the HHAN (Health and Homeland Alert Network). It alerts all of its registered members when a significant threat to public health emerges. The second system tested is unique to Franklin County. This second system relies on a central police/fire dispatch (Shelburne Control for most towns but also including Northampton, Greenfield and Montague) alerting a 24/7 contact at the town level who then delivers an emergency message to the town health board. MAPHCO and FRCOG staff developed this alternate system for member towns because of a real concern that the HHAN couldn't provide reliable communication due to challenges like spotty cell phone coverage, lack of high-speed



internet access, and part-time volunteer health board members who might not be reachable due to family and full-time job responsibilities.

Preparing for the Drill:

FRCOG staff visited town health boards prior to the drill to assess each town's state of "health emergency readiness" and to identify who in town (fire, police, other?) could relay emergency messages to the board at any time of the day. One of the most positive things to emerge from the pre-drill training process was the dialogue that emerged in many towns between the Board of Health, town emergency manager, fire/EMS, police, and town elected officials. Many Boards of Health also became much more aware of the numerous mandates being required of them by MDPH and recognized that a great deal would need to be done to meet such high standards.

Drill day – April 12th:

Drill day was April 12th and it saw emergency messages being sent simultaneously thru the HHAN and the dispatch systems. A majority of our towns received these messages and logged their arrival. All of our towns were required to report on how they would handle an outbreak of bacterial meningitis in their town. A few of our towns took the additional step of contacting their emergency managers and discussing whether or not an outbreak of this magnitude would require the opening of the town EOC. The City of Greenfield performed a third task by communicating with regional hospital resources in order to assess whether a surge of patients in need of hospitalization needed to be managed.

The logs we received from Franklin County towns indicate a very positive success rate of less than 30 minutes from receipt of an alert to contacting all necessary response persons. Twenty-two of the 26 towns served by MAPHCO were able to achieve this standard. An interesting finding was that while both the HHAN and dispatch worked fairly well, there were some delays between the time when HHAN messages were sent and when these messages were received by health board members. Interestingly, the success rate mentioned above was higher than that experienced

by other county coalitions in Western Mass. We think the redundancy of the dispatch system helped to fill in the holes when HHAN messages were delayed or could not get through.

Findings and the future

What ultimately emerged from the drill process was:

- We identified a need for more drills (a July one has been scheduled) to further refine the communication process and to work out some minor glitches.
- We now know that our dispatch system will work better next time and, more importantly, in a real emergency, if we tone out the entire fire or police department instead of relying on one 24/7 town-level contact.
- The pre-drill process made it clear to FRCOG staff that more education and training initiatives are needed to provide support to town board members and service providers. We are now working on providing a number of trainings (ICS/NIMS, Isolation & Quarantine, disease investigation, etc.) as well as an easy-to-understand communicable disease action guide to all boards in the near future.

What's going on with the Franklin County Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) and Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)?



The Franklin County MRC is continuing to develop organizationally. On April 12, 2007 they participated in a test of the Health & Homeland Alert Network, this is a secure web based application interfaced with a wide range of devices (e.g. pager, fax, phone, email, wireless). We have incorporated the volunteers into this alert system so that in the event of an emergency they can be easily and rapidly sent a response request. During the test we had a 50% response rate (a higher rate, it turns out, than the

other MRC units piloting this system). As it turned out, this was a timely drill because on Monday, April 16, 2007, at the request of the Greenfield Emergency Manager, a real HHAN alert was sent out to the MRC asking for help to open a "precautionary shelter" due to the flood water situation. We had 19 volunteers respond to the school (6 MRC, 13 CERT, of which 3 had HAM radios and communicated with the EOC). After review of the water situation it was decided that no evacuations were needed but it was wonderful to have the response and know that the cadre of CERT and MRC volunteers are there, ready, and willing to help out their communities when called! For more information on joining the MRC or requesting service please contact: Franklin County CERT & MRC Volunteer Coordinator, Dawn M. Josefski, EMT-P, at work 413-586-6065, cell 413-575-3558, home 978-544-5279 or email: dawn@josefski.com.

16th Annual Youth Conference a great success

The Community Coalition for Teens' 16th Annual Youth Conference, "Challenge Yourself, Change the Future," was a great success on April 11 at Greenfield Middle School. Over 350 youth and adults attended. Students from all Franklin County and North Quabbin public school districts participated, as well as youth from Holyoke, Amherst and Northampton. Our gracious hosts at Greenfield Middle School accommodated the conference while simultaneously having a full school day in session.

The Franklin County Technical School Conflict Resolution Theater Group kicked off the day by performing a play based on the realities of high school life, with a facilitated discussion afterwards. Participants attended two workshops each, with 26 from which to choose. Most of the workshops were organized by young people. The day closed with a slide show of the day and prize drawing by the Quit Using Advertising to Sell Cigarettes to Kids (QUACK), which had done a Social Norms Campaign throughout the day. This group, a Community Action youth program, used

stickers to inform participants of the positive norm that most area students do not smoke cigarettes.

Results of conference evaluations show that the vast majority of participants learned from their workshops and plan to take action as a result of having attended. The Tech School performance also received rave reviews.

All operating costs for the youth conference were generated through conference fees and private donations. The Community Coalition for Teens wishes to thank the following generous donors: Western Massachusetts Out-of-School Time (WestMOST) Network, Rice Oil, Tobacco Free Network, China Gourmet, Mesa Verde, The Peoples' Pint, Small Corporation, Bank of Western Mass, Dial Self Teen Services, Franklin/Hampshire Employment and Training Consortium, Channing Bete Company, Maria and Richard Rodman, Buckland Management, Connecticut River Internists, Cohn and Company Real Estate, Dahna Virgilio Real Estate, Greenfield Cooperative Bank, Melanson Heath and Co., Patricia Vincent and friends, Mark Berson, The Brick House Community Resource Center, All About Beads, Joan Vander Vliet, and Anonymous.

For the 2008 Youth Conference, CCT is contacting principals to identify a school host. Interested school districts may contact Youth Development Programs Coordinator, Rachel Stoler at 774-1194 ext. 116 or rstoler@frcog.org.



Draft Pioneer Valley Clean Energy Plan is available for review and comment

Want to do something about global warming? Own a home, small business or farm and want to get some ideas about how to cut down on your energy costs? Maybe you want your town to save on electricity and heat. Or, maybe you're a town official, sustainable energy advocate, or a concerned citizen interested in learning about the public policies that can help leverage positive changes in creating a sustainable energy future for us all.

The Draft Pioneer Valley Clean Energy Plan has the information and inspiration you need to take action in your community and your region. The Clean Energy Plan was developed over the past year and a half to help our region's cities and towns, energy experts and advocates work together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2020 and to create new jobs by reducing our energy demand and replacing dirty fossil fuels with clean renewable ones like solar, wind, biodiesel, and heat and power generating biomass-fueled plants. The Clean Energy Plan was developed by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) in collaboration with agencies and organizations involved with clean energy including CoopPower, Massachusetts Division of Energy Resources, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MTC), Clean Water Action, SmartPower, City of Northampton Planning and Community Development, Sustainable Step New England, Center for Ecological Technology, HAP, Inc., Mt. Wachusett Forest and Wood Products Institute, Greenfield Community College, Congressman John Olver's Office, UMASS Renewable Energy Research Lab, and Western Massachusetts Electric Co. In addition, hundreds of people participated in the plan's development through participating in on-line discussions, surveys, and attending face to face meetings and forums.

The Pioneer Valley Clean Energy Plan is available for review on the FRCOG's website

(www.frcog.org) and anyone can submit comments on the plan by June 1, 2007 to Bill Labich (blabich@frcog.org). Please download it, read it, comment on it and endorse it! The Pioneer Valley Clean Energy Plan has been endorsed by the Franklin Regional Planning Board. FRCOG and PVPC will be seeking endorsement of the Clean Energy Plan by every city and town in the three-county region as well as by all of the plan's developers. Both agencies will be seeking funding to implement the Clean Energy Plan and would appreciate hearing from those cities and towns that want to move forward together to help reach our shared clean energy goals!

Massachusetts State Building Code 7th Edition

Effective April 1, 2007 the 7th edition of the Massachusetts State Building Code is available at the State Bookstore, 436 Dwight Street, Room 102, Springfield, MA 01103-1317. This building code is a stand-alone code for One and Two Family Dwellings. There will be a six month transition period where the owner/contractor may choose either the sixth or seventh edition to build by. There will be a space on the permit application to choose the edition. The owner/contractor must use the entire code he/she chooses. Continue to use the 6th edition for other than 1-2 family dwellings. For more information, please contact Building Commissioner, James Hawkins at 413-772-2026 ext. 123 or jhawkins@frcog.org.



Traffic Count Program

In the 16 years since its traffic count program began, the FRCOG has collected traffic count data at over 600 different locations in the 26 Franklin County Communities. The data collected during

that time is contained in a database from which a booklet is produced each year showing the traffic volumes recorded at each location. The latest version of this booklet covering data from 1991 through 2006 is now available for review and download from the Transportation Planning Publications section on the FRCOG Website at www.frcog.org.

The traffic count equipment operated by the FRCOG is used primarily for the purpose of conducting state-requested counts required by our contract with the Massachusetts Highway Department. However, fulfilling this obligation takes only a portion of the traffic counting season, making it possible for us to use the equipment to conduct traffic counts for FRCOG planning studies and fulfill requests from our member towns at no charge during the remainder of the season.

As the threat of snow becomes a distant memory the FRCOG traffic counting season begins. From now through early November, Planning Department Staff will be out on Franklin County roadways installing traffic counting equipment. A typical count installation involves placing two rubber hoses 8ft apart across the roadway and connecting them to a traffic counting unit. Each installation is left in place for at least seven days. The traffic count equipment has the capability of collecting vehicle type and speed data, although contrary to popular myth, the data collected by this equipment is **not** used to ticket speeding drivers. For more information about the traffic count program, contact Transportation Planning Engineer, Keith P. Wilson at 413-774-1194 ext. 109 or kwilson@frcog.org.

