

**Lt. Ray Resendez, Assistant Coordinator to the Office of Emergency
Management for El Paso, Texas**

Lt. Resendez has spent 19 years with the El Paso Fire Department. For the past 3.5 years serving as Assistant Coordinator to the Office of Emergency Management for the City and County of El Paso. Assigned to coordinate, prepare and present emergency management training to emergency response agencies and the general public; coordinate the updating and maintenance of the El Paso City/County Emergency Operations Plan and annexes; Current member of the Local FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force. Chairman of Ad-Hoc Committee to design I-10 Emergency Operation Plan. Vice Chairman of the El Paso County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), Chairman of LEPC sub Committee on Emergency Alert and Notification, and member of the first Responder Preparedness planning Group with the Rio Grande Council of Governments.

El Paso

CITY-COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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Local Officials and First Responders

In 1998 the Domestic Preparedness program was implemented in El Paso, Texas. This program provided training and equipment to better prepare public safety personnel for a chemical, biological, or nuclear terrorist attack. It also allowed for an improved relationship between local, state, and federal agencies. Sharing of resources and training were some of the benefits gained. Locally, we have designed, and had participation in, various terrorism exercises. These exercises included the cooperation of local businesses and the response of local, state and federal agencies and their resources. Many lessons have been learned, especially understanding the various levels of response and areas of responsibility. These exercises have allowed us to practice communication and cooperation in activating and requesting the assistance of resources from state and federal agencies. Most important, training and exercising together has allowed us to better understand local resources, capabilities and limitations related to responding to a terrorism incident.

Communications of threats between agencies at the different levels of government have improved greatly in the past few years. Responsibility should fall on all agencies to conscientiously share information about all types of threats. Locally, the El Paso FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force has been very helpful in coordinating local, state, and federal agencies, and the sharing of information related to threats. Some outreach is necessary to better inform the rural areas, and cooperation should be coordinated to share threat information with our Mexico sister city. The City of El Paso has a population of about 700,000, and our sister city, Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico has a population of approximately 2 million. An estimated 90,000 people cross into the United States through 5 ports of entry on a daily basis. A terrorist event on either side of the border will have a serious impact on both communities.

The funding and availability of state of the art protection and detection equipment has improved greatly, and is a very important part in allowing local responders to improve their response capabilities. The Department of Homeland Defense can assist in broadening the protection and response for first responders by providing assistance in identifying the most current technology in protective and detection equipment. It is important that first responders have the final decision in the selection of equipment that best fits their level of training and response. Larger populated communities are called

upon and requested to assist smaller, less wealthy communities, in the event of a major incident or disaster. Larger urban communities must work with their rural neighbors to insure common training and equipment for a cohesive and coordinated response. In the El Paso area this coordination and cooperation is more complex due to the treatment and care of victims from two neighboring countries. The health issues will be felt throughout both countries, as family members will flee across the border to aide their families.

All members of our community must work together in identifying and mitigating security threats. We must have a commitment from industry, business, local, state, and federal officials to insure awareness and security measures are in place to reduce the vulnerability to the community. Cooperation of all members of the community through training and planning will reduce vulnerable areas. The vigilance, cooperation, and assistance of all public safety agencies in notifying, and educating the public of heightened national threats should be the number one goal in establishing a safer community.