

Planning and Response to Major Natural Disasters

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In 2010 Connecticut updated its Emergency Response Plan to be aligned with the tenets of the National Response Framework. Our new State Response Framework (SRF) was aggressively exercised weekly in 2010 – 2011 and this proved invaluable in the late summer and fall of 2011 when Connecticut was impacted by two major natural disasters in less than two months. The SRF provided the blueprint for the State response to these disasters.

Concurrently our state also conducted counts of trees in the right-of-ways of 7 towns that indicated very high Urban/Wildland interface densities. This result was confirmed by the U.S. Forest Service that ranked Connecticut first in the Nation for Urban/Wildland Interface density. The very high urban/wildland interface density was one of the primary contributing factors in the degree of damage inflicted by both Tropical Storm Irene and the October Nor'easter in 2011. This Interface density remains our primary vulnerability to several natural hazards including Hurricanes, Ice Storms, Wildfires, and freak snowstorms that occur when leaves are still on trees. Only two logical solutions are possible to reduce this vulnerability; a very expensive tree trimming / utility hardening program or an impact by a major hurricane. Sooner or later one of these solutions will be implemented by us or by mother nature.

PRESENTER'S BIO

Sylvia Reeves Dake was born in St. Louis, Missouri and grew up in tornado alley. Strong interests in the sciences eventually lead to a Bachelor of Science degree in Atmospheric Sciences from Cornell University – Ithaca, New York - in 1981. She earned a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies degree from North Carolina State University – Raleigh, North Carolina - in 2006. (This unique graduate program allows students to create individualized programs of study around a topic of their choice. Sylvia's multidisciplinary studies focused on three disciplines – Earth Sciences, International Policy and Geospatial Information Systems.)

Sylvia began her professional career as an officer in the United States Air Force. Her first assignment was as an Environmental Analyst at Scott AFB, IL. Sylvia joined the Air Force to serve her country, begin her career in meteorology and see the world. And yes, her first assignment was 30 minutes from her childhood home. There her work was with

atmospheric analysis software that was used during the United Kingdom/Falkland's war and during testing at White Sands Missile Range. Her second assignment was more oriented toward daily operational forecasting for the deactivation of Titan missiles, a KC 135 Tanker Squadron and a variety of other aviation assets at McConnell Air Force Base in Kansas. She transitioned to Air Force Reserve duty and continued to support both National Guard and Reserve units. Sylvia finally got that long dream-of overseas deployment when she was selected to provide weather support to US and Royal Air Force Harrier jet units for a NATO training exercise at RAF Base Wittering, UK.

Following her military career, Sylvia worked for private meteorological firms and opened her own consulting practice. Work for one firm focused on forecasts for radio and television clients in the Mid-West. She also provided customized local and global forecasts for agriculture, utility companies, highway departments, and shipping interests. Other duties included sourcing specialized weather data sets for clients and the evaluation of transmission and display options for weather data and imagery. For one company, Sylvia created and edited "ON THE FRONT," a monthly weather services newsletter. This publication was designed to educate customers and keep them informed about new developments in meteorology and forecasting products. She was also responsible for sales and customer support to high profile US DOT and DOE agencies, commercial aviation clients, airports, and corporate aviation departments.

When Sylvia moved to Connecticut in 2004 with her family, she volunteered as the Emergency Management Coordinator for the town of Andover, Connecticut. In this very small New England town Sylvia recruited and trained their first Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). As an instructor for this program, Sylvia went on to train hundreds of CERT members for other Connecticut communities. Their activations included H1N1 flu clinic support, local shelter operations and commodities distribution as well as public preparedness education. Local emergency planning was the focus of her position with the town but regional integration opportunities were the key to post storm recovery in 2011. Sylvia was a member of several regional planning and working groups dedicated to coordination and collaboration at that level.

To facilitate these efforts, Sylvia's continuing education and professional development has focused on training in the Incident Command System (ICS) and specialized course work in the public health domain, radiological and hazardous materials emergency response support and mass care.

This past June, Sylvia accepted a position with the State of Connecticut's Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS). Her duties include planning for radiological emergencies with the staff of Millstone Power Station and providing backup for Doug Glowacki. Their detailed weather forecasts for real world events and exercises support the DEMHS staff and help protect the citizens of Connecticut.

Sylvia's hobbies include tennis, downhill skiing, attending her son's high school football and track games (he's the coach), viewing science fiction movies with her daughter when she's home from college and exploring historical sites with her husband. Sylvia and her husband are also training Layla – a sixty pound, seven month old, Blonde Lab and Great Pyrenees mix puppy.