

## **Damascus Emergency Preparedness Team Meeting of 1 November**

This was the first meeting of DEPT since 28 September, as the CERT training was held in Damascus on Mondays during the month of October and many DEPT members attended that training.

A report on a meeting with Gordon Aoyagi was given by George Moy. Mr. Aoyagi is the designated director of the new Montgomery County Department of Homeland Security and the meeting was arranged by Catherine Matthews of the Upcounty Service Center. There was a briefing on DEPT and the Good Heart Program and discussions on how the County Government might help. While the County response was favorable and complimentary regarding the citizens of Damascus, Mr. Aoyagi pointed out that with the new department just established, the County was in the middle of jurisdictional reorganization, which made it difficult for the County to respond in a timely manner. Also, there were concerns about liability issues to be considered.

A report was given by Frank Jacob about the recently completed CERT training. An article on the Damascus CERT training had already appeared in the Gazette, pointing out that this was the first instance of a community coming together to take the training in the community rather than at the Fire academy. Almost 1 in every 3 CERT trained personnel in Montgomery County is now a DEPT member.

A report was given by Chief Darren Long of the Damascus Volunteer Fire Department and Ray Gustin regarding the Siren exercise. The long dormant siren at the firehouse was sounded at noon on Saturday and DEPT members were on alert to listen and report on area coverage and effectiveness. In fact, the sound was not as loud as hoped nor the coverage as widespread. Chief Long attributed this to the very low ceiling on that day. It was resolved that the siren should be sounded every Saturday at noon and that inquiries be made regarding grant funding and whether or not any of the old Thunderbolt sirens that used to be used for civil defense could be obtained. The purpose of the siren is simply to alert the community that an emergency or disaster is in progress and that they should turn on local media for information. The recent tornado outbreak was discussed as a reason for making the siren operational again.

A Montgomery County Citizens Corps Council Meeting was held earlier in the day and attended by the DEPT Chair, who reported that the various County employees attending from the various departments and County service centers were briefed on DEPT and the Good Heart Program.

A Communications Committee report was given by Doug Noble regarding the new Digital Emergency Broadcast System the County is attempting to implement. It is in early stages and more info will be made available as more is known.

Molly Lew of the Salvation Army had to leave town suddenly and was not able to attend the meeting and give her presentation.

The Rotary Club of Damascus has volunteered the use of its web site for DEPT development and use. Webmaster Collingwood Harris (collingwoodh@comcast.net) was present to give a brief explanation and take questions. The purpose of the site is to explain the DEPT mission, archive the DEPT reports and work product, and provide educational links and information for community use. George Moy, Doug Noble, and Sam Sumner were tasked to provide content and oversight. It can be found at [www.damascusrotary.org/dept](http://www.damascusrotary.org/dept)

Chair announced that calls were again made to Matt Swinburn of the Red Cross and messages left regarding his promise to get back to DEPT with a proposal for training. There continues to be no response and calls are not returned.

It was announced that DEPT members were invited to attend a Montgomery County Volunteer Center briefing on the role of volunteers in Montgomery County emergency preparedness on Saturday morning, 6 Nov. This will include a presentation by Jim Resnick, Program Manager of the Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management.

Future goals were discussed and the strong consensus was that further training was important. Accordingly, Frank Jacob volunteered to chair a Training Committee. The necessity of timely communications with DEPT members was again brought up and the necessity of a telephone tree discussed.

Discussion commenced on the timetable for future meetings, and it was decided that DEPT would meet every first and third Monday of the month.