

APWA Washington REPORT

August/September 2004

TRANSPORTATION

TEA-21 Reauthorization

CONFEREES MEET, THEN DEPART CAPITOL WITHOUT FUNDING AGREEMENT

In the hectic last week before the start of the Congressional August Recess, transportation reauthorization bill conferees met one last time just two days before departing Washington, DC in an unsuccessful effort to try to reach an agreement on a funding level for the stalled six-year highway and transit proposal.

Although no agreement was reached at the July 22, 2004, meeting, Representative Bill Thomas (R-CA), chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, responded to an earlier Senate offer with a House Republican conferee counter-offer of \$299 billion over six years, of which \$284 billion would be guaranteed.

The proposal followed two earlier offers from the Senate side. Senate conferees first voted to write a bill at \$318 billion, with \$301 billion in guaranteed spending, as approved by the full Senate in February 2004, and then presented the proposal as their offer to House conferees. House conferees responded that they needed time to develop a response. In the absence of a House counter-offer, Senator James Inhofe (R-OK), chair of the conference committee, later offered to fund a bill at \$301 billion with \$289 billion in guaranteed spending.

Achieving an agreement on a total funding level has been the major impediment to the conference committee negotiations. Conferees have been meeting since early June to reconcile House and Senate versions of bills to reauthorize TEA-21, which expired September 30, 2003. The administration has issued veto warnings against both the \$318 billion Senate-passed bill and the \$284-billion House-passed bill. The Administration's proposal would provide \$256 billion over six years.

Thomas indicated that the Administration would support the House Republicans' counter-offer when he presented it to conferees, but the Administration has not yet formally endorsed the proposal. After the counter-offer was presented, conference committee staff was asked to review the proposal over the August Recess.

A funding agreement before the August Recess was seen as critical to improving the chances that conferees could finish a bill sometime after they returned in September. To date, only a handful of non-controversial provisions in both bills have been reconciled. Many policy and program decisions facing conferees are contingent upon a total funding agreement, including minimum funding guarantees to the states. Many states are urging an increase, from the current minimum 90.5 percent return on the share of gas taxes paid, to a minimum 95 percent return.

Since the expiration of TEA-21, federal transportation programs have been funded by temporary funding extensions. The latest continues federal highway program funding authority through September 24, 2004 and federal transit program funding through September 30. When Congress returns from its recess it will have about three weeks to complete its work before another extension becomes necessary. *For more information, contact Jim Fahey in APWA's Washington Office at 202-4098-9541 or jfahey@apwa.net.*

INSIDE YOU'LL FIND

TRANSPORTATION contd.--**P2:** Transportation Appropriations, MUTCD, Americans With Disabilities Act; **P3:** Pipeline Safety, Historic Preservation Regional Operations Planning; **P4:** ENVIRONMENT--EPA Appropriations, Water Emergency Response Plans, Stormwater; **P5:** Drinking Water, Awards Program, Runoff Solution; **P6:** Environmental Solutions Library, Wastewater Security, Drinking

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Transportation Appropriations

HOUSE PANEL APPROVES HIGHWAY FUNDING INCREASE, TRANSIT FUNDING CUTS



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Before the start of the August Recess, the House Appropriations Committee approved a fiscal year 2005 spending measure that would increase funding for federal highway programs by \$1 billion over current level, but would reduce funding for federal transit programs by \$16 million.

The Transportation-Treasury Appropriations bill totals \$89.9 billion. Funding total for the US Department of Transportation (US DOT) is \$60.1 billion which includes the federal highway program at \$34.6 billion for the next fiscal year, the level set in the House proposal to reauthorize TEA-21, and provides \$7.25 billion for the transit program.

In addition, the measure would fund the Airport Improvement Program at \$3.5 billion, \$100 million more than current funding, and it would provide \$102 million for the Essential Air Service program.

The bill has not been acted on by the full House. On the Senate side, the Senate Transportation-Treasury Appropriations Subcommittee has not yet considered its version of the spending measure. With a limited number of legislative days available when Congress returns from the August Recess, it is widely expected that many appropriations bills will be folded into an omnibus measure.

MUTCD

AMENDMENTS TO INCLUDE TRAFFIC SIGN RETROREFLECTIVITY

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is seeking comments to proposed amendments to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) for Streets and Highways. The amendments relate to methods to maintain traffic sign retroreflectivity.

The proposed maintenance methods would establish a basis for improving nighttime visibility of traffic signs to promote safety, enhance traffic operations, and facilitate comfort and convenience for all drivers. The proposed changes would be designated as Revision No. 2 to the 2003 Edition of the MUTCD.

Comments must be received on or before October 28, 2004. For more information contact Peter J. Hatzi, Office of Safety Design at 202-366-8036 or Raymond Cuprill, Office of the Chief Counsel at 202-366-0791.

Americans with Disabilities Act

ACCESS BOARD ISSUES NEW GUIDELINES FOR ACCESSIBLE DESIGN

The U.S. Access Board announced the release of new design guidelines that cover access for people with disabilities under the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The guidelines update access requirements for a wide range of facilities in the public and private sectors covered by the law.

The Board's guidelines detail how accessibility is to be achieved in new construction and alterations and provide specifications for various building elements and spaces, including entrances, ramps, parking, restrooms and telephones, among others. The new design document is the culmination of a comprehensive, decade-long review and update of the Board's ADA Accessibility Guidelines, which were first published in 1991.

The updated guidelines are based largely on recommendations from an advisory committee the Board established for this purpose, representing a cross-section of stakeholders. As part of the update, the Board also revised its guidelines for federal buildings under the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) of 1968.

The Board's guidelines serve as the baseline for standards used to enforce the ADA and the ABA. These standards, which are maintained by other Federal agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Justice under the ADA, will be updated according to the new guidelines. It is these standards, not the Board's guidelines, which the public must follow.

Copies of the new ADA and ABA Accessibility Guidelines and other information are available on the Board's website at <http://www.access-board.gov/ada-aba.htm>.

Pipeline Safety

STUDY URGES PIPELINE SAFETY OFFICE TO DEVELOP LAND USE GUIDANCE

A new study recommends that the US Department of Transportation's Office of Pipeline Safety should develop risk-informed guidance for land use near transmission pipelines to help improve public safety.

The study, *Transmission Pipelines and Land Use: A Risk-Based Approach*, was prepared by the Transportation Research Board's Committee for Pipelines and Public Safety, which conducted the study in response to a provision in the Pipeline Safety Act of 2002.

The study concludes that the federal government could serve a useful role by providing leadership in the development of risk-informed land use guidance for application by local, state and federal governments. It points out that judicious land use decisions can reduce the risk associated with transmission pipelines by reducing the probabilities and the consequences of incidents and that it is feasible to use a risk-informed approach to establish land use guidance for application by local governments.

The study recommends that the guidance should address:

- Land use policies affecting the siting, width and other characteristics of new pipeline corridors;
- The range of appropriate land uses, structures and human activities compatible with pipeline rights-of-way; setbacks and other measures that could be adopted to protect structures that are built and maintained near pipelines;
- Model local zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations and planning policies; and model state legislation that could be adopted for land uses near pipelines.

The study also urges that the process for developing risk-informed land use guidance should involve the collaboration of a full range of public and private stakeholders and be conducted by persons with expertise in risk analysis, risk communication, land use management and development regulation.

Historic Preservation

FINAL RULE ADDRESSES COURT DECISIONS ON FEDERAL DETERMINATIONS

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) has amended the regulations setting forth how federal agencies take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties and afford the ACHP a reasonable opportunity to comment, pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

Most of the amendments respond to court decisions which held that the ACHP could not require a Federal agency to change its determinations regarding whether its undertakings affected or adversely affected historic properties, and that Section 106 does not apply to undertakings that are merely subject to State or local regulation administered pursuant to a delegation or approval by a Federal agency.

Other amendments clarify an issue regarding the time period for objections to 'No Adverse Effect' findings and establish that the ACHP can propose an exemption to the Section 106 process on its own initiative, rather than needing a federal agency to make such a proposal.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on properties included, or eligible for inclusion, in the National Register of Historic Places and to afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to comment on such undertakings.

The amendments are effective August 5, 2004. For further information contact the Office of Federal Agency Programs at 202-606-8503.

Regional Operations Planning

TWO COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS AVAILABLE TO DEMONSTRATE CONCEPT

The Federal Highway Administration Offices of Operations and Planning are seeking applications from state, local and/or municipal planning organization to assess, develop and demonstrate the idea of a "Regional Concept for Transportation Operations."

Two cooperative agreements, each for \$200,000 will be available. Applications are due October 15, 2004.

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The demonstration initiative is being undertaken to help take the regional concept from theory into everyday practice. For more information, go to <http://www.epa.gov> and enter the site as a vendor. Select "Find Business Opportunities" and enter DTFH6104RA00006 in either the "Full Text Search" or "Search by Solicitation Number" box 4.

ENVIRONMENT

EPA Appropriations

HOUSE COMMITTEE SLASHES CLEAN WATER STATE REVOLVING FUNDS (SRFs)

On July 23, 2004, the House Appropriations Committee cut Clean Water State Revolving Fund appropriations from \$1.35 billion to \$850 million. Annual funding for that program has been set at \$1.35 billion since 1998.

The Drinking Water SRF would remain at \$845 million, the same as the FY04 allocation and the President's FY 05 request.

Overall, the Committee approved \$7.72 billion for the Environmental Protection Agency in FY05, \$36 million less than the Administration's request of \$7.759 billion.

Both the Bush and Clinton Administrations requested around \$850 million each year for the Clean Water SRF, but Congress has always increased that level to \$1.35 billion.

The Committee also provided \$3.4 billion for state and tribal assistance grants, \$127 million more than the President's request. State environmental grants would be funded at \$1.2 billion, equal to the FY04 level.

The Superfund program receives \$1.3 billion, the same as the FY04 amount.

The full Committee blamed the need for cuts on a lack of adequate funding in a number of areas. Next stop for the legislation is the House floor but a date is uncertain.

For more information contact Heather Doucet in APWA's Washington Office, 202-408-9541 or hdoucet@apwa.net

Water Emergency Response Plans

EPA RELEASES GUIDANCE FOR SMALL/MEDIUM COMMUNITY DRINKING WATER SAFETY

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has released a new report entitled *Emergency Response Plan Guidance for Small and Medium Community Water Systems to Comply with the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002*. The purpose of the report is to provide guidance on developing or revising Emergency Response Plans (ERPs) for small- and medium-sized community (populations between 3,301-99,999) drinking water systems.

An ERP is a documented plan that describes the actions that a Community Water System (CWS) would take in response to various major events. The report is divided in to five sections:

- Before You Begin Developing or Revising Your ERP;
- Emergency Response Plan—Eight Core Elements;
- Putting Your ERP Together and ERP Activation;
- Action Plans; and
- Next Steps.

A copy of the report is at http://www.epa.gov/safewater/security/pdfs/guide_small_medium_erp.pdf

Stormwater

EPA HOSTS WORKSHOPS FOR IN-DEPTH STORMWATER PHASE II TRAINING

EPA is holding workshops for city and county stormwater managers called "Getting In Step With Phase II." Participants in these two day workshops receive in-depth training on several of the Phase II minimum measures, including education, outreach and public involvement, illicit discharge detection and elimination, and construction and post-construction.

The first workshop will be September 16-17, 2004 in Salem, OR followed by November 9-11 and again November 10-12 in Reno, NV. For more information, visit <http://www.epa.gov/npdes/gettinginstepwithphase2>.

Drinking Water

EPA PLANS WORKSHOP TO RE-EVALUATE LEAD, COPPER RULE

After recent revelations of high lead levels in the District of Columbia's drinking water, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) August 10, 2004, announced a review of public notification and education requirements in the regulation of lead in drinking water.

The agency will hold an "expert panel" by invitation workshop September 14-15, 2004, in Philadelphia to help determine if additional guidance or revision is needed for the Lead and Copper Rule of 1991. The panel will review the rule and spend time specifically on the notification and communication aspects.

The public was only made aware of the high lead levels after *The Washington Post* ran a story on the situation. The D.C. Water and Sewer Authority and EPA Region III were criticized for failure to notify the public of the crisis.

The workshop will involve discussion regarding effective public notification campaigns on a national level. The agency will also ask experts their opinion as to whether an additional guidance or revision of the ruling is necessary.

Awards Program

INNOVATIONS IN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AWARDS COMPETITION OPEN

Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation is now accepting applications from cities and counties for the 2005 "Innovations in American Government Awards," given annually to programs that serve as examples of creative and effective government at its best. Award winners are chosen on the basis of their novelty, effectiveness, significance, and transferability.

Every year, the Innovations Program recognizes five government initiatives, and each winner receives a \$100,000 grant. By offering the recognition and grants, the Innovations Program serves as a catalyst for transforming creative and effective ideas into best practices throughout the nation and around the world. Applications are due by September 15, 2004. For more information, click on the following URL: <http://www.lgean.org/html/whatsnew.cfm?id=792>.

Runoff Solution

SEATTLE STORMWATER PROGRAM AN INNOVATIONS AWARD WINNER

The City of Seattle, Washington was recently named an Innovation in American Government Award winner by the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University for its natural drainage system program as a solution to the problem of stormwater runoff from development.

Like cities throughout the country, Seattle struggled with the affects of runoff from impervious surfaces including rooftops, streets and parking lots which do not allow rainwater to seep into soil. Consequently, great volumes of water flow quickly into Seattle's creeks—a significant part of the city's drainage system. This problem forced Seattle to look for solutions throughout its urban watershed and in areas far beyond the stream channel itself.

The city developed a new technology that emphasizes natural infrastructure rather than traditional pipe and vault systems that quickly convey polluted stormwater to creeks. The design for the Natural Drainage System (NDS) uses plants, trees, vegetated swales, stormwater cascades, small wetland ponds and deep, healthy soils as the heart of the NDS. The greenery operates as a living infrastructure that increases in value over time. NDS closely replicates the natural hydrologic process of a forested watershed in its "pre-developed" condition allowing more natural levels of runoff to enter creeks. The hope is that this program will infiltrate and slow stormwater flow, filter and bio-remediate pollutants by soils and plants, increase vegetation, and improve the pedestrian experience.

Innovations in American Government Award winners receive a \$100,000 grant (see previous article) to support replication activities of their significant and creative efforts. Five winners were selected from among fifteen finalists and nearly 1,000 applicants for the award. For additional information on this program, log onto:

<http://www.seattle.gov/util/naturalsystems>

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Environmental Solutions Library

NEW WEB SITE FEATURES CREATIVE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTIONS

EPA has a new Web site offering environmental policies and best practices from countries around the world. The online global library provides links to journals, databases, guidelines, programs and case studies involving innovations in air, toxics, waste and water issues, as well as approaches, such as, sustainable transport, smart growth and industrial ecology. It provides examples of state and local partnerships with other countries and regions that have resulted in creative environmental solutions in the United States. For more information, click on the following URL:

<http://www.lgean.org/html/whatsnew.cfm?id=787>

Wastewater Security

EPA ALLOCATES \$1 MILLION TO REGIONS FOR WASTEWATER SECURITY TRAINING

EPA is allocating \$1 million in FY 2004 funding to the Regions for grants to established state environmental training centers. With this funding, State environmental training centers will be equipped to provide on-site operator training assistance or classroom training on the use of vulnerability assessment tools, emergency response plan development and upgrades, and security system upgrades.

More information can be accessed at <http://www.epa.gov/owm/mab/smcomm/104g/104secur.pdf>.

Drinking Water Disasters Workshops

TRAINING OFFERED ON DRINKING WATER THREAT RESPONSES

Over the past two years the Environmental Protection Agency, in collaboration with the water industry, has created the *Response Protocol Toolbox: Planning for and Responding to Contamination Threats to Drinking Water Systems* (the "Toolbox").

The Toolbox provides extensive guidance to drinking water utilities, laboratories, emergency responders, state drinking water programs, technical assistance providers, public health personnel and law enforcement officials on how to respond to threats or actual incidents of intentional contamination.

To further assist utilities and emergency responders in preparing for threats and potential incidents, EPA is offering a series of 2-day emergency response workshops across the nation. The first day of the workshop will consist of instructional training on emergency response and will include a review of EPA's Response Protocol Toolbox. Day 1 also will include a discussion of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) which describes the nationally accepted protocol for managing public emergencies ranging from accidents and natural disasters to acts of terrorism. The NIMS instruction will focus on the Incident Command System (ICS) and the activation of Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs).

Day 2 of the workshop will be devoted to a detailed tabletop exercise centered on an intentional contamination event of a public water supply. The goal of the exercise is to bring representatives of the key response agencies together to apply the guidance provided during the first day of training. The exercise will involve personnel from water utilities, FBI, local and state police, emergency responders, EPA, state regulatory agencies, state and local health departments, elected officials, and any individuals that would be involved in the response to such an incident.

The workshop is FREE, and 1.6 CEUs are being offered. Registration and location information can be found at <http://www.horsleywitten.com/epa2day/> Dates and times for the first four have been scheduled: Honolulu, HI, October 19-20, 2004; San Juan, PR, November 9-10, 2004; New York, NY, December 15-16, 2004; and Phoenix, AZ, January 11-12, 2005.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT/DISASTER MITIGATION

First Responder Appropriations

BOTH HOUSES APPROVE SPENDING BILLS; DIFFERENCES MUST BE RESOLVED

The House passed a \$33.1 billion FY 2005 Homeland Security spending bill (H.R. 4567) by 400 to 5 after lengthy debate over the distribution formula for homeland security grants.

The Senate Appropriations Committee approved its FY 2005 Homeland Security spending bill as well. It's bill recommends \$32 billion in discretionary spending for the Department of Homeland Security. This is \$896 million more than the President's fiscal year 2005 discretionary spending request and \$2.8 billion more than the fiscal year 2004 enacted level. There is a good chance the differences in the bills will be resolved in September as part of an omnibus package.

H.R. 3266, House Select Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Chris Cox's bill has stalled in the House after referral to the Committees on Transportation and Infrastructure, Judiciary and Energy and Commerce when disagreements over the funding allocations surfaced. It is unlikely that these tensions will be resolved before Congress adjourns this year. APWA sent a letter to Members of the Committees with jurisdiction supporting an all hazards approach that recognizes that all communities must be prepared.

For more information contact Kristina Tanasichuk in APWA's Washington Office 202-408-9541 or ktanasichuck@apwa.net

Search and Rescue Teams

HOUSE CUTS 80 PERCENT OF SEARCH AND RESCUE FUNDING FOR 2005

Funding for the nation's 28 Urban Search and Rescue Task Forces was cut by more than 80 percent and may be forced to curtail activities under fiscal 2005 funding levels proposed by the House of Representatives, task force officials said this week.

Funding for the 28 specialized teams would drop by more than 80 percent, from \$60 million in fiscal 2004 to \$7 million in fiscal 2005, under the Department of Homeland Security appropriations bill, HR 4567, approved by the House last June. The task forces, funded through the department's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), each have about 200 highly trained volunteers. Each task force is split into three teams of about 70 members, allowing rescue operations to work around the clock.

FCC Rules on Interference

DEAL WITH NEXTEL ADOPTED TO RELIEVE RADIO INTERFERENCE IN CRISIS TIMES

Since 9-11 interoperability has been the buzz-word among first responders, and others who were unable to communicate during the terrorist attack. Increasing interference for public safety radio systems operating in the 800 MHz band as wireless companies occupy more and more of the commercial 800 MHz spectrum adjacent to that used by first responders has been identified as a problem.

The FCC has unanimously adopted a plan similar to the "Consensus plan" forwarded by Nextel Communications, one of the companies causing most of the interoperability on the band. Under the plan adopted by the FCC, Nextel will give up its rights to certain licenses in the 800 MHz band and all in the 700 MHz band in exchange for license to operate in two 5 MHz blocks in the 1.9 GHz band. Nextel will also be required to pay "relocation" fees for others it is displacing or having to relocate by its move.

Disability Preparedness

EVACUATING PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CONFERENCE PLANNED

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge is chair of a new Interagency Coordinating Council on Emergency Preparedness for People with Disabilities created to ensure that disabled people are included in preparedness plans.

The Council, and the National Organization for the Disabled will host a conference on preparedness at which, Michele Ohmes, APWA member from Kansas City, MO will speak on evacuating special needs populations. For more information on the conference visit www.nod.org

9-11 Commission

RECOMMENDATIONS RANGE FROM BUDGETING TO CENTRALIZING INTELLIGENCE

The 9-11 Commission has released its report after a 20 month long investigation of the events leading to the September 11th attacks.

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The major recommendations urge Congress and the Administration to:

- Unify the intelligence budget into a single annual appropriation bill and declassify the total budget authority while keeping specific programs secret.
- Create either a bicameral congressional committee on intelligence or establish in each chamber intelligence committees with both authorizing and appropriating powers.
- End term limits on the congressional intelligence panels and shrink membership to foster more accountability.
- Establish permanent Homeland Security committees in the House and Senate.
- Create a cabinet level position of National Intelligence Director to oversee intelligence agencies across the federal government, propose and oversee a unified intelligence budget and serve as the principal intelligence adviser to the president.
- Form a National Counter-terrorism Center as the central office for intelligence gathering, intelligence analysis and counter-terrorism operations.
- Reassign the CIA director to focus solely on the CIA, building its "comparative advantages" in human intelligence and intelligence analysis.
- Accelerate the transition process between administrations so the president's national security team is in place within a month of inauguration.
- Shift responsibility for clandestine and covert operations to the Pentagon from the CIA.

The full report is available on the Commission's website: <http://www.9-11commission.gov/>

Congress has scheduled numerous hearings to evaluate the Commission's recommendations and both President Bush and presidential hopeful Kerry have endorsed the Commission's recommendations. The recommendations on overhauling the nation's intelligence system, including an "intelligence" czar have drawn the most controversy. Some at the Pentagon urge that the recommendations be undertaken slowly and deliberately before shifting responsibilities.

New Head of CIA

PORTER GOSS NOMINATED FOR INTELLIGENCE DIRECTOR

President Bush has nominated Porter Goss (R-FL) as new director of the CIA. Citing Goss as a "reformer" and a force for positive change, the president hailed the Congressman, and Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, as an ideal candidate to lead the agency. Goss was at the center of events in the Congressional investigation surrounding the September 11th terror attacks, spearheading the investigation on possible intelligence-gathering failures prior to the attacks.

Airline Security Leader

ADMINISTRATOR FOR TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (TSA) APPROVED

As expected, the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee gave voice-vote approval to the nomination of Rear Admiral David M. Stone to be administrator of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and assistant secretary of Homeland Security. Stone has been the acting administrator of TSA since last December.

In 2002, following a 28-year Navy career, Stone became the TSA's first security director at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) where he was recognized for his leadership. After leaving LAX in May of 2004, he was summoned to Washington and made TSA's deputy chief of staff. Four months later, he was picked to act as a temporary successor to TSA Administrator James M. Loy, who left to become deputy secretary of Homeland Security.

National Incident Management Systems (NIMS)

WEBSITE UNVEILED TO HELP FIRST RESPONDERS

FEMA has unveiled a website to help first responders and other emergency responders with tools and information to help familiarize them with the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Information is available at www.fema.gov/nims

Contributors to this month's APWA Washington Report are: Beth Denniston, Heather McTavish Doucet, Jim Fahey and Kristina Tanasichuk.

The APWA Washington Report is edited by Beth Denniston

EDITOR'S NOTE: This issue of APWA's Washington Report combines the months of August and September as recesses and the political conventions have delayed activity in Congress and the Administration.