

# **Learning from 911**

## **Lessons for Leaders**

**Richard Sheirer, Senior Vice President**  
**Giuliani Partners, LLC**  
**New York, New York**

**Former Commissioner of Emergency Management  
and Director Homeland Security, City of New York**

# Overview

- Purpose / Objectives
- Background of Richard Sheirer
- Similarities of Cities & Facilities
- Planning
- Preparing
- Practicing
- Executing
- 10 Lessons from events of 2001
- Conclusion

# Purpose

Provide insight and understanding in order to plan, prepare, partner, practice and execute for a major disaster, critical emergency, terrorist attack or events that routinely occur

# Objective

- Provide background on
- the City of New York's approach for dealing with major disasters and the role of the Office of Emergency Services
- Describe key **planning** activities
- Clarify the kind of **preparation** required
- Explain the value of **practicing** for disasters
- Discuss the **execution** process and what happens during a disaster or critical event
- Share lessons learned from the experience

# Background of Richard Sheirer

- Began as dispatcher in New York Fire Department (1967)
- Chief of Dispatch Operations – NYFD (1989)
- Assistant and Deputy Fire Commissioner – NYFD (1992)
- Deputy Commissioner and Chief of Staff to Commissioner Howard Safir – New York City Police Department (1996)
- Director of Mayors Office of Emergency Management (February, 2000)
- First Commissioner of Emergency Management and Director of Homeland Security (December, 2001)

# Similarities

1. All Cities & Facilities share characteristics
2. High profile, high visibility
3. Constant media exposure / attention
4. In many cases tourist driven
5. Symbols of what our "enemies" hate

# Planning

- The Office of Emergency Management
- Why it was created
- How it was organized
- The Police Department and Fire Department of NYC – “Tradition Bound”
- The role of leadership – Rudy Giuliani and others

# Preparing

## Four Key Factors for Success

1. Communication
2. Collaboration
3. Coordination
4. Cooperation

# Preparing (continued)

- Positive interagency relationships
  - Federal, State, Local
- Strong involvement by private sector
- Support from the Public Utilities
  - Water, power, telephone, etc.
- Identifying major issues / concerns / challenges affecting performance

# Practicing

- Importance of practicing for a disaster
- Table Top and functional exercises
- Simulations
- Conducting mock events
- Conducting emergency drills
- Coordinating emergency training
- Debriefing / analyzing results
- Confront and deal with personal / professional / institutional differences

# Executing

- The experience of 9/11
- The experience of the NYC Anthrax attacks, October 2001
- The experience of the crash of Flight 587, November 12, 2001
- What worked / what went right
- What didn't work / what when wrong

# 10 Lessons from the events in 2001

1. Think the unthinkable / think like the enemy – “diabolical, devious, distasteful”
2. Factor in for Murphy’s Law
3. Appreciate that Catastrophic events don’t recognize “TURF”
4. Accept politics over reason / science
5. Be prepared for the knucklehead factor

# 10 Lessons (continued)

6. Value / encourage strong leadership
7. Rely on your frames of reference
8. Appreciate the need for redundancy
9. Recognize importance of communication
10. Commit to relentless preparation / practice

# Conclusion

- America is a major terrorist target
- They will likely strike something unlikely
- Natural disasters / events will pose greater threats
- "We" can never let our guard down
- First responders / everyone has to be better prepared
- Planning, Preparing, Practicing contributes to prevention