The Need for Unity of Command at the Local Level from the Planning Phase to Execution

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All Hazards Planning

- Public safety agencies have been planning and preparing utilizing the all hazards approach for quite some time.
- In some agencies, a disconnect still exists between divisions operating within the same jurisdiction.
- The same disconnect also exists in some agencies which are dependent upon mutual aid for some level of support.

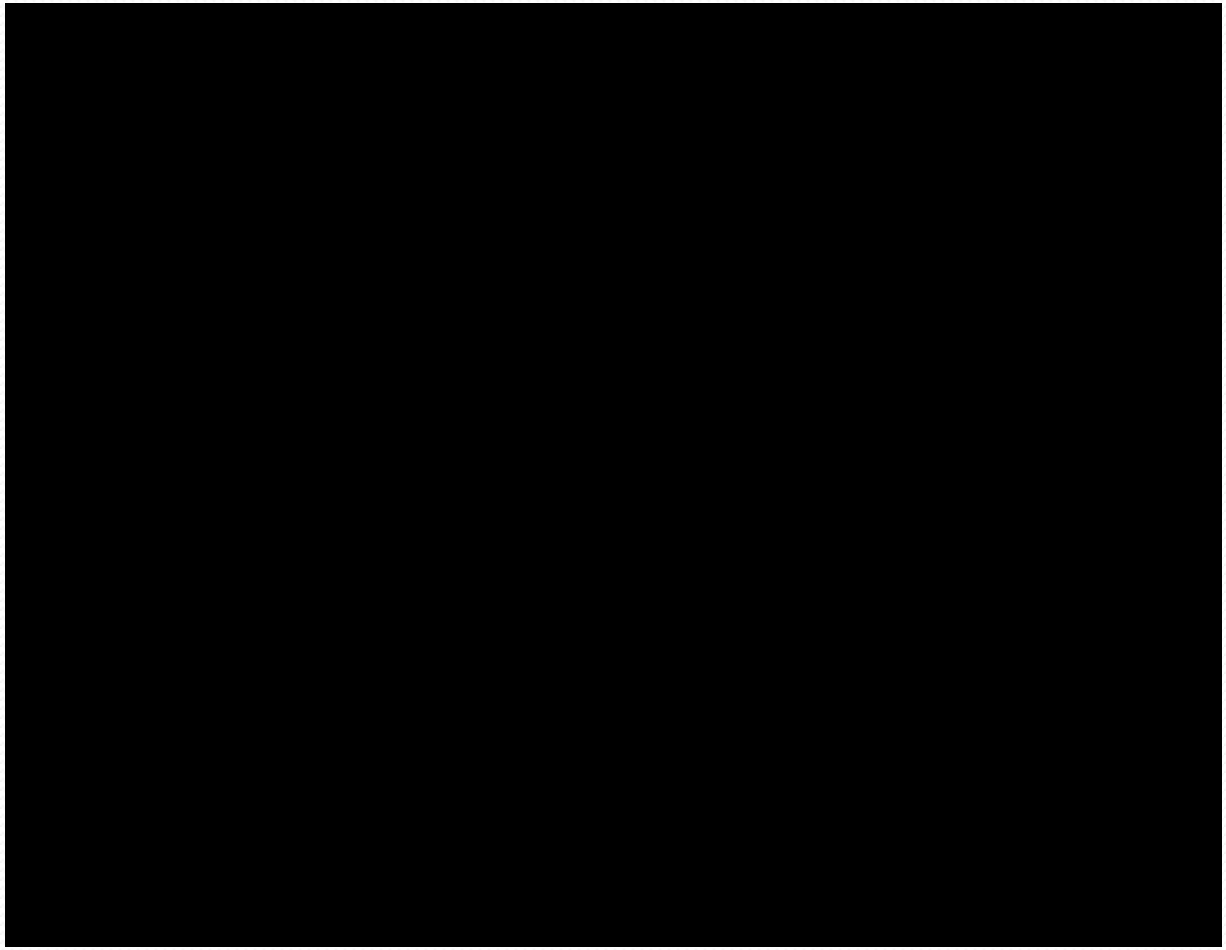
Poor Planning

All Hazards Planning

- An agency should conduct their planning for an event based on best practices
- It's ok to steal someone else's idea
- It might be better than yours
- Planning should include a written directive(s) or a strategy
- It should also consist of, at the very least, a tabletop
- Ideally, an agency should follow the tabletop with a walk-thru, and then a full-scale drill

All Hazards Planning

- One of the primary issues in efficiently preparing, responding, and recovering from a catastrophic event is the lack of ability to play nice with another agency
- Inability to play nice is usually driven by ego
- Another issue is the failure to conduct a drill on the subject
- A drill will not only display what you are doing right, it will highlight what needs improvement



Unity of Command

- Unity of Command is not new to larger agencies which have historically experienced catastrophic disasters.
- The term Unity of Command is a military term which recognizes the existence of a single commander with the requisite authority to direct all forces in pursuit of a unified purpose.

ICS vs. Unity of Command

- Operationally, the concept of having a single commander is not unlike the Incident Command System. ICS, as we are aware, is a detailed, highly structured concept for responding to a catastrophic incident.
- Unfortunately, the ICS Commander often finds him/herself in that position without having the opportunity to have overseen the plan which is driving the operational action.

Unity of Effort

- Unity of Effort, which is simply de-confliction or the reduction of duplication of effort, is achieved through Unity of Command.
- Unity of Effort through Unity of Command is one of the Five Key Principles in the National Response Framework.

Five Key Principles in the National Response Framework

- ***Engaged partnership*** means that leaders at all levels collaborate to develop shared response goals and align capabilities. This collaboration is designed to prevent any level from being overwhelmed in times of crisis.
- ***Tiered response*** refers to the efficient management of incidents, so that such incidents are handled at the lowest possible jurisdictional level and supported by additional capabilities only when needed.
- ***Scalable, flexible, and adaptable operational capabilities*** are implemented as incidents change in size, scope, and complexity, so that the response to an incident or complex of incidents adapts to meet the requirements under ICS/NIMS management by objectives. The ICS/NIMS resources of various formally defined resource types are requested, assigned and deployed as needed, then demobilized when available and incident deployment is not longer necessary.
- ***Unity of effort through unified command*** refers to the ICS/NIMS respect for each participating organization's chain of command with an emphasis on seamless coordination across jurisdictions in support of common objectives. This seamless coordination is guided by the "Plain English" communication protocol between ICS/NIMS command structures and assigned resources to coordinate response operations among multiple jurisdictions that may be joined at an incident complex.
- ***Readiness to Act***: "It is our collective duty to provide the best response possible. From individuals, households, and communities to local, tribal, State, and Federal governments, national response depends on our readiness to act."[2]

Case Study # 1: Township of Springfield, NJ Active Shooter Plan

- 1 Civilian Public Safety Director
- No plan on how to prepare, respond, and recover from an Active Shooter event
- 40 Member PD
  - PD had minimal individual training on response
- 20 Member FD
  - FD were all EMTs with one tactical medic
  - No idea of their role in an active shooter
- 2 Member OEM plus
  - 30 Member Auxiliary PD under direct control of OEM
- 30 Member Volunteer FAS

Case Study # 1 (continued)

- Pre-planning: The Police OIC, the Fire Chief, and the civilian OEM Coordinator believed they would be in command of their individual agencies, working in different directions.
  - Police OIC (later promoted to Chief), who wanted to be the first person in the building to save people
  - Fire Chief, who wanted nothing to do with anything that would take him out of his comfort zone
  - Civilian OEM Coordinator, who had almost 40 years experience, but did not want to overstep what others considered to be his bounds
- Table Top: Was designed to demonstrate any shortcomings created by a lack of Unified Command. As it progressed, they saw how their narrow view of their own lanes made it impossible to coordinate an actionable response.

Case Study # 1 (continued)

- They made the determination that the OEM Coordinator should be the Commander.
- The Police OIC understood the need for him to remain at a distance to coordinate the LE function
- The Fire Chief understood that without Fire and Rescue, the operation would not be successful
- The next step was a walk-thru drill
- This frustrated everyone because they thought they were locked-on after the table-top

Case Study # 1 (continued)

- The walkthrough drill immediately uncovered what would have been a fatal flaw in the process
- The commander, who was now in place, was able to correct the flaw within 15 minutes
- As the exercise developed, Police, Fire, and EMS all determined ways to make the event more efficient and safe.
- They relayed their ideas to the commander, and those ideas were made part of the plan.

Case Study # 2: FDU Lessons Learned Symposium on Super Storm Sandy

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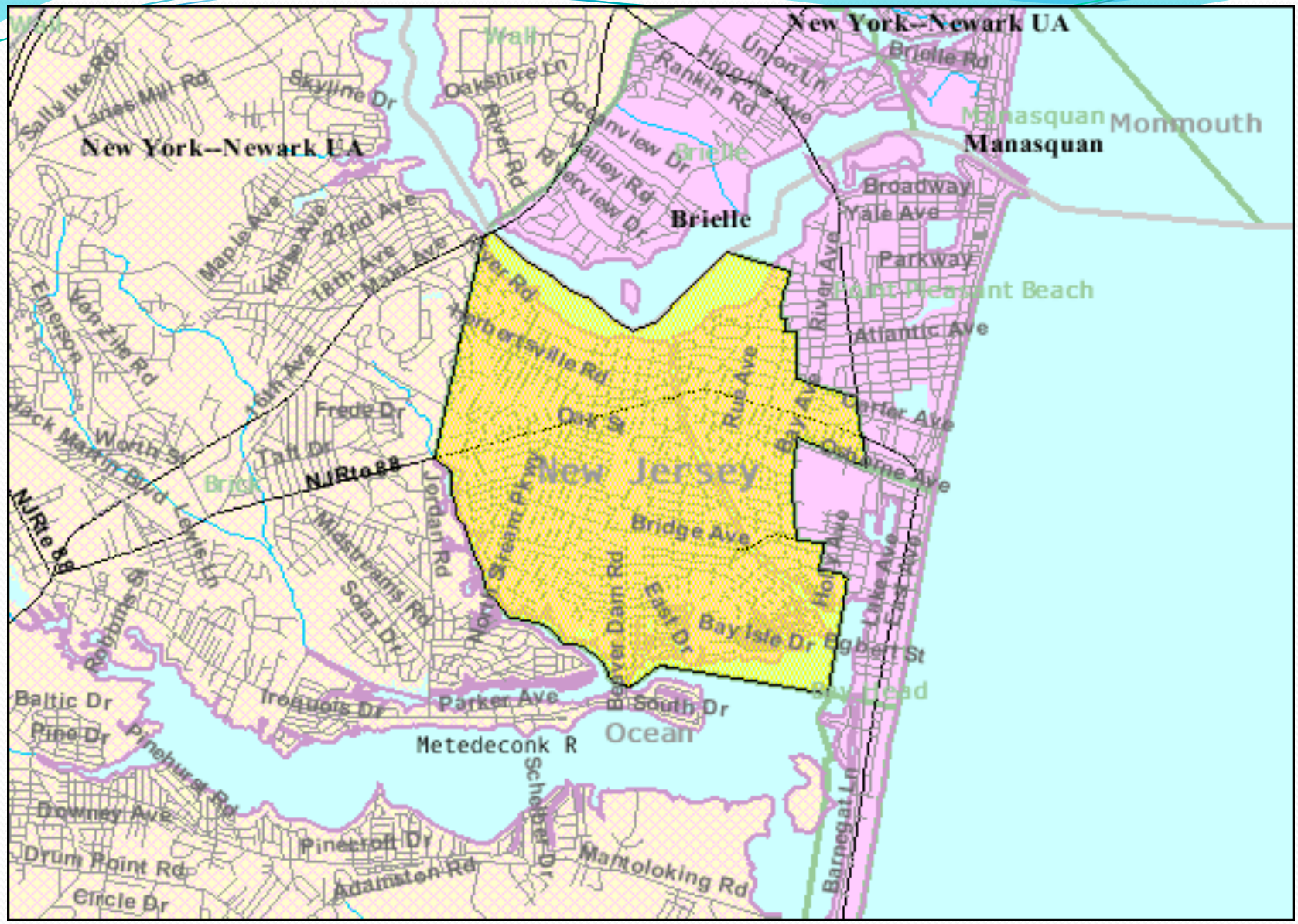
May 21, 2009

November 5, 2012
USGS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Case Study # 2

- Super Storm Sandy devastated much of the east coast of New Jersey at the end of October 2012
- Media coverage highlighted the lack of preparation in some public and private sectors
- FDU held sponsored a L^2 symposium IOT share courses of action that worked
- Target audience was all public safety professionals plus Town Managers

Case Study # 2

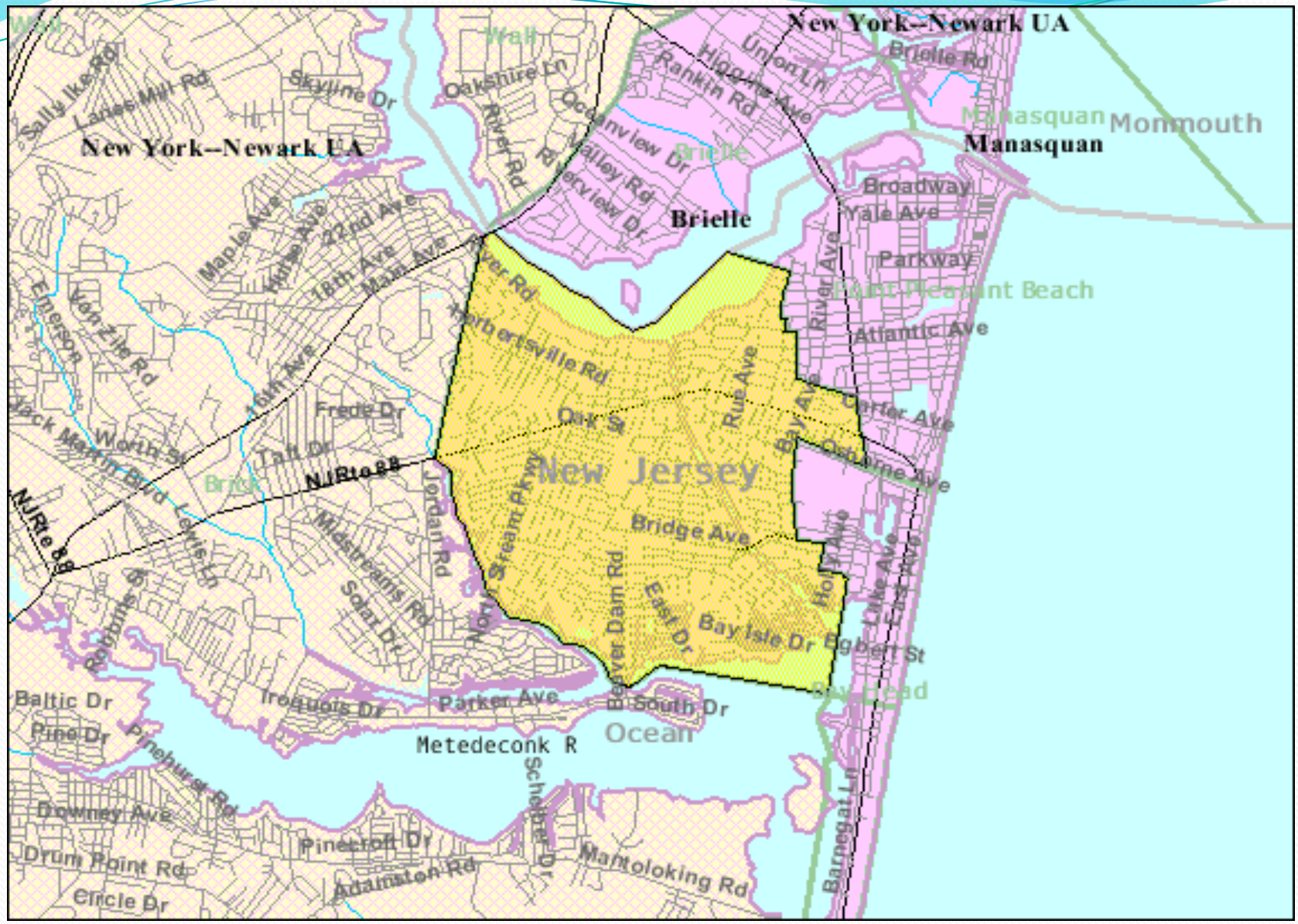
- Presenters were SMEs who worked on preparation and recovery. They provided the best practices
- A theme developed early on. Those towns who did not assign a commander to oversee the effort had slower recovery times.
- Same for those towns who never conducted a tabletop exercise
- There was no difference between towns who placed LEO, Fire, OEM, or civilian Mayor in command of recovery.

Case Study # 2

- The only common variable for successful recovery operations was that one person was in command the minute recovery started
- The Unity of Command assured Unity of Effort
- The commanders were able to prioritize and employ assets based on that prioritization

Case Study # 2

- The power company, NJ Power and Light, was invited to the Symposium
- They refused to send a representative to present
- They were unhelpful throughout the event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Emerson
Von Zile Rd
Jack Martin Blvd
Worth St
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Taft Dr
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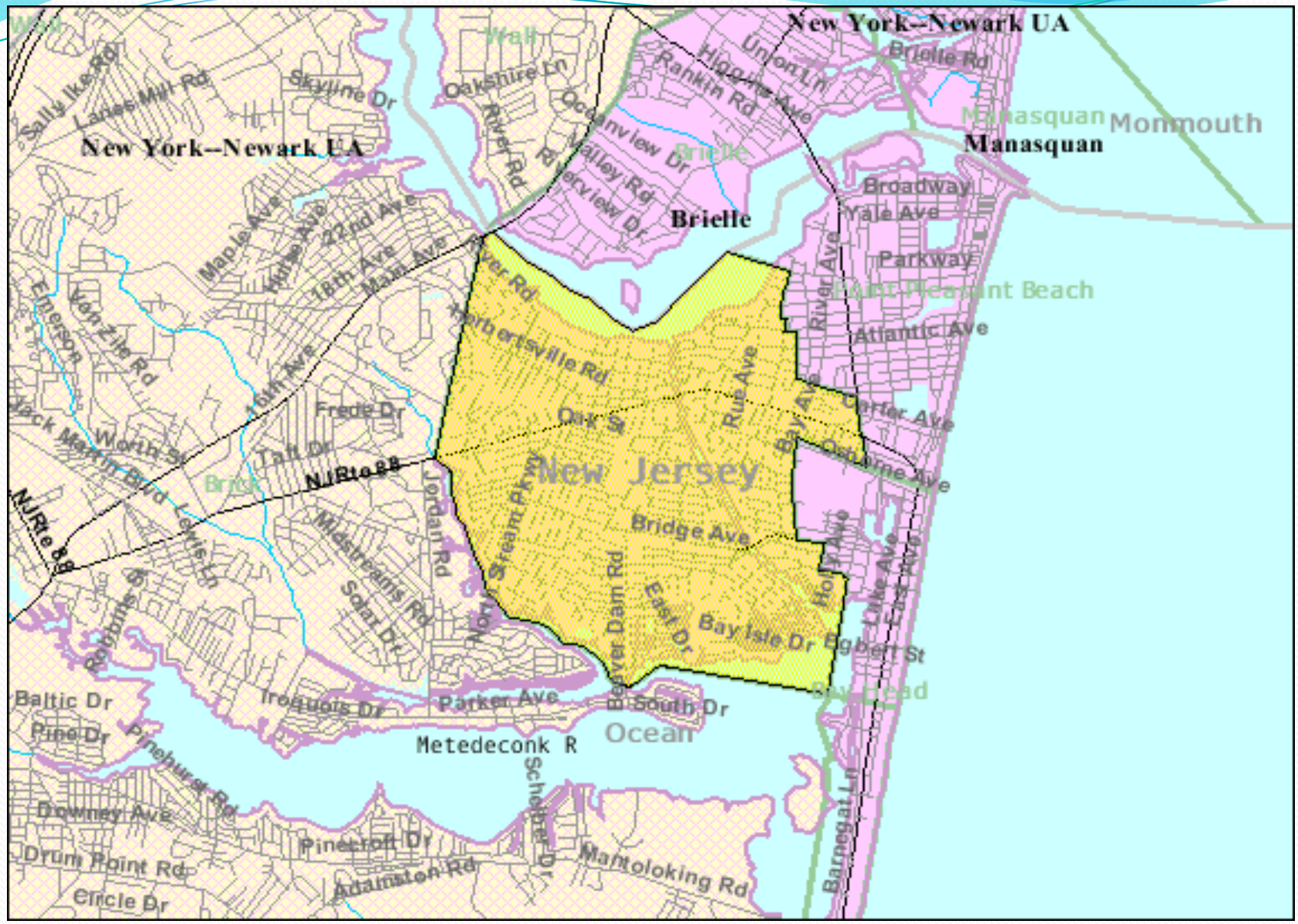
Midstreams Rd
Solar Dr
Jordan Rd
North Stream Pkwy
Beaver Dam Rd
Iroquois Dr
Parker Ave
South Dr
Baltic Dr
Pine Dr
Pinehurst Rd
Downey Ave
Drum Point Rd
Circle Dr
Pinecroft Dr
Adamston Rd
Mantoloking Rd
Schelber Dr

Case Study # 2

- Prior to the storm, Brick Township designated their OEM Coordinator to be the Commander.
- He preplanned the event before the storm hit
- He was a retired Lieutenant from the PD
- All town assets, LEO, Fire, DPW, and administration liked and respected him
- His preplanning enabled people to safely drive in and out of Point Pleasant Boro in less than 12 hours after the storm had passed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Mutual Aid

- Can mutual aid work in a situation where everyone else's effort is going down the toilet?
- This is where an effective, predetermined commander can make a difference
- Once you have drilled your event, you will know where your operational weakness's exist
- Preplanning should involve the commander asking his mutual aid partners to commit based on a worse case scenario

Case Study # 3: Hurricane Irene

- Springfield Township in Union County
- High ground, well above sea level at 177 feet
- Has a small river (Rahway River) that winds through town at the lowest points of town
- Hurricane Irene blew through at the end of August 2011
- Flood gates were opened up stream without any warning an two neighborhoods were flooded within minutes, leaving dozens stranded, some on the second floor of their homes

Case Study #3

- Mutual Aid in the form of personnel was not going to happen.
- Springfield already had mutual aid commitments in the form of equipment
- A surrounding town loaned a boat, which was used to rescue people from their homes
- The town had submitted a hazard mitigation plan to the State of NJ several years in a row asking for the Rahway River to be dredged. The state ignored the request

Conclusion

- Public and Private agencies and institutions need to conduct All-Hazards planning
- Drills are where your strengths and weakness should surface, not during the actual event
- Unity of Command is not unlike ICS. Identify a qualified commander prior to any possible event.
- That commander can start planning immediately
- Unity of Command will assure Unity of Effort