

National Preparedness Month observed in Dover

As part of National Preparedness Month, a special meeting was held Sept. 6, at the office of the Delaware Secretary for Safety and Homeland Security in Dover.

Along with the secretary's staff, participants included the U.S. Coast Guard admiral responsible for Coast Guard operations on the Gulf Coast when Hurricane Katrina hit two years ago; Delaware State Police personnel; scientists from NASA who designed and built the satellite-controlled boat which made its first public debut at the natural disaster response exercise in Dewey this past July and which can stay at sea for months, riding out hurricanes and helping to pinpoint their landfall; and scientists from Monmouth University who designed and built, at the request and support of the U.S. Army, the space age communications command control vehicle which also made its first public debut at the July exercise.

The meeting's purpose was to solicit input from the state as to how the technologies presented can be improved and better help Delaware in dealing with natural and man-made disasters. The rest of Delmarva and United States will benefit as well. Importantly, these technologies are being

developed and built in Delaware. The Florida Keys are the number one most difficult area in the U.S. to evacuate, New Orleans is number two, and the Delmarva Peninsula is number three. Thus, the right work is being done in the right place at the right time.

The meeting was a great success and has led to cooperative efforts in technology development and related strategic planning. A real asset at the meeting was the participation of Coast Guard Rear Admiral Robert Duncan, who planned and coordinated the response to Katrina, airlifted 35,000 people out of New Orleans and moved many others by barge.



Submitted photo

Shown are (l-r) U.S. Coast Guard Rear Admiral Robert Duncan, NASA engineers Carl Schirtzinger and John Higinbotham, U.S. Public Health Service Capt. Pete Hartsock, and Delaware Office of Safety and Homeland Security Communications Director Thomas Steele standing with the NASA-designed satellite-controlled boat which was demonstrated at the preparedness meeting Sept. 6. The boat is named for deceased U.S. Coast Guardsman Ray Gillett.

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