

Companies, emergency agency discuss forming aid network

By **Randy Ludlow**

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Not that it would hurt, but Anheuser-Busch and L Brands will not be offering cold beer and sexy underwear to help Ohioans deal with natural and manmade disasters.

Still, representatives from both companies joined colleagues yesterday as corporate Ohio huddled with Ohio Emergency Management Agency officials to discuss how each could help the other in tough times.

Dubbed the Ohio Public Private Partnership, the initiative centers on sharing information to permit businesses to more quickly get back to work and positioned to help Ohioans recover from major disasters.

“We need to learn the assets each of us can bring to overcoming or responding to a disaster,” Department of Public Safety Director John Born told officials of about 50 companies at the state’s emergency operations center.

Representatives from utilities, banks, grocers, hospitals, retailers, insurers and major employers, among others, gathered at the center on the Northwest Side to begin opening lines of communication.

“Government is not the solution to a big disaster — it’s part of it,” said Nancy Dragani, executive director of the Ohio EMA.

“We need to get our businesses back open doing what they do best,” Dragani said, noting that grocers and other retailers are much better-positioned to provide food, water and other supplies than government.

Ohio also needs its major employers quickly back online following events such as floods, tornadoes, ice storms and widespread wind damage and power failures to help keep the state economy humming, she said.

Sharing information also will better-position retailers to order greater quantities of in-demand items, such as clean-up supplies, drywall and tools, that Ohioans would need to repair damaged homes and small businesses, Dragani said.

Ohio's companies also can be a source of volunteers, donations and items and equipment to help the state recover from weather emergencies, she noted.

Greg Halvacs, chief security officer of Dublin-based Cardinal Health, attended the session to learn how his company might be able to protect and assist its 4,000 local employees in dealing with disasters while helping others.

The company could arrange, for example, to contact its distribution centers to meet any increased needs for medical supplies and equipment from Ohio hospitals dealing with injuries from a mass-casualty disaster, Halvacs said.

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