

County officials conduct disaster drill

By Darla Ellingson

Daily Journal

A bad winter storm with ice damage has occurred, inside the Sherriff's Operations Center in Ottertail city. At least that is what Otter Tail County Commissioners and department heads experienced in an emergency preparedness drill on Tuesday.

"We are looking at our county-wide emergency plans in the event of a severe winter storm, flood or other disaster," said County Emergency Manager Patrick Waletzko. "In this exercise we are executing our plan and seeing what works, what we can improve on."

Participating in the mock emergency were county commissioners, as well as county departments, including administration,

public health, highway, human services, land and natural resources, assessor, auditor and sheriff.

"It was important for staff to see how the county emergency operations function," said Waletzko. "Future sessions are planned to include Fire, EMS and other law enforcement officials this spring or summer."

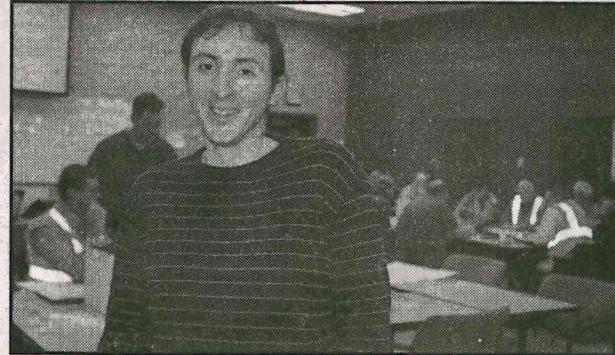
Waletzko adds that the county has had an emergency operations team for many years that meet on a regular basis to anticipate how we can best prepare if disaster should strike. Disasters the team considers for the area include blizzards, tornadoes, floods, a pipeline leak, train derailment, hazardous spill or disease outbreak.

In addition to prevention preparedness strategies, county emergency manage-

ment objectives include mitigating the effects of hazards, responding to, and recovering from all threats and hazards.

"It's about developing second, third and fourth level of resources in our infrastructure," said Waletzko. "Some cities may not have certain resources, at which point the county would step in."

Waletzko has been the Otter Tail County Emergency Manager since August, 2011, and has seven years previous emergency management experience.



Darla Ellingson/Daily Journal

This is only a drill! County Emergency Manager Patrick Waletzko organized a mock storm hazard session so County administrators could experience how emergency operations function.

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