

# Winfield Twp. creates new emergency operations center

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Adam Hartwig, emergency services coordinator, left, Matt Klabnik, supervisor chairman, and township secretary Rachel Altman study several maps in Winfield Township's emergency operations center Friday at the township building.

## *Shale gas company donation covers changes, preparations*

Residents of Winfield Township have an added layer of security in the event of a disaster, thanks to PennEnergy Resources and the vision of the township emergency management coordinator.

Adam Hartwig, the township's emergency management coordinator, said he approached township supervisors after an extended weather-related power outage a few years ago.

He told the supervisors that the township needs continuity of operations in the event of a disaster of any kind, and suggested they get generators and create a space where police, emergency medical personnel, township officials and others can meet to handle a disaster.

He said the supervisors responded favorably, so he then met with officials from PennEnergy Resources, which has nine well pads, a compressor station and pipeline in the township.

"There's a chance a disaster could happen through nobody's fault," Hartwig said of the possibility of a natural gas disaster. "We've seen that happen in Pennsylvania and Ohio." He explained to PennEnergy officials the township's plan to refurbish part of the township building's interior to serve as an emergency operations center and to buy generators to keep the facility up and running during an outage.

Hartwig asked PennEnergy officials to donate \$10,000 toward the project, which they did in November. The donation paid for the entire project, with no taxpayer dollars involved. "That speaks to PennEnergy as a company," he said. "Their core values and operational excellence are outstanding. Safety is at the forefront of everything they do."

The donation paid for generators and the remodel of the township building, said Matt Klabnik, supervisor chairman.

Klabnik said the walls between the building's three small rooms were removed to create a larger space.

"The building was built like a warren, with all these little rooms," Klabnik said, "but we wanted an open space."

A large table, a television that can serve as a computer monitor, and backup power were added to the new, open room. Klabnik said the supervisors attended emergency management training as well. "We just want to be ready," he said. The room also is used for township work sessions, annual audits and other purposes, but can be turned into an emergency operations center within minutes, Klabnik said. Hartwig, who is the Middlesex Township manager and former Winfield Township manager, also serves as the emergency management coordinator for Middlesex, Jefferson and Clinton townships. He said he knows of no other rural township that has an emergency operations center. "The board was willing to invest the money in emergency management," Hartwig said of the donation from PennEnergy. Hartwig also worked with Winfield supervisors to update the emergency operations plan, which now fits the township's specific needs. Steve Bicehouse, county emergency services director, said he knows of no other rural township that has taken the initiative to create an emergency operations center. "I think it's great," Bicehouse said. "It shows a commitment to emergency management and to the community." He also likes the fact that the emergency operations center in Winfield is being used for other township business. "It's nice to see them commit to a mixed use, because that is the smartest way to do it," Bicehouse said.



Walls were removed at the Winfield Township building to create the new emergency operations center. From left are emergency services coordinator Adam Hartwig, supervisor chairman Matt Klabnik and township secretary Rachel Altman.

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