



## Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

# News

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### County officials from around West Virginia attend court security conference For immediate release Thursday, Feb. 24, 2011

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – About 70 people representing about 40 counties attended a conference in Charleston this week to discuss ways to improve security in courthouses throughout West Virginia.

The conference was held Tuesday through Thursday at the Charleston Marriott Town Center and was paid for by a grant from the West Virginia Court Security Fund. Every time a defendant pays court costs, a portion goes to the fund, which is managed by the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia and the Division of Criminal Justice Services through the Court Security Board. The board, by statute, is led by the Supreme Court Administrative Director.

“The Supreme Court and the Administrative Office are concerned about the safety and well-being of judicial employees, county employees, and the public who access judicial buildings every day,” said Angela Saunders, Director of Court Services. “The purpose of this conference is to provide training to the counties on emergency preparedness and court security, provide technical assistance, and work out ways to communicate better with each other and the Administrative Office.”

Supreme Court Administrative Director Steve Canterbury said, “When a disaster is occurring, that is no time to figure out who is in charge. You have to have a protocol, a continuity of operations plan. There has to be a chain of command to prevent a bad situation from getting worse.”

The Supreme Court has requested that each county designate two people to be in charge of security planning at court facilities in case of disaster. Almost every county has complied. Those who attended the conference were able to discuss how to make detailed plans of action about what to do in the case of a natural disaster or security breach, continuity of operations, and recovery.

“It’s not a matter of if something will happen in one of our counties, it’s a matter of when, and if we are prepared to assist one another on the state level, and counties helping other counties,” said former Jefferson County Sheriff Ed Boober, director of his county’s homeland security team and one of five people from Jefferson County who attended the conference.

“It’s not just about safety of court employees,” said Judge Roger L. Perry, of the Seventh Judicial Circuit (Logan County). “It’s about protecting the public and ensuring

the courts continue to function under what might be trying circumstances.” Judge Perry was one of five people who attended from Logan County.

There were several national experts in the field of court security who spoke at the conference, including Timm Fautsko, Principal Court Management Consultant for the National Center for State Courts; Jessica Pitts, Director of Emergency Preparedness and Court Security for the Maryland Judiciary; and Pennsylvania Court Administrator Zygmunt Pines, Co-Chairman of the Joint Committee on Security and Emergency Preparedness for the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators. They talked about the way judicial systems in other states have handled emergencies and disasters – successes and failures – and made suggestions for preparedness planning.

Several directors from the Supreme Court Administrative Office also spoke, as did David W. Skeen, Continuity of Operations Coordinator and Continuity of Government Coordinator for the West Virginia Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety. Representatives of the five counties who have been working on pilot court security emergency preparedness for several years also talked about their work. Those counties are Greenbrier, Harrison, Jefferson, Logan, and Mercer.

“It was a very beneficial learning experience,” said Boone County Chief Deputy Chad Barker. “It gave us a lot of ideas to take back to the county to not only protect the county workers but also the public in an emergency situation. We have support from the county commission, the sheriff, and the judge. We plan to meet with them and get our security plans started.”

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