

Why Halifax sends a Christmas Tree to Boston Annually--the 100th Anniversary

by Lt Colonel Gregory Banner

Gregory T. Banner, Lieutenant Colonel, US Army (retired), MS, CEM (Certified Emergency Manager), is a Regional Emergency Coordinator, Region I (New England), US Department of Health and Human Services. In that capacity he primarily coordinates federal medical support to the six New England states, but has deployed throughout the US for various emergencies and planned events. He also deployed for five weeks to Haiti following the earthquake in that country. He graduated from the US Military Academy at West Point, New York and then served 21 years in the US Army in Infantry and Special Forces assignments. He commanded units for over 90 months ranging from team level (11 personnel) to a battalion of several hundred soldiers. Assignments involved live operational missions and contingency planning throughout the world, including Central America, Africa, The Middle East, and Bosnia. Among other duties he served as a War Plans officer, instructor and advisor. Following retirement from the Army he spent five years as the Emergency Planner at the Rhode Island Department of Health. In that position he served as the lead planner for the State Health Department for the SNS program, CHEMPACK, Medical Reserve Corps, Biohazard Detection System and for ESF8 functions. He assumed his current position with the federal government in April 2005. In addition to his official functions he provides volunteer medical support and teaches in a number of areas with the National Ski Patrol. He has a BS from the United States Military Academy, a Masters in International Relations from Troy State University, and a Masters of Military Arts and Sciences from the US Army Command and General Staff College.

The 100th Anniversary

In December 1917 an ammunition ship blew up in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. This was categorized as the largest man-made explosion in human history prior to atomic weapons. The explosion devastated the Halifax area and resulted in over 2000 fatalities. This event resulted in the mobilization of a response from throughout Canada and the northeast United States, as well as a long term recovery program for the area. This presentation will provide an overview of the event which links in various parts of military, local and nautical history; as well as looking at the disaster response and emergency management aspects of what happened.