

NEWS:



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Orange County Holds Seminar on Autism Awareness for First Responders *Training important to protecting special needs residents*

(Goshen, NY) – The Orange County Fire Services Division, under the Department of Emergency Services, recently held an autism awareness seminar for emergency response personnel at the Emergency Services Center in Goshen.

“Training our first responders on how to effectively interact and respond to an emergency involving a person with autism is an important component to our mission of enhancing the safety of Orange County residents,” said Deputy Commissioner of Fire Services John Horan.

People with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are seven times more likely to have a 911 encounter than a typical person. The number of responses is increasing at an alarming rate nationwide. These calls can be high risk for the responder and for a person with autism due to a lack of understanding about a person with ASD.

The seminar's featured speaker was Captain William A. Cannata, Jr. of Westwood, Massachusetts Fire Department. A member of the fire service for 33 years, he is also a Massachusetts Fire Academy Instructor, member of the Autism and Law Enforcement Education Coalition (ALEC), as well as the co-chairman for the Autism Society National Task Force.

The forum provided first responders with an overview of ASD, including specifics such as, growth rates, theories, common characteristics, effective communication methods, behavioral symptoms, sensory issues, and practical skills on how to respond to an emergency involving a person with autism.

For more information on future training opportunities, please contact the Orange County Fire Training Center at 845-374-1900 or visit them at www.orangecountygov.com.

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(L-R) Orange County Fire Training Center Manager and Training Coordinator James McCann, JoAnn Atlas of the Atlas Foundation, Captain William A. Cannata Jr. of Westwood, MA Fire Department, and Orange County Deputy Commissioner of Fire Services John Horan at Orange County Emergency Services auditorium during autism awareness seminar for emergency personnel in Goshen, May 24, 2011.



Captain William A. Cannata, Jr. of Westwood, MA Fire Department addresses first responders at Orange County 911 auditorium during autism awareness seminar for emergency personnel in Goshen, May 24, 2011.