

FACT SHEET

Report on Pennsylvania's Preparedness for the Year 2000 Problem

The Year 2000 problem has the potential to create significant problems. While most experts now believe cataclysmic system failures are highly unlikely, at least in the United States, no one knows for certain what will happen on January 1, 2000. This report, the third in a series, focuses on the steps being taken by the Commonwealth to prepare the public and to plan for possible emergencies should the Y2K problem cause significant disruptions in essential services. It also addresses the Y2K status of state agencies, local governments, schools, and private businesses.

Findings:

A. The Commonwealth Has Taken Contingency Planning Seriously and Appears to Be Well Prepared. Agencies under the Governor's jurisdiction have completed virtually all of their Y2K remediation tasks. Attention has now turned to developing and testing contingency plans, which would be activated if Y2K causes unexpected problems. These agencies completed testing of their contingency plans in September. The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) has also conducted several multi-agency training programs and exercises to help ensure that agencies can act in a coordinated and comprehensive manner.

PEMA has been promoting public awareness and is working with state agencies, county emergency management agencies, and the Pennsylvania National Guard (PNG) to prepare for possible disruption in essential services such as water and electricity. PEMA and PNG are also prepared for the possibility of civil disturbances. The PNG conducted a successful test of its *Millennium Shift Operations Plan* in August 1999. This plan was developed to ensure Guard units would be prepared to conduct emergency support and law enforcement functions, if necessary.

On December 31, 1999, PEMA will activate the state's Emergency Operations Center at a limited level as a precaution. The Lieutenant Governor and officials from key agencies are expected to be present at the PEMA command center for the change of the millennium. The PNG plans to activate as many as 350 guardsmen to serve on watch teams at task force, battalion, and unit levels both at PNG headquarters and at the 130 armories located throughout the state.

B. Y2K Preparations for State Agencies Under the Governor's Jurisdiction Are Almost 100 Percent Complete.

State agencies under the Governor's jurisdiction report that more than 99.9 percent of their computer programs are now Y2K compliant, and that all their mission-critical programs are compliant. All agencies participating in the Administration's Y2K remediation effort have reportedly completed **final readiness testing** on a computer leased for this purpose. It allows agencies to make exact copies of their programs and run them against multiple dates in the Year 2000. These tests indicate that **data interface issues**--the ability to exchange data with the computer systems of external partners--appear to have been resolved. The extent to which **embedded systems** may contain non-Y2K compliant devices remains uncertain; agencies are working to identify and correct such systems. The level of preparedness of state government **agencies not under the Governor's jurisdiction** is less well documented. The Treasury Department, a key independent agency, has reported it has corrected and tested its computer systems and encountered no problems.

C. The Commonwealth Has Conducted an Extensive Y2K Public Awareness Program for Local Governments, School Districts, Businesses, and the General Public. Little comprehensive information exists on the extent to which local governments, school districts, and private businesses are prepared for Y2K.

Department of Community and Economic Development officials expressed concern that many smaller **local governments** lack the resources needed to adequately prepare for the Year 2000. DCED reported, however, that at least some county governments have assumed additional Y2K responsibilities for the municipalities in their county.

Pennsylvania Department of Education officials reported that the superintendents of Pennsylvania's 501 **school districts** should now be well aware of the Year 2000 problem. The Secretary of Education sent a letter to the superintendents urging them to address the problem and has made "Link-to-Learn" funding contingent upon the existence of a school district Y2K plan. Additionally, the Pennsylvania School Boards Association has made presentations to member school districts on the Y2K problem and has conducted a Y2K awareness campaign in its newsletter.

In the **private sector**, near-complete information on Y2K readiness is available only for certain business sectors, such as financial services, utilities, and chemical manufacturers. For other business sectors, and particularly for small businesses, information is largely anecdotal. The Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry believes that some Pennsylvania businesses may fail as a result of Y2K-related problems, but that such failures will not be widespread.