

SUFFOLK SETS CYBER CHECKUP

Belone: Focus is on identifying municipal flaws

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Suffolk has hired a New York City consulting firm for a “cyber checkup” to determine vulnerabilities in the county’s information technology network and make recommendations on how to protect the system from attacks, officials said Monday.

“This is a very serious matter,” County Executive Steve Bellone said at a news conference in Hauppauge. “Cybersecurity, cyberattacks, these threats, these vulnerabilities are real, and this is not a theoretical issue, this is not an academic exercise we are engaged in here. We have seen these attacks in real time, in municipalities across this country, we’ve seen it around the globe.”

Bellone said Suffolk will be the first municipality in New York State to conduct a security exercise to evaluate network weaknesses and develop responses to cyberattacks.

The county will pay RedLand Strategies \$55,000 to conduct the five-month assessment, which will focus on Suffolk police, fire and rescue services and the county’s Department of Information Technology, Bellone said. The firm is led by Michael A. L. Balboni, a former New York state senator and former state deputy secretary for public safety. Palo Alto Networks, a Santa Clara, California, cybersecurity firm, will assist in the review.

“Municipalities operate many crucial cyber control systems

that are vital to the function of government, affecting everything from the water we drink to traffic signals to power plants and more,” Bellone said. “This thorough security assessment of our current network will serve as a ‘cyber checkup,’ helping us understand our current abilities and identifying areas that could use improvement.”

Suffolk has not suffered any significant breaches, said Department of Information Technology Commissioner Scott Mastellon, but there have been countless attempts in recent years. Many, he said, may be from people trying to gain access to information without proper passwords or clearance, but others could be hostile hackers attempting to disrupt government functions.

“There is attempts on an everyday basis as it relates to compromising the network here at the county,” Mastellon said. “We have a number of different components, technology, appliances, people, personnel, policies and procedures that are in place to try to thwart that. I will tell you we have on a regular basis thwarted those types of attacks.”

Mastellon said he is unaware of anybody who faced criminal charges for attempting to breach the county network.

Nassau County spokesman Chris Geed said he was “not aware of the county doing anything similar at this time.”

Other municipalities across the country have suffered from serious cyberattacks. Hackers activated 196 emergency sirens in Dallas in April 2017 and a ransomware attack deleted 30 million files from the Sacramento regional transit system. Baltimore’s 911 system was disrupted for about 17 hours in March 2018 by hackers.



CN Guidance & Counseling Services' mobile recovery unit, the first of its kind in Nassau County.

PHOTOS BY BARRY SLOAN

Substance abuse help goes mobile in Nassau

BY ROBERT BRODSKY
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Nassau residents with opioid or heroin dependence but limited transportation or health insurance will have options due to a new state-funded mobile recovery unit providing specialized services in high-need neighborhoods, officials announced Monday.

CN Guidance & Counseling Services unveiled a state-of-the-art RV equipped with three private treatment rooms that will be staffed by a registered nurse, case worker and two clinicians who will use on-board video monitors to connect patients directly with doctors from the nonprofit’s Hicksville location.

Jeffrey Friedman, chief executive of CN Guidance & Counseling Services, said many Long Islanders suffering through the opioid crisis, which has claimed nearly 3,700 lives on Long Island since 2010, are desperate to obtain help for themselves or their family. But they have limited resources and difficulty accessing a provider.

“We have seen this on the front line where people are frantic, calling us that they’ve been trying to get their loved



Joseph Cavallo is an outreach coordinator on the mobile unit.

ones into treatment for weeks,” Friedman said at a news conference in Hicksville. “Now, we will be out in the community; on the streets, able to access services immediately. This initiative will remove the barrier about transportation and cost of treatment. This is a real game-changer for our agency ... It’s a needed service, and it will save lives.”

The RV will be accompanied at each location by two minivans that will transport patients to CN’s offices or a treat-

ment and rehabilitation facility. While Narcan will be available on board for patients in immediate need, the facility is not designed for first-responders and will not dispense prescriptions.

Joseph Cavallo, 31, of Ronkonkoma, a recovering heroin and cocaine addict who will serve as an outreach coordinator on the mobile unit, said the vehicles will allow providers “to fill in the gaps that were there for so many years in treatment.”

The three vehicles were pur-