



Emergency Management Times

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Empire 09: Working Together Works

From late May through June the State of New York hosted *Empire 09*, a multi-phase exercise sponsored by the US Department of Energy.

Phase I was a two-day table-top exercise - a “talk through” of the first 48 hours of local response to a terrorist attack in downtown Albany. In the scenario the blasts from two “dirty bombs” killed six, injured 20 and spread radioactive materials over the Capital City, across the Hudson through Rensselaer County and possibly into Vermont.

Phase II, June 2-4, was a functional “hands on” exercise involving over 750 players from federal, state, county, and local government and nearly 150 controllers, evaluators, simulators, and other exercise management personnel. And there were observers: 65 representing other countries from Iceland to Australia and 52 from across the US.

For the federal partners the critical feature was the establishment of the Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center (FRMAC). This federal team of experts supports local governments’ capabilities by coordinating field monitoring operations, assessing results, and providing data to state and local government for critical decision-making, such as evacuations and other protective actions.

During this phase the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) synchronized the response activities of thirteen State agencies and the American Red Cross. To meet the public information needs and brief the media the State managed a Joint Information Center (JIC) for State and federal agencies.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) established a Joint Field Office (JFO) to facilitate the federal agencies response and support effort.

At the Incident Command Post (ICP) directed the tactical responsibilities under the coordination of Unified Command. The ICP was supported by Incident Management Teams (IMTs) from New York State, the US Department of Energy, and the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Phase III was another tabletop exercise dealing with issues such as long term clean-up; population relocation; and the transfer of federal responsibility from the FRMAC to the Environmental Protection Agency.

As an exercise Empire 09 identified both successes and areas for improvement. Perhaps the biggest challenge for Empire 09 was taking a “real world look” at melding local plans with the State’s Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and the federal National Response Framework. And the goal of this top to bottom look at planning and preparedness? Protecting public health and safety – which is, after all, governments’ first responsibility

Guard Maximizes Empire 09 Training Opportunity



Members of the New York National Guard CERFP prepare to decontaminate “victims” of a simulated dirty bomb incident during training June 6 at the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control Training Site in Colonie, NY. Photo by Staff Sgt. Kevin Abbott, Joint Forces Headquarters – NY

Empire 09 offered the Guard’s Civil Support Team (CST) a major role in the response to the “dirty bomb” attack in Albany. But, while looking at the scenario, the Guard planners saw another opportunity. So they tweaked the script and added a collapsed apartment building with victims trapped in the radioactive rubble.

This new twist gave an additional 400 National Guard soldiers, airmen and New York Guard troops from Buffalo, the Finger Lakes and New York City the opportunity to mobilize, deploy to the Capital District and work with local authorities in their urban search and rescue missions.

The extra effort gave the all elements of NY’s CERFP (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and high-yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package) the opportunity to see the entire response team in action. According to Air National Guard Lt. Col. Ken Kieliszek, a health services administrator from the 107th Airlift Wing, based in Niagara Falls, “Very rarely do we get to see how the whole thing fits together as a team. Every time we do this we get a little better.”

The New York CERFP is a “purple” organization composed of units from the State’s militia forces: the Army Guard provides 102nd Military Police Battalion for command and control; A Company of the 27th Brigade Special Troops Battalion is the “extraction team,” which enters a damaged building to remove survivors; and the 105th Military Police Company, 104th MP Battalion and the New York Guard’s 88th Brigade staff the decontamination line. The New York’s Air National Guard wings provided the team’s

medical and security forces. The 109th Airlift Wing in Scotia was tasked with the care and feeding of the team.

On Saturday, the CERFP teams moved to the New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control Training Center in Colonie and linked up with New York Task Force-2, the state's urban search and rescue team made up of local emergency responders, to explore a rubble pile on the site which simulated an apartment building.

“Training with the National Guard gives the civilian responders a sense of how the military operates and a chance to share their skills,” said Chief Bryant Stevens, head of the Office of Fire Prevention and Control's Special Services division.

Lt. Col. Martin Dinan, the commander of the 102nd MP Battalion and the CERFP, said he was especially pleased with the unique training opportunity. "This is really coming out great. It's good to work with State fire and some of the other capabilities," Dinan said. “It seems like we are really starting to hit the run mode and, as a matter of fact, we are starting to talk about some new capabilities to bring to the table.”

Long Island’s 6th Air Show



It's one of the largest air shows east of the Mississippi. But on May 23 and 24 it took on an international look as the Canadian Snowbirds demonstration team joined the US Air Force's Thunderbirds in wowing the crowd of 240,000 people during the two-day event at Jones Beach, the crown jewel of the NYS Park System.

Other acts included historic aircraft of WWII; private aerobatic demonstrations like Sean Tucker Team Oracle – a red biplane that flies 300 mph and just 10 feet off the ground; GIECO Sky Typers – WWII trainers that use precision flying to deliver aerial messages; the US Army Golden Knights jump team, US Navy F/A 18 E/F Super Hornet, US Air Force F-15 Eagle, F-16 Falcon and A-10 Warthog attack plane. While the visitors' eyes were on the sky, another team's focus was making sure the show ran smoothly and safely. Although the state and local agencies had worked as a team for the first five shows, this year's planning process took on added depth. It included a tabletop exercise, conducted by the State Emergency Management Office that evaluated existing plans against a series of events. This “what if” session helped identify planning gaps in the concept of operations designed to protect public health and safety.

The task force included: New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; Long Island State Parks, NY State Police; NY Department of Transportation; NYS Park Police; NY Department of Environmental Conservation; NYS MTA Police; Long Island Bus; Federal Aviation Administration; Republic Airport; NY Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing; National Weather Service, US Coast Guard; Nassau and Suffolk Counties Emergency Management Offices and Police Departments, the Wantagh Fire Department and members of the local Community Emergency Response Teams.

Response To The American Civic Association Shootings

- Considerations for Special Populations



By Stephanie Pagnotta
Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

The tragic shooting that occurred the morning of Friday, April 3, at the American Civic Association, in Binghamton, illustrated the importance and the need to plan for special population, especially from a human services perspective. The tragedy resulted in the deaths of 14 individuals, including the shooter, and left many survivors to deal with the aftermath. The incident had far-reaching effects as victims' countries of origin included: Pakistan, the Philippines, Haiti, Vietnam, Iraq, China, Brazil, and the United States.

The New York State Human Services Committee (HSC) to the New York State Disaster Preparedness Commission (DPC) is chaired by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). Staff from the HSC and leadership from the HSC's Disaster Assistance Center (DAC) Group were requested to assist Broome County at the established Victim Assistance Center. On April 5, staff from the State Emergency Management Office, OTDA and the Office of Children and Family Services was deployed to the Victim Assistance Center that was set up to assist and coordinate with local and volunteer/community-based resources already in place within the county to establish a framework for outreach to victims of the disaster. Additional resources were made available by the Office of Mental Health and the State Education Department. Mid-week, staff from OTDA's Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (BRIA) provided support by presenting three training sessions for emergency and mental health workers on cultural issues around death, dying and grieving for the ethnic communities directly affected, assisting with translation of materials and letters for outreach to the community, and by providing interpretation assistance for mental health providers.

Overall, the diversity of the victim population created specific unique challenges, such as:

- Cultural sensitivity in dealing with children and surviving family members
- Legal issues and extensive coordination involving travel for family members to the United States from abroad
- Cultural/religious sensitivity regarding the handling, viewing, and disposition of remains
- Custodial issues for children of the deceased
- Needs for translation and interpretation services in multiple languages
- An understanding of the victims, and their roles within the community

The incident also demonstrated the need to actively engage the voluntary or community organizations early in the process to assist with outreach to the community and the healing process, and to always learn from and re-evaluate your preparedness posture to prevent such incidents from reoccurring.

Also, a partnership was formed between OTDA's BRIA and the Binghamton School District to provide additional training for their staff on how to deal with children affected by the tragedy, and cultural awareness training sessions are taking place this month. BRIA has had preliminary discussions with the School Superintendent's office regarding implementation of a district-wide refugee school impact program. BRIA staff also hosted a quarterly meeting in May to discuss refugee mental health and cross-cultural trauma topics, which included participation from federal, state and local mental health providers.

In addition to contributing as part of the Victims Assistance Center, staff from BRIA supported the American Civic Association (ACA) using their network of resources to provide assistance with the processing of current caseloads for immigration work, in addition to monitoring and assessment of caseload and needs for new refugee arrivals. Site visits have been made to ACA and ongoing support will continue until ACA no longer needs it.

The shooting incident also served as an opportunity for OTDA, through its Bureau of Management Services to mitigate future potential security incidents. Staff members from several of OTDA's bureaus are working jointly to design a security training program for their providers/ contractors that will also be shared with the non-profits and local departments of social services. Recently, OTDA staff participated and coordinated with the Broome County Department of Social Services for security debriefing sessions that provided an overview and discussion of lockdown procedures at local offices. This training was embraced by executive, management services, and program staff, and was also supported by labor unions.

President Briefed on Hurricane Readiness

DHS Secretary Napolitano and FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate briefed President Obama on preparedness efforts for the 2009 hurricane season, which officially began on June 1. Among other things, the secretary and FEMA administrator discussed FEMA's progress on prepositioning assets, developing evacuation plans, and readying emergency communications.

Following the briefing, the president discussed the need for individual preparedness, noting that statistics from Florida indicate a large number of people simply have not made hurricane preparedness plans. He pointed out that those people who can prepare themselves for hurricanes should do so, and thereby enable the government to focus its resources on people — such as the elderly and disabled — who are the most vulnerable in major storms. The president urged residents to prepare for the 2009 hurricane season by visiting the federal government's disaster planning Web site at www.ready.gov

Statements By HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius And DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano On WHO Decision To Declare H1N1 Virus Outbreak A Pandemic

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano issued the following statements in response to the World Health Organization's (WHO) decision to raise the pandemic threat level on the novel H1N1 virus.

“The decision by the WHO was expected and doesn't change what we have been doing here in the United States to prepare for and respond to this public health challenge. Once we saw how fast this virus was spreading, we activated our pandemic plans and started doing all the things we needed to do to keep the public as safe and secure as possible,” said Secretary Sebelius. “What this declaration does do is remind the world that flu viruses like H1N1 need to be taken seriously. Although we have not seen large numbers of severe cases in this country so far, things could possibly be very different in the fall, especially if things change in the Southern Hemisphere, and we need to start preparing now in order to be ready for a possible H1N1 immunization campaign starting in late September.”

“We responded to the H1N1 outbreak from the outset with the presumption that a pandemic was likely, so this decision comes as no surprise. We acted aggressively to stay ahead of the virus as it spread across the country. Now our challenge is to prepare for a possible return in the fall,” said Secretary Napolitano. “The Obama Administration has been working together across the government and will continue to do so over the weeks and months ahead to keep the American people safe. We are reaching out to our partners in state and local government, in school districts and the private sector to urge them to modify and update their pandemic plans. We are working with our scientists to test and prepare a possible vaccine. And we are working with governments around the world to share what we know and learn from what is happening in their countries.”

What You Can Do To Fight The Flu

Staying informed on the current influenza outbreak and following the evolving guidance from national, state and local public health authorities. For the latest information, visit [New York State's H1N1 Influenza Update Page](#).

The [New York State Department of Health](#) is encouraging New Yorkers to practice good health hygiene and follow these tips to help reduce the spread of influenza:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water.
- Avoid contact with people who are ill.
- Stay home from work or school if you are sick.

For questions on H1N1 influenza, call the New York State Health Department's hotline at 1-800-808-1987. New York City residents should call 311.

New York State Office of Homeland Security Announces 2009 Regional Exercise Project

The New York State Office of Homeland Security (OHS) is soliciting applications from local governments to participate in regional exercises with the goal of expanding regional preparedness capabilities of first responders to respond to major terrorist events and/or natural disasters.

The Regional Exercise Project is designed to enhance regional collaboration and regional preparedness by administering as many as four table-top exercises (TTX), analyzing results, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and shaping future investment strategies. Each TTX will test regional capabilities against one of the pre-selected national planning scenarios (e.g., Major Hurricane, Major Earthquake, Explosive Attack, Chemical Attack, Biological Attack or Radiological Attack). Each TTX must be multi-jurisdictional and include multi-disciplines.

Applications must be submitted through the OHS E-Grants System no later than 11:59 p.m. on August 10, 2009. Supporting documentation must be received as an attachment to the application. Applications and supporting documentation received after the due date will not be considered.

For more detailed information and project application please visit the New York State Office of Homeland Security website at www.security.state.ny.us or contact Louis A. Valenti, Jr., Special Projects Coordinator at 518-457-4090 or via e-mail at grants@security.state.ny.us.

2009 NY State Citizen Preparedness Volunteer Conference

More than 240 persons attended the Second Annual NY State Citizen Preparedness Volunteer Conference held at the Holiday Inn Turf in Colonie on June 18-19. The two-day conference attracted volunteers and professional staff from across the State in the fields of preparedness, response and volunteerism.

In addition to giving the attendees a chance to share lessons learned and network, the conference agenda stressed the importance of community collaboration, the development of local spontaneous management plans and the regionalization of Citizen Corp Councils.

The panel discussion entitled “Successful Volunteer Collaborations” focused on bringing together various volunteer agencies to work towards a common goal. Some of the keys to success included shared trust and goals, maximizing resources, and recognition of each partner’s work and contributions. The panelists concluded that as a result of this activity the community benefits with an increased sense of preparedness and safety through a coordinated efforts that minimizes duplications and makes the most of limited dollars.

Another panel discussion examined “The Benefits of Spontaneous Volunteer Management Planning.” The panelists stated that in times of emergency, many private citizens want to help. These untrained volunteers, they said, offer additional “helping hands” and talents. The American Red Cross of Greater New York said using spontaneous volunteers should be integrated into the planning process and tied closely to the goals and mission of the overall response organization.



Sharing Ideas: Jill Dunkel, Alleghany County Citizen Corp; Marge Brinn, Yates County Public Health Medical Reserve Corp; and Kathy Martin, Town of Bethlehem Volunteer Medical Reserve Corp during a conference break. Photo by Ruth Hess, SEMO.

Training Schedule thru October 21, 2009

July 6-8, 2009	Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation (HSEEP) - Announcement	Erie County Emergency Services
July 15-17, 2009	ICS Intermediate (I-300) - Announcement	Alleghany County Public Safety Facility
July 21-23, 2009	ICS Intermediate (I-300) - Announcement	Orange County Fire Training Facility
July 28-30, 2009	ICS Intermediate (I-300) - Announcement	Jefferson Public Safety Building
August 4-6, 2009	ICS Intermediate (I-300) - Announcement	Suffolk County Police Academy
August 25-27, 2009	Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation (HSEEP) - Announcement	Suffolk County Fire Academy
October 19-21, 2009	Save The Date 2009 Annual DPC Conference More information, including lodging details, will be available shortly.	Crowne Plaza Hotel Lake Placid, New York