



FEMA

LESSON LEARNED

Incident Command: Clarifying the Roles and Functions of Mobile Command Posts

SUMMARY

Jurisdictions should develop plans that clearly define the roles and functions to be performed by their mobile command posts (MCP).

DESCRIPTION

Pennsylvania Region 13 sponsored and conducted the Steel Hammer full-scale exercise (FSE) in conjunction with Beaver County Emergency Medical Services from September 14 to 16, 2007. Over 3,000 participants from 128 federal, state, local, and private sector organizations participated in the FSE. Region 13 conducted the FSE to test a broad scope of response capabilities across multiple jurisdictional levels and agencies. The FSE scenario included the dispersion of liquid chlorine by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device and the dissemination of anthrax in three separate locations. One FSE objective was to test the Region's ability to control and support response operations through alternate emergency operations centers (EOC). The FSE scenario included a planned failure of the Beaver County EOC and the transfer of its functions to the Allegheny County EOC.

The Pennsylvania Region 13 Task Force consists of 13 counties and the City of Pittsburgh in southwestern Pennsylvania. The Task Force provides the Region with an all-hazards response capability.

During the FSE, the Beaver County MCP served as a public safety answering and dispatch point due to the failure of the county EOC. The MCP also handled duties and message traffic that would have been more appropriately handled by an EOC. Incident commanders transmitted message traffic and resource requests through available radio communication channels that were coordinated by the MCP. However, the Beaver County MCP became swamped by the volume of message traffic at peak times, which delayed communications. This was due to an insufficient number of workstations as well as the older equipment at the Beaver County MCP. The Steel Hammer after-action report (AAR) also noted that the problems encountered by the Beaver County MCP may be attributable to a lack of clarity and definition of the tasks to be performed by an MCP versus a fixed facility EOC.

The AAR recommends that Region 13 jurisdictions develop plans that clearly define the roles and functions to be performed by MCPs. The AAR noted that there is a need for greater familiarity of and practice with the National Incident Management System regarding the definitions and roles of MCPs, EOCs, and other incident facilities. The AAR recommended expanding the availability and delivery of Incident Command System 300- and 400-level classes to include company officers and first-line supervisors.

Jurisdictions should develop plans that clearly define the roles and functions to be performed by their MCPs.

CITATION

Pennsylvania Region 13. *DRAFT Operation STEEL HAMMER After Action Report*. 22 Oct 2007.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=35104>

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