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LESSON LEARNED

School Evacuations: Using Traffic Directors to Control Bus Arrival and Departure

SUMMARY

Prior to an evacuation, school administrators should designate staff members to act as traffic directors who can aid bus drivers who are not familiar with the evacuating school's pick-up zones.

DESCRIPTION

On December 16, 2004, Vermont's Windham Southeast Supervisory Union (WSSU) school district conducted an exercise evacuating 17 schools within the 10-mile emergency planning zone of Yankee Nuclear Power Facility. The drill called for the transportation of 1,500 students. The simultaneous evacuation of all schools in the WSSU district required 72 buses, 40 of which were provided by a bus company located approximately 30 minutes away in Swanzey, New Hampshire.

It quickly became clear that the New Hampshire drivers were not familiar with the day-to-day traffic flow or pick-up procedures of the WSSU schools. Some bus drivers missed the entrance to one elementary school, while others questioned whether to proceed to normal student pick-up zones or to specially designated evacuation pick-up zones. This created significantly longer transit times for many arriving buses and resulted in congested traffic patterns around most schools. After the exercise, school administrators and emergency managers decided that the confusion could be prevented by designating staff members to act as traffic directors at each school prior to an evacuation.

Prior to an evacuation, school administrators should designate staff members to act as traffic directors who can aid bus drivers who are not familiar with the evacuating school's pick-up zones.

CITATION

Barlow, Daniel. "Evacuation Drill, Take Two, Bumpy but OK." *Rutland Herald*. 16 February 2005.

Mason, Justin. "Evacuation Plan to be Tested Again." *Brattleboro Reformer*. 13 January 2005.

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