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LESSON LEARNED

Emergency Management: Assigning an Agricultural Specialist to State Emergency Operations Centers

SUMMARY

State emergency managers should ensure that a state agricultural specialist is available for deployment to the state emergency operations center (SEOC). The specialist should maintain close coordination between the state agriculture department and the SEOC to ensure that relevant agricultural information is incorporated into plans and situational updates.

DESCRIPTION

From September 9 to 10, 2008, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region X hosted a full-scale exercise (FSE) within the 10-mile emergency planning zone (EPZ) surrounding the Columbia Generating Station (CGS) nuclear power plant in Richland, Washington. Over 100 federal, state, and local agencies from 8 counties in Washington and Oregon participated in the FSE. The goal of the FSE was to test and assess the capabilities of state and local emergency preparedness organizations in implementing their radiological emergency response plans. Specific exercise objectives focused on emergency operations management, protective action decision-making and implementation, the measurement and analysis of radiological contaminants, and public information dissemination. The FSE simulated the release of radiological materials into the atmosphere due to a reactor leak at the CGS.

The Columbia Generating Station is a nuclear power plant located in the southeastern quadrant of the US Department of Energy's Hanford Reservation, approximately 10 miles north of Richland, WA. For more information on the CGS please refer to the [Energy Northwest](#) Web site.

FEMA and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission together designated the 10 miles surrounding all US nuclear power plants as EPZs. The EPZ for CGS has a total resident population of 3,674 and transient population of 15,836.

During the FSE, Oregon did not deploy an agricultural specialist to its state Emergency Operations Facility (EOF). Due to the absence of the specialist's subject matter expertise, EOF staff encountered difficulty developing an agricultural sampling plan for Oregon. As a result, the Oregon section of the sampling plan consisted only of a single page of general instructions outlining procedures for obtaining vegetation, soil, and water samples. The Oregon section also failed to identify specific crops for sampling or the locations of these crops. Consequently, crop sampling operations for Oregon lacked specificity and were inconsistent with the state of Washington's agricultural sampling plan.

State emergency managers should ensure that a state agricultural specialist is available for deployment to the SEOC. The specialist should maintain close coordination between the

state agriculture department and the SEOC to ensure that relevant agricultural information is incorporated into plans and situational updates.

CITATION

Federal Emergency Management Agency Region X. *Columbia Generating Station Plume and Ingestion Pathway Exercise After-Action Report*. 15 Dec 2008.
<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=35255>

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