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LESSON LEARNED

Exercise Design: Incorporating Secondary, Unrelated Incidents

SUMMARY

Exercise designers should consider incorporating secondary, unrelated incidents into their scenarios to simulate the complexity of emergency response operations.

DESCRIPTION

On April 15 and 22, 2004, members of the Jefferson County Office of Emergency Management and the University of Denver's Graduate School of International Studies, Homeland Security Program coordinated Exercise "Team Spirit," a tabletop exercise designed to simulate the destruction of two passenger airplanes outside Denver, Colorado. The exercise scenario required participants to respond to emergencies at aircraft debris impact sites throughout the region while also responding to several other incidents unrelated to the air disaster. These events included an emergency call from an armed man threatening suicide and an anonymous call warning of a hostage situation at a nearby middle school.

"Team Spirit" exercise planners used these secondary incidents, which were unrelated to the air disaster, to simulate the challenges associated with large-scale emergency response. The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office was forced to dispatch a Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team, an ambulance, and a negotiator to respond to the suicide threat. Similarly, the area commander for 2 of the aircraft debris impact sites dispatched a detective, a SWAT team, and approximately 20 police officers to the nearby middle school in order to investigate the reported hostage situation. These secondary incidents forced exercise participants to confront the command and resource challenges associated with a major emergency.

Exercise designers should consider incorporating secondary, unrelated incidents into their scenarios to simulate the complexity of emergency response operations.

CITATION

The University of Denver, Graduate School of International Studies, Homeland Security Program and the Jefferson County Office of Emergency Management. *After-Action Report for Exercise "TEAM SPIRIT," April 15 & 22, 2004.* 24 Aug 2004.

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