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LESSON LEARNED

Field Training: Conducting Debriefing Sessions at the Conclusion of Response Operations

SUMMARY

Incident commanders and response field training organizations should attempt to conduct debriefing sessions with responders at the end of a prolonged incident response. These sessions allow responders an opportunity to provide early feedback on the response operations and help trainers design more valuable training courses for responders.

DESCRIPTION

On the evening of Friday, May 4, 2007, a 1.7-mile wide F5 super cell tornado hit Greensburg, Kansas, with winds in excess of 200 miles per hour. The tornado devastated 95% of Greensburg, causing 10 fatalities and massive destruction to public and private property. Federal, state, local, and non-governmental entities worked together to coordinate response and recovery efforts. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region VII staff members worked closely with state and local agencies and established a Joint Field Office (JFO) in Wichita to assist with the response effort.

Greensburg is located in Kiowa County in south-central Kansas. It has a population of about 1,500. It falls within the jurisdiction of FEMA Region VII, which is headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri; Region VII is responsible for Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.

Disaster Assistance Employees (DAE) from Region VII and other Regions deployed to Greensburg and to the JFO to assist in the response effort. Region VII also deployed a Disaster Field Training Operation (DFTO) Training Unit Lead to conduct onsite training of the DAEs after the tornado. The DFTO cadre conducted training courses for DAEs and other responders in Greensburg and at the JFO in Wichita.

DAEs are temporary federal employees authorized to assist FEMA in disaster response and recovery operations. The DFTO provides onsite training opportunities to assist field staff members in performing their job functions.

The DFTO was unable to find time to schedule debriefing sessions before the end of the incident response. This prevented the DFTO from gathering valuable feedback from the DAEs and responders about incident response operations. Debriefing sessions could have helped them assess the effectiveness of training they provided during the incident response. Debriefing sessions can also give the responders the opportunity to discuss problems they may have had during the incident response, which helps the responders prepare for their next mobilization. The feedback also helps the trainers prepare more useful courses for the responders.

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sessions allow responders an opportunity to provide early feedback on the response operations and help trainers design more valuable training courses for responders.

CITATION

Lessons Learned Information Sharing. *The Federal Emergency Management Agency Response to the Greensburg, Kansas, May 4, 2007, Tornado After-Action Report*. 12 Dec 2008.

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