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Exercise Conduct: Preparing Volunteers for their Exercise Roles

SUMMARY

Exercise planners should ensure that exercise volunteers receive training and information before a full-scale exercise (FSE) in order to perform their role(s) properly. Even with training and information, however, volunteers may act inappropriately during an exercise.

DESCRIPTION

On June 7, 2005, Volusia County, Florida hosted a FSE simulating a man portable air defense systems (MANPADS) attack on a commercial airliner departing from Daytona Beach International Airport. The exercise's intent was to improve interoperability processes between agencies likely to participate in a Volusia County ocean mass casualty incident. Over 300 participants were involved in the exercise, with 140 volunteers designated as exercise "victims" or other "exercise injects." Exercise victims were positioned on a ¼ mile portion of Daytona Beach, while injects were periodically inserted into play as the FSE progressed.

Before the FSE, exercise planners staged volunteers at a local elementary school and provided them with information on the FSE, as well as their specific role(s) within the exercise. The information was conveyed in various forms, including:

- **Players' Manual:** Volusia County Emergency Management created and distributed a players' manual that detailed general exercise information, exercise participant roles and responsibilities, as well as other issues relevant to the FSE's operations and logistics.
- **Verbal Briefing:** Volunteers received an informational briefing that discussed their specific FSE roles and exercise safety issues.
- **Injury Tags:** Volunteers acting as victims were given an injury tag that described their hypothetical medical condition/symptoms and personal attributes, such as height, weight, and sex. The tags were designed based on recommendations from the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Domestic Preparedness Exercise and Evaluation Program and the Director of Volusia County Emergency Medical Services.

Despite pre-exercise volunteer training efforts, several reports of volunteers acting inappropriately surfaced throughout the FSE (e.g. building sand-castles, wildly running and screaming, and openly conversing with one another despite their "critical condition"). The improper behavior diminished the FSE's effectiveness by reducing its overall level of realism.

Exercise planners should ensure that exercise volunteers receive training and information before a FSE in order to perform their role(s) properly. This may involve the creation of a player's manual, a verbal briefing, and/or other activities or materials given in advance of an exercise. Even with training and information, however, volunteers may act inappropriately during an exercise.

CITATION

Callea, Donna and Ihuoma, Ezeh. "Beachside 'Plane Crash' Test of Skills." *Daytona Beach News-Journal Online*. June 8, 2005.

Mauney, James. Deputy Fire Chief, Volusia County Emergency Management. Interview with *Lessons Learned Information Sharing*. July 13, 2005.

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