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LESSON LEARNED

Incident Command: Keeping Emergency Operations Centers Advised of Protective Action Operations

SUMMARY

Incident command posts (ICP) should keep their emergency operations centers (EOC) advised of all areas subject to evacuation and/or shelter-in-place (SIP) during incident response operations. Information provided to the EOC should include the approximate number of people evacuated, the presence of any special needs populations, and the potential for additional areas to be evacuated.

DESCRIPTION

On July 16, 2005 the Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, Department of Public Safety hosted the Twisted Rail full-scale exercise (FSE). The exercise simulated a terrorist-initiated explosion and the release of liquid chemical agents from a train car in West Newton, PA. The FSE provided participating agencies with an opportunity to practice key capabilities, including weapons of mass destruction response, incident command system procedures, and the implementation of protective actions. Nearly 300 people from 48 federal, state, and local agencies participated in the FSE.

ICP personnel did not keep the EOC adequately apprised of protective action implementation during the exercise. For example, they did not inform the EOC when evacuation and SIP were initiated and completed, which areas of the county were affected, and how many people were involved. As a result, EOC personnel could not accurately determine the status of evacuees and address the potential needs of the at-risk population. The *Twisted Rail Exercise After-Action Report* recommended that ICP personnel provide the EOC with better situational information concerning protective actions during future incident responses.

ICPs should keep their EOCs advised of all areas subject to evacuation and/or SIP during incident response operations. Information provided to the EOC should include the approximate number of people evacuated, the presence of any special needs populations, and the potential for additional areas to be evacuated. Accurate and timely situational information can help the EOC effectively arrange shelters and transportation for at-risk populations and respond more appropriately to changing incident conditions. Incident command and EOC checklists can be used to record this information during incident responses.

CITATION

Westmoreland County, PA, Department of Public Safety, *Exercise Twisted Rail: After-Action Report*. 2005.

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