



FEMA

LESSON LEARNED

Emergency Planning: Establishing a Traffic Control Plan to Reduce Congestion around Incident Sites

SUMMARY

Emergency managers should consider establishing a traffic control plan to ensure rapid ingress/egress for emergency medical services (EMS) vehicles during mass casualty incidents. These plans can help responders prepare for incidents in areas that present transportation challenges.

DESCRIPTION

In March 2008, the US Coast Guard station at Ponce de Leon Inlet in New Smyrna Beach, Florida, held a tabletop exercise (TTX) designed to familiarize local responders with the draft Ponce de Leon Inlet Mass Rescue Operation (MRO) plan. TTX participants included 32 individuals from 17 government agencies and the private sector. The TTX consisted of a walking tour around the Coast Guard facility, which contained proposed locations for triage centers, helicopter landing sites, and an incident command post. The TTX scenario involved a burning passenger vessel, the *Lucky Lady*, which was several miles offshore with 440 passengers and crew members aboard. Many passengers were collapsing from smoke inhalation, and 185 were critically injured. TTX participants reviewed the steps responders would take to contain the fire, to evacuate all onboard, and to triage the injured. Through this TTX, planners elicited feedback from participants regarding the strengths and weakness of the draft MRO plan.

The Ponce de Leon Inlet Mass Rescue Operation plan outlines emergency response procedures for sea-based incidents such as distressed passenger vessels and offshore airplane crashes.

During the TTX, participants noted that the Coast Guard station and surrounding area could easily become congested with emergency vehicle traffic during an incident. Any congestion would pose a threat to emergency operations because it would inhibit the "rapid transportation flow" of injured people from the station to hospitals. Consequently, TTX participants suggested that planners establish a traffic control plan to mitigate vehicle congestion during an incident. According to the TTX after-action report, the plan should incorporate traffic flow maps of the surrounding neighborhoods and include traffic control logistics, such as patrol units and street barricades. Such a plan would provide medical vehicles with rapid ingress and egress routes to and from the operations site.

Emergency managers should consider establishing a traffic control plan to ensure rapid ingress/egress for EMS vehicles during mass casualty incidents. These plans can help responders prepare for incidents in areas that present transportation challenges.

CITATION

US Coast Guard. *Ponce de Leon Inlet Mass Rescue Operation Plan Seminar and Table Top Exercise*. 04 Sep 2008.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=31408>

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