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# LESSON LEARNED

## Emergency Operations Center Management: Additional Staffing during a Hospital Evacuation Event

### SUMMARY

Emergency managers should consider additional staffing and education for individuals staffing the Emergency Support Function (ESF)-8 desk in emergency operations centers (EOC) during a hospital evacuation event.

### DESCRIPTION

The South Central Pennsylvania Regional Task Force conducted the Dark December full-scale exercise (FSE) from December 11 to 13, 2007. The objectives of the FSE included the exercising of the regional mass casualty incident plan, the development of hospital disaster acceptance capabilities, and the management of an internal hospital disaster. In the exercise scenario, an earthquake at Carlisle Fairgrounds in Cumberland County, PA, resulted in a large number of victims presenting to area hospitals and select specialty medical services and clinics. One receiving hospital conducted a mock evacuation to further complicate the situation. More than 1,200 individuals from within the region participated, including 968 participants from 4 state and 30 county and city agencies. During the FSE, regional healthcare facilities focused on integrating processes to ensure that response activities occurred promptly, efficiently, and effectively.

#### South Central Pennsylvania Regional Task Force

The goal of the South Central Pennsylvania Regional Counter-Terrorism Task Force is to develop and to maintain an effective crisis and consequence regional response program for the effective and efficient response to acts of terrorism. The Task Force represents Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, and York counties.

Cumberland County partially activated its EOC and assigned the ESF-8 head as the primary contact for all health- or medical-related needs and informational requests. The ESF-8 desk was quickly inundated with requests from hospitals and medical clinics. Additionally, the ESF-8 head lacked the necessary expertise to handle specific requests, e.g. questions and requests related to environmental health, pharmaceuticals, and hospital protocol. The FSE participants suggested that additional staffing would be beneficial for the ESF-8 desk in order to address these problems. The after-action report recommended that emergency managers consider additional staffing in several areas, including:

- Additional ESF-8 desk staff in specific sub-disciplines, such as hospital specialty, pharmaceutical specialty, environmental health, laboratories, and emergency medical services transportation; and
- A group leader or branch director assigned for the coordination of activities and information.

Emergency managers should consider additional staffing and education for individuals staffing the ESF-8 desk in EOCs during a hospital evacuation event.

**CITATION**

Cocciardi, Joseph. Planning Specialist, South Central Pennsylvania Regional Counter-Terrorism Task Force, Hospital and Healthcare Subcommittee. Interview with *Lessons Learned Information Sharing*, 29 Jul 2008.

South Central Pennsylvania Regional Counter-Terrorism Task Force. "*Dark December*" Exercise After-Action Report and Improvement Plan. 18 Dec 2007.  
<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=31736>

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