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LESSON LEARNED

Interoperable Communications: Programming State and Local Interoperability Frequencies in Response Agencies' Radio Systems

SUMMARY

Emergency response agencies should ensure that state and local interoperable frequencies are programmed into their radio systems. This can enhance interoperability and help personnel of different agencies communicate effectively during a response.

DESCRIPTION

The Riverside County, California, Department of Public Health (DOPH), Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (PHEPR) sponsored the Riverside County Countywide Hazmat Operations Group (CHOG)/March Air Reserve Base (MARB) Air Show Disaster Functional Exercise (FE) on March 18, 2010. The FE planning team included personnel from DOPH PHEPR, CHOG, MARB, Emergency Medical Services Agency, Riverside County Sheriff, and Riverside County Fire Department Office of Emergency Services.

The CHOG/MARB Air Show Disaster exercise scenario simulated multiple HazMat releases and suicide bomber explosive device detonations at the MARB during the 2010 Air Show. Personnel from 37 Federal, state, and local agencies and organizations participated in the FE. This FE tested multiagency coordination; interoperable communications; victim decontamination, triage, and transportation; and HazMat response capabilities of participating agencies and organizations.

> CHOG is a partnership of Southern California agencies to enhance local hazardous materials (HazMat) response capabilities. CHOG member organizations include: Cal-Fire's HazMat Teams; the cities of Hemet, Riverside, and Corona; the Riverside County Sheriff's Department; the City of Riverside Bomb Squad; DOPH; Riverside County Environmental Health HazMat Response Team; and the Riverside County Sheriff-Coroner's Office.

> MARB is located in the western Riverside County region of Southern California and encompasses approximately 6,500 acres. MARB houses the Air Force Reserve Command and units from the Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, and Air National Guard.

Many participating agencies employ different communications systems that are not always compatible during this exercise. At the time of the FE, many of these agencies had not programmed state and local interoperability frequencies into their radios. As a result, fire, law enforcement, and public health personnel encountered difficulties in establishing unified communications and exchanging information effectively during the FE. The after–action report recommends that every agency has both state and local interoperability frequencies programmed in their radio system.

Emergency response agencies should ensure that state and local interoperable frequencies are programmed into their radio systems. This can enhance interoperability and help personnel of different agencies communicate effectively during a response.

19 Nov 2010

CITATIONS

Riverside County, California, Department of Public Health. *The Riverside County March Air Reserve Base/Countywide Hazmat Operations Group Air Show Disaster Exercise After Action Report/Improvement Plan*. 28 Apr 2010.
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http://www.march.afrc.af.mil/index.asp

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