

# ***NORTHWEST ALABAMA REGIONAL AIRPORT EXERCISE – 2014 Muscle Shoals, Alabama***



## ***After-Action Report/Improvement Plan***

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The After-Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) aligns exercise objectives with preparedness doctrine to include the National Preparedness Goal and related frameworks and guidance. Exercise information required for preparedness reporting and trend analysis is included; users are encouraged to add additional sections as needed to support their own organizational needs.

## EXERCISE OVERVIEW

<b>Exercise Name</b>	Northwest Alabama Regional Airport Exercise
<b>Exercise Dates</b>	July 31, 2014
<b>Scope</b>	This exercise ran for 6 hours at the Northwest Alabama Regional Airport, Muscle Shoals, Alabama. It required response from multiple counties and municipalities in the area.
<b>Mission Area(s)</b>	Response
<b>Core Capabilities</b>	Operational Coordination, Environmental Response/Health and Safety, Mass Care Services, On-Scene Security and Protection, Public Information and Warning, Operational Communication, and Public Health and Medical Services.
<b>Objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Test the Northwest Regional Airport's Disaster Plan</li> <li>2. Challenge responders, EMS, Public Health, and hospitals with mass contaminated casualties.</li> <li>3. Test local hazmat response - to include decontamination.</li> <li>4. Evaluate the effectiveness of unified command</li> <li>5. Evaluate local public information procedures and guidelines.</li> <li>6. Review EOD procedures.</li> </ol>
<b>Threat or Hazard</b>	Hazardous material: Farm insecticides and aviation fuel. Additional threat of an improvised explosive device.
<b>Scenario</b>	The scenario included a multiple aircraft accident involving a passenger plane and a crop duster at the local airport. An additional element of explosive ordinance is introduced by a deranged family member of one of the aircraft victims.
<b>Sponsor</b>	Florence/Lauderdale EMA
<b>Participating Organizations</b>	<p>American Red Cross</p> <p>Colbert County 911</p> <p>Colbert County EMA</p> <p>Colbert County Public Health Department</p>



Eliza Coffee Memorial Hospital  
 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)  
 Florence Police Department  
 Florence/Lauderdale EMA  
 Helen Keller EMS  
 Helen Keller Hospital  
 Muscle Shoals Fire Department  
 Muscle Shoals Police Department  
 Northwest Alabama Regional Airport  
 Shoals EMS  
 Shoals Hospital  
 Silver Airways  
 Transportation Security Administration (TSA)  
 University of North Alabama Police Department



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## **ANALYSIS OF CORE CAPABILITIES**

Aligning exercise objectives and core capabilities provides a consistent taxonomy for evaluation that transcends individual exercises to support preparedness reporting and trend analysis. Table 1

includes the exercise objectives, aligned core capabilities, and performance ratings for each core capability as observed during the exercise and determined by the evaluation team.

Objective	Core Capability	Performed without Challenges (P)	Performed with Some Challenges (S)	Performed with Major Challenges (M)	Unable to be Performed (U)
Test the Northwest Regional Airport's Disaster Plan	Operational Coordination	P			
	Public Information and Warning	P			
	On-Scene Security and Protection	P			
Challenge responders, EMS, Public Health, and hospitals with mass contaminated casualties.	Public Health and Medical Services		S		
Test local hazmat response - to include personnel decontamination	Environmental Response/Health and Safety		S		
Evaluate the effectiveness of unified command	Operational Coordination Public Information and Warning Operational Communication	P			
Evaluate local public information procedures and guidelines	Public Information and Warning	P			
Review EOD procedures	On-Scene Security and Protection	P			

**Table 1. Summary of Core Capability Performance**

The following sections provide an overview of the performance related to each exercise objective and associated core capability, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

## **Objective 1: Test the Northwest Alabama Regional Airport's Disaster Plan.**

The strengths and areas for improvement for each core capability aligned to this objective are described in this section.

### **Core Capability 1: Operational Coordination**

**Strength:** Airport Management response and integration into the unified command post.

**Analysis:** The airport management and staff quickly completed all initial notifications and were instrumental in responders arriving at the scene without any delay. All external notifications were completed rapidly and accurately. Airport management moved immediately to the responder's command post and expertly coordinated activities with responders. An airport command post was established in the airfield communications room and maintained constant contact with the airport manager in the on-scene command post. Staff was obviously well versed in executing the airport emergency plan.

**Areas for Improvement 1.1:** Communication devices

**Analysis 1.1:** The airport staff was limited to only cell phones for emergency communications. While they were able to communicate effectively without challenges during this exercise, a higher volume of calls during an actual disaster could impact cell communications. Equipping the airport with sufficient hand held radios would improve their ability to continue emergency communications during an actual disaster as well as give them direct communication with first responders.

### **Core Capability 2: Public Information and Warning**

**Areas for Improvement:** None noted

**Analysis:** The airport staff immediately established their position as the sole point of contact for emergency information and media releases. Family and friends of victims were managed and provided with information by TSA agents, airport staff, and Red Cross Volunteers.

### **Core Capability 3: On-scene Security and Protection**

**Areas for Improvement:** None Noted

**Analysis:** TSA agents quickly responded to a reported aircraft theft and then a crash between the stolen aircraft and a commuter jet. All external notifications were made. Agents effectively utilized and communicated with local law enforcement officers to secure the airport.

*(Note: The Airport Disaster Plan requires airport staff to make emergency notifications to each response agency as a separate call. This represents several phone calls over several minutes needed to complete. Local 911/dispatch protocols as such that only ONE call to 911 is needed to*

*activate all response agencies. Recommend looking into simplifying the emergency call process in the Disaster plan to just calling 911.)*

## **Objective 2: Challenge responders, EMS, Public Health, and hospitals with mass contaminated casualties.**

The strengths and areas for improvement for each core capability aligned to this objective are described in this section.

### **Core Capability: Public Health and Medical Services.**

**Strength:** Emergency Medical Services and local Emergency Room treatment.

**Analysis:** Emergency Medical Services and hospital emergency rooms demonstrated they have the appropriate medical and non-medical staffing, resources, skills, and capabilities to provide excellent response to a mass casualty situation.

**Areas for Improvement 2.1:** Treatment of contaminated casualties

**Analysis:** Contaminated victims were not isolated while waiting on decontamination. Some confusion existed concerning triaging, pre-hospital treatment, and decontamination. Sometimes it was unclear if a patient arriving at the Emergency Room had been previously decontaminated. EMS and hazmat personnel need to work together and develop or improve standard operating procedures for a hazmat incident involving casualties. Additional drills in this area will prove to be beneficial as well.

**Areas for Improvement 2.2:** Triage Training

**Analysis:** Victims were removed from the crash scene to a triage area quickly by fire personnel; however, no one was treating or performing triage for some time. Triage categories were changed numerous times indicating a need for further training in triage. There were no designated areas for different triage categories (immediate, delayed, etc.). All victims were bunched together. This could result in a potential for delay of transporting victims with the most serious life-threatening conditions. Additional training for EMS and fire personnel in emergency triage would be beneficial.

## **Objective 3: Test local hazmat response - to include personnel decontamination.**

### **Core Capability: Environmental Response/Health and Safety**

**Areas for Improvement 3.1:** Establishing hazard zones.

**Analysis:** The first team in correctly and quickly identified the hazard. However, hazard zones were not correctly set and identified. The hot, warm, and cool zones were too close to the hazard area and no zone boundaries were physically identified to prevent un-necessary exposure.

**Areas for Improvement 3.2:** Responder safety.

**Analysis:** Adequate PPE was available and used. Rehab services were on scene and available. Hazmat members demonstrated a good knowledge of field patient decontamination. However, some cross-contamination occurred when mobile victims were extracted into the same area as firemen not protected with appropriate PPE. Additional trained hazmat team members are needed to effectively deal with a major incident.

## **Objective 4: Evaluate the effectiveness of Unified Command.**

### **Core Capability 4.1: Operational Coordination**

**Strength:** Incident/Unified Command.

**Analysis:** Incident command was expertly demonstrated throughout this exercise. From initial establishment of a command post, to transfer of command, to transition to a unified command, this was the best example of Operational Coordination seen to date by this evaluating organization.

### **Core Capability 4.2: Operational Communication**

**Areas for Improvement 4.2:** Communication devices.

**Analysis:** Lines of communication were clear. Each agency was able to provide information to other agencies as was appropriate. It was noted that most agencies were resorting to cell phones as a primary means of communication. Airport managers do not have radios. TSA agents have antiquated radios and we not able to communicate on the radios with any degree of consistency. Further, hazmat communication was degraded due to not having the quantity of radios needed. Adequate numbers of radios with shared frequencies will significantly improve tactical communications with all agencies.

## **Objective 5: Review EOD Procedures**

### **Core Capability 5: On-Scene Security and Protection.**

**Strength:** Bomb threat response.

**Analysis:** The EOD team was very well versed in EOD operations. The team was precise, cautious, and extremely knowledgeable in their duties. Their demonstration of EOD response was one of the best seen to date by this evaluation team.

## **Objective 6: Mass Care Services**

### **Core Capability 5: Mass Care Services**

**Strength:** Local Red Cross response and support.

**Analysis:** The local Red Cross demonstrated an exceptional ability and capability to support emergency response with a wide range of services. Throughout this exercise, Red Cross volunteers were fully engaged with response agencies as they provided services such as feeding of responders and victim family and friends, sheltering needs, and reunification of victims with family. This was an outstanding performance by the Red Cross.

## APPENDIX A: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Core Capability	Issue/Area for Improvement	Corrective Action	Capability Element <sup>1</sup>	Primary Responsible Organization	Organization POC	Start Date	Completion Date
Operational Communication	Communication Devices (radios)	Procure radios for airport staff with capability to communicate with local authorities	Equipment	NWAR Airport	Airport Director	1 September 2014	31 August 2015
		Procure radios for TSA staff with the capability to communicate with local authorities	Equipment	TSA	unk	1 September 2014	31 August 2015
		Procure additional radios for the Hazmat team	Equipment	Muscle Shoals Fire Department	Fire Chief	1 September 2014	31 August 2015
Public Health and Medical Services.	Treatment of contaminated casualties	Review protocol for treatment of contaminated patients. Insure input by local ERs, EMS, and fire. Exercise protocol.	Planning And Training	Colbert County EMA (coordination)	Director	1 September 2014	1 March 2015
	Triage	Provide additional training in triage for Fire and EMS personnel to improve this capability	Training	Colbert County EMA (Coordination)	Director	1 September 2014	1 March 2015

Environmental Response/Health and Safety	Establishing hazard zones	Provide hazmat teams with additional training in hazmat operations	Training	Muscle Shoals Fire Department	Fire Chief	1 September 2014	31 August 2015
	Responder safety	Develop and train additional firemen for hazmat operations.	Training	Muscle Shoals Fire Department	Fire Chief	1 September 2014	31 August 2015

1. Capability Elements are: Planning, Organization, Equipment, Training, or Exercise.

## APPENDIX B: EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS

Participating Organizations
<b>Federal</b>
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
Transportation Security Administration (TSA)
<b>State</b>
Alabama Department of Public Health
Alabama Department of Public Safety
University of North Alabama Police Department
University of North Alabama C.E.R.T.
<b>Local</b>
American Red Cross
Colbert County 911
Colbert County EMA
Eliza Coffee Memorial Hospital
Fayette County EMA
Florence Police Department
Florence/Lauderdale EMA
Helen Keller EMS
Helen Keller Hospital
Lauderdale County EMA
Marion County EMA
Muscle Shoals Fire Department
Muscle Shoals Police Department
Northwest Alabama Regional Airport
Shoals EMA
Shoals Hospital
Silver Airways



Initial Response



Taking care of the Victims



Patient decontamination



EMS transporting victims



Thank you Red Cross



A couple of the 30 plus volunteer actors