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LESSON LEARNED

Emergency Operations Centers: Assigning Emergency Management Agency Representatives to Functional Groups

SUMMARY

Emergency managers should consider assigning an emergency management agency representative to each functional group serving at the emergency operations center (EOC). This can help to maintain a common operating picture (COP) throughout the EOC during activations.

DESCRIPTION

The New York State Office of Homeland Security, New York State Emergency Management Office (NY SEMO), and New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) sponsored the Empire Express Hurricane Functional Exercise (FE) from May 30 to June 4, 2008. The exercise scenario involved a Category 2 hurricane that made landfall in New York City and impacted 3 nearby counties. This hurricane caused a massive amount of debris, which posed significant public health risks to residents, and required extensive rescue operations. EOC management activities were conducted and evaluated during the FE through the activation of the state EOC on June 2. The New York State EOC coordinated response efforts with NYS DOH, regional health operations centers, and Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester counties. Six federal, fifty-four state, forty-nine local, and twenty private sector entities participated in the FE.

The New York State EOC employed a series of functional groups during the FE. The groups used the New York State EOC's information management system, DisasterLAN, to receive updates and to process resource requests. Some groups felt isolated since each worked from a designated area separated from the main EOC. On the second day of the FE, the deputy operations section chief checked in with each functional group to help alleviate the sense of isolation and to clarify EOC processes. Participants found this extra support very helpful and appreciated the close interaction with NY SEMO.

DisasterLAN is a Web-enabled crisis information management software tool that delivers real-time data to emergency managers and first responders. The software enables users to share data through message boards, geographic information systems-based maps, resource catalogues, and other tools.

The *Empire Express Hurricane Functional Exercise (FE) After Action Report (AAR)* notes that the state EOC and functional group participants would have benefited from greater support from NY SEMO. The AAR recommends that NY SEMO assign a representative to each functional group to provide guidance on EOC procedures. The AAR recommends that NY SEMO representatives interface with functional groups on an individual basis during an

For more information on supporting EOC functional groups during an activation, please refer to the *Lessons Learned Information Sharing Lesson Learned, [Emergency Operations Centers: Establishing a Helpdesk for Personnel](#)*.

activation. This will help functional groups overcome the challenges and feelings of isolation due to being located outside of the main EOC.

Emergency managers should consider assigning an emergency management agency representative to each functional group serving at the EOC. This can help to maintain a COP throughout the EOC during activations.

CITATION

Federal Emergency Management Agency. *Empire Express Hurricane Functional Exercise (FE) After Action Report (AAR)*. 12 Nov 2009.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=41330>

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