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PRACTICE NOTE

Field Training: The Federal Emergency Management Agency Region VII Disaster Field Training Operation's Management Training Series

PRACTICE

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region VII Disaster Field Training Operation (DFTO) management training series increases the effectiveness and efficiency of supervisory personnel by enhancing their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

DESCRIPTION

A series of tornadoes battered southwest Kansas in early May 2007. On the evening of Friday, May 4, 2007, a 1.7-mile-wide EF5 super cell tornado hit Greensburg, Kansas, with winds in excess of 200 miles per hour. The tornado devastated 95% of Greensburg, causing 10 fatalities and massive destruction to public and private property. Federal, state, and local governmental and non-governmental entities worked together to coordinate response and recovery efforts.

FEMA Region VII immediately established an Area Field Office (AFO) in Greensburg to coordinate response operations and deployed a DFTO training unit lead to conduct onsite training at the AFO. Two weeks later, FEMA Region VII established a Joint Field Office (JFO) in Wichita to supplement the AFO. Disaster assistance employees (DAE) from Region VII and other regions deployed to the AFO and JFO to assist in the response effort. DAEs filled various response roles, including management.

DFTO staff members located at the JFO recognized that many DAEs had been unable to attend specialized management courses in the past due to scheduling conflicts, selection criteria, and/or lack of available seats. The DFTO team therefore decided to create an improved management training series especially for DAEs deployed to the JFO. The DFTO training unit lead submitted a proposal to the federal coordinating officer (FCO) to provide an in-house management series in August 2007 and began conducting the courses soon after.

DFTO staff members solicited help from selected officers, such as the equal rights officer, to choose seven training courses from the course catalog available on the DFTO Web site. DFTO staff members chose the following courses for the management training series:

- Working as a Team

Greensburg is located in Kiowa County in south-central Kansas. It has a population of approximately 1,500. FEMA Region VII is headquartered in Kansas City, Missouri, and is responsible for Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska.

DAEs are temporary federal employees authorized by the Stafford Act to assist FEMA in disaster response and recovery options. DAEs are often assigned to a workforce cadre, such as logistics or mitigation.

- Time Management and Delegation
- Managing Meetings
- Thriving in Change
- Conflict Resolution
- Problem Solving
- Team Reconstruction
- Briefing and Presentation Skills

DFTO staff members designed the courses to be taken in succession and to build upon one another sequentially.

The FCO suggested that both managerial and non-managerial staff members be eligible to register for the training. This allowed additional DAE staff members interested in assuming supervisor responsibilities in the future to attend with their supervisor's permission. It also enabled supervisors to encourage training of those they felt had supervisory potential. As a result, a mix of participants wanting to update and/or develop management skills participated in the training.

DFTO staff members taught all the courses using instructor and student materials available on the DFTO Web site. Each class lasted 2.5 hours and was conducted at the JFO in Wichita. In total, 61 DAEs participated in the training. Participants downloaded materials, including instructor guides and student manuals, from the DFTO Web site.

The DFTO team also developed a 3-day training course for local, non-DAE hires at a college near Greensburg. Further, the DFTO team included a weekly training situation report in the JFO Situation Report and used the FEMA Employee Knowledge Center to help FEMA employees participate in independent study courses. These additional training opportunities allowed employees to continue their training during deployments and to expand their skills.

CITATION

Lessons Learned Information Sharing. *The Federal Emergency Management Agency Response to the Greensburg, Kansas, May 4, 2007, Tornado After-Action Report*. 12 Dec 2008.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=39054>

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