



MRC ★ In Touch

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Featured Article

Portage County MRC Participates in Multi-State Talon Shield Exercise

Six volunteers of the Portage County (OH) MRC unit participated in a multi-state (Ohio, Illinois, West Virginia, and Oklahoma) and multi-jurisdictional exercise called Talon Shield in early August 2010 with the Portage County Public Safety Agencies and the Ohio National Guard, among other local public agencies. The MRC joined the three-day exercise for two days at Camp Ravenna Joint Military Training Center in Ohio. The purpose of the exercise was to test the Ohio National Guard's ability to work with national, regional, state, and local emergency responders. In addition, it allowed soldiers and airmen to experience working with civilian agencies.

The MRC unit was involved with the exercise, because the Portage County Emergency Management Agency works closely with the MRC, which is coordinated by the Portage County Health Department. The two agencies collaborate on Volunteer Reception Center (VRC) activities and the six participants from the MRC are also county VRC staff.

Exercise

Before attending the exercise, MRC participants attended a pre-training to discuss Incident Command Structure (ICS), documentation forms, and pertinent information regarding the exercise. During the morning of the actual exercise, participants met at Station 30, a central EMA location where vehicles are housed and participants were directed to meet to deploy for the exercise. Then, the drive order for the convoy was given and vehicles from all over Portage County moved out. Once the participants were onsite, a safety briefing was held with other agencies including fire, police, sheriff, and local health departments.

The exercise simulated buildings and public health infrastructure being destroyed after a chemical plant was hit by an F-4 tornado. The scenario included many casualties, heavy infrastructure damage, and the release of chemicals. The training was conducted on a structural collapse simulator to test the interoperability of agencies and public health infrastructure.

At the Incident Command Center, the Incident Commander assigned MRC volunteers to each unit: planning, logistics, and operations. The various responsibilities of the MRC included scribing for logistics and planning, registering and tracking exercise participants, managing the T-card system to track exercise participants, and completing activity logs.

In addition, the volunteers' comments were solicited to be included in the after-action report. The exercise also provided the MRC a chance to observe officers of military units and civilian response personnel.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

One of the challenges identified by MRC volunteers includes the need for all volunteers to understand ICS. Unit coordinator, Kim Villers says, "If we receive a Capacity Building Award from this year's application, we would direct a portion of it for more volunteer training in this area."

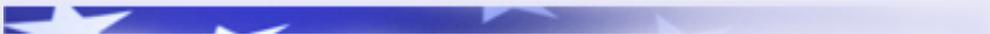
In addition, MRC participants recognized that communications and equipment and coverage provided challenges during the exercise. These types of issues will be addressed in the final Improvement Plan, and it will require updates to response agencies' communication plans, as well.

Final Thoughts

The interaction among civilians, the military, public health, and local public safety went smoothly. The communication was effective, due to the many existing working relationships that had been developed and nurtured between agencies since 9/11. Villers says, "For public health, grant funding has facilitated this process." MRC participants also said they enjoyed being part of the exercise and are happy they could contribute to the process with their observations and input.



MRC/NACCHO Connections



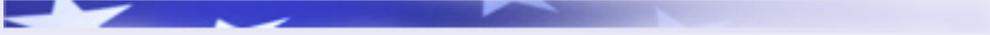
Food Safety Program at NACCHO

The Food Safety Program at NACCHO strives to support and work with local health departments to improve food safety and prevent foodborne illness. To ensure the seafood from the Gulf Coast region is safe to eat, representatives from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) met with health officers and fisheries directors from the Gulf Coast region to coordinate and implement a joint protocol for sampling and reopening state and federal waters.

For more information about the FDA's role with the seafood in the Gulf Coast, visit <http://www.fda.gov/Food/ucm210970.htm>.

Information is provided about the reopening of closed waters by state, the responsibilities of the FDA, monitoring and surveillance, and press releases and fact sheets are available, too.

Announcements



Register Today for the 2011 Public Health Preparedness Summit

The 2011 Public Health Preparedness Summit will be held in Atlanta February 22-25, 2011. Register early to save money for the 2011 Public Health Preparedness Summit! Register today at <http://www.phprep.org/2011/register/>.

To learn more about why you should attend the 2011 Summit, visit <http://www.phprep.org>.

The 2010 Profile Study Has Launched

NACCHO is pleased to announce the launch of the 2010 Profile of Local Health Departments (Profile) study! The purpose of the Profile study is to develop a comprehensive and accurate description of local health department (LHD) infrastructure and practice. <http://www.naccho.org/topics/infrastructure/profile/resources/2010report/index.cfm>

Vaccines for Children Awareness Campaign

NACCHO launched a campaign, with support from Sanofi Pasteur, to increase awareness of the Vaccines for Children program to educate parents about how they can access no- or low-cost vaccines for their children and teens. Campaign materials will include radio Public Service Announcements in English and Spanish, radio interviews, and posters and other printed outreach materials. Materials will be available soon for local health departments to order and share with community partners. For more information and updates, visit <http://www.naccho.org/topics/HPDP/immunization/vfc.cfm>.

MRC Lessons Learned and Experience Sharing

"MRC lessons learned and experience sharing" is a way for MRC units to share their practices, examples, and success stories. It is designed to highlight the challenges and successes of MRC units' involvement with emergency preparedness, response, and public health activities; therefore, MRC units and their leaders can learn

from one another. _

<http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/MRC/resources/mrcshare.cfm>

To submit information for either MRC: In Touch or MRC: In Focus, please contact Megan Skupien at mskupien@naccho.org or (202)783-1376.



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