

LAFAYETTE COUNTY HAZARDOUS CHEMICAL RELEASE

FUNCTIONAL/FIELD EXERCISE

September 15, 2009

AFTER ACTION REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lafayette County Functional/Field exercise was developed to test Lafayette County's policies, plans and procedures. The exercise planning team was purposefully limited in number to allow for the broadest level of player participation by key decision makers.

Based on the exercise planning team's deliberations, the following objectives were developed for Lafayette County Hazardous Chemical Release Functional/Field Exercise.

- Objective 1: Evaluate the ability of the Lafayette County School District to implement their Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) in response to a Hazardous Chemical Release incident on their school property.
- Objective 2: Evaluate the coordinated primary response activities of the School District, Sheriff's Office, County and Town of Mayo Volunteer Fire Departments, and other response and support agencies.
- Objective 3: Evaluate the corresponding response and support activities (emergency notification, emergency dispatch and incident communication) of on-scene coordination and information sharing.

The purpose of this report is to analyze exercise results, identify strengths to be maintained and built upon, identify potential areas for further improvement, and support development of corrective actions.

Major Strengths

The major strengths identified during this exercise are as follows:

Lafayette County established coordination between the response agencies on the scene and demonstrated the ability for an effective Unified Command, in spite of the limited personnel and resources in responding to a Mass Casualty event.

Upon notification, the ability to activate the Emergency Operations Center was demonstrated, beginning the process of utilizing the system at the state level, including mutual aid for resources and personnel, proving the expertise obtained by the emergency management staff within Lafayette County.

Primary Areas for Improvement

Throughout the exercise, several opportunities for improvement in Lafayette County's ability to respond to the incident were identified. The primary areas for improvement, including recommendations, are as follows:

Understanding and use of the Incident Command System. Lafayette County should conduct additional Incident Command System, position specific and Emergency Support Function training and workshops to ensure all responding agencies are adequately trained.

Training on Incident Scene/Crime Scene security and accountability.

Communication and Coordination from the incident scene with the Lafayette County Emergency Operations Center.

Lafayette County should identify additional department personnel to receive training and serve in key roles during incidents or events.

Lafayette County should continue to offer opportunities throughout the year to test and evaluate plans and procedures through exercises.

In all, Lafayette County conducted a beneficial exercise. Communication is the key to success in all exercises, drills and in real world events. If communication is inadequate, the availability to key personnel and resources will be limited and could suffer. As observed, the players in the exercise recognized the personnel shortfalls within Lafayette County and the limited resources that are available on-hand and within a short time frame. Included within this report is an Improvement Matrix that includes recommendations along with a completion schedule which can serve as a valuable tool to map and document progress in suggested areas.

SECTION 1: EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Exercise Details

Exercise Name

Lafayette County Hazardous Chemical Release Functional/Field Exercise

Type of Exercise

Functional/Field

Exercise Start Date

September 15, 2009

Exercise End Date

September 15, 2009

Duration

Four Hours

Location

Lafayette County High School

Sponsor

Lafayette County Emergency Management

Program

State Homeland Security Grant Program

Mission

Evaluate the Plans and procedures within Lafayette County

Capabilities

Onsite Incident Management

Emergency Operations Center Management

Scenario

Hazardous Chemical Release Agent in the schools

Exercise Planning Team Leadership

Alton Scott, Emergency Management

Participating Organizations

Lafayette County Sheriff's Office

Lafayette County School Board

Lafayette County Public Safety

Lafayette County Fire Rescue

Lafayette County Emergency 911

Florida Division of Forestry

American Red Cross

Lafayette County High School

Lafayette County Emergency Medical Services

SECTION 2: EXERCISE DESIGN SUMMARY

Exercise Purpose and Design

The Lafayette County Hazardous Chemical Release Functional/Field Exercise was designed to evaluate and validate existing Lafayette County plans and procedures for several essential functions. The scenario allowed for a plausible situation where a hazardous chemical was released inside the high school.

The exercise conduct was supported with State Homeland Security Grant funds. The exercise planning team developed the objectives to re-familiarize all agencies regarding their roles and responsibilities in a emergency situation, implement procedures and validate plans, testing the sustainability of direction and control.

Exercise Objectives, Capabilities, and Activities

Capabilities-based planning allows for exercise planning teams to develop exercise objectives and observe exercise outcomes through a framework of specific action items that were derived from the Target Capabilities List (TCL). The capabilities listed below form the foundation for the organization of all objectives and observations in this exercise. Additionally, each capability is linked to several corresponding activities and tasks to provide additional detail.

Based upon the identified exercise objectives below, the exercise planning team has decided to demonstrate the following capabilities during this exercise:

Onsite Incident Management Emergency Operations Center Management

- Objective 1: Evaluate the ability of the Lafayette County School District to implement their Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) in response to a Hazardous Chemical Release incident on their school property.
- Objective 2: Evaluate the coordinated primary response activities of the School District, Sheriff's Office, County and Town of Mayo Volunteer Fire Departments, and other response and support agencies.
- Objective 3: Evaluate the corresponding response and support activities (emergency notification, emergency dispatch and incident

communication) of on-scene coordination and information sharing.

Scenario Summary

The office of the school is filled with numerous staff. The students are in the hallways and proceeding to their assigned classrooms. It is a sunny day in the high 70's with wind from the east at 4 miles per hour.

The 911 Communications Center receives a call from the school office reporting that she feels sick and four (4) of the school staff inside the office are gasping for air and convulsing. Several more teachers are collapsing in the hallway and classrooms. She is evacuating the school and needs help. First responders are immediately dispatched to the scene.

After Fire and Sheriff's Deputies and Medical Emergency Units arrive on site, they conduct a size up, and initiate emergency response operations.

Those affected in the schools and in the parking lots near the exits appear to have been exposed to an unidentified substance and are convulsing and asphyxiating. Some are shaking uncontrollably and sweating profusely.

Many first responders at the response site exhibit similar symptoms and need immediate medical attention. Residential areas in the surrounding areas appear unaffected.

A representative from (WCTV-6 news) contacts Lafayette County officials to report that an unidentified caller claims to have released a nerve agent at the school as a first part of a coordinated terrorist attack to raise awareness of the economic suffering of the agricultural community caused by American businesses that import produce from foreign farmers. The television station goes live with the story moments later.

The emergency rooms at (Live Oak, Perry, Lake City, and Gainesville, Tallahassee) report that some of their personnel exhibit the same symptoms as patients from the schools. Shands-Live Oak, Doctors Memorial Hospital (Perry) activated their mass casualty disaster plan, and they are unable to care for additional victims. The designated trauma center (Shands-UF) requests technical information from the EOC regarding the agent used in the terrorist attack.

Shands-UF also reports that tissue and blood samples from several of the victims have been packaged as extreme biohazards and sent to the State Lab at FDLE, JROC by National Guard helicopter.

National television broadcasts, linking with the local affiliates, show live pictures of the incapacitated and dead being removed from the schools. Reporters request information

regarding the county's response to and preparedness for this type of incident. CNN requests an interview with the representative from the county.

Residents within two miles of the affected school(s) spontaneously evacuate their homes, frightened by the images on television. Traffic bottlenecks form in front of the school, caused by parents wanting to pick up children further complicating response activities. The combination of spontaneous evacuees and above-normal traffic results in traffic congestion throughout the downtown area.

A preliminary situation report indicates that the unidentified hazardous material affects 100 in Mayo and surrounding area. Residents in the vicinity request directions on what they should do and if they should evacuate. There is mounting concern and fear over the potential for additional chemical agent releases in other areas of the State. Media reports include rumors of widespread panic.

Responders continue to assess protective measures. "Hot spots" are identified inside the each school's ventilation system and other confined spots. Responders evaluate containment and decontamination strategies at the hot spots and ask if "forced ventilation" is an option.

Evacuation of selected areas continues. Other public protective measures are evaluated.

HAZMAT responders debate declaring upwind areas around the release site safe for reentry and believe vapor or inhalation risk is a threat in a limited area. Designated shelter locations request food, medicine, and dwelling resources and information on containment actions to prevent the spread of the chemical agent contamination to clean areas.

Hospitals in the area report increasing cases of medical personnel exhibiting symptoms of exposure. Medical teams are unsuccessful in identifying a chemical nerve agent, though they are certain that symptoms are caused by organophosphate poisoning.

Due to symptoms manifested by its medical personnel Doctors Memorial Hospital and North Florida Regional Medical Center closes its emergency room and discourages people from coming to their facilities. The Doctors Memorial Hospital director calls the county requesting assistance in evacuating unexposed hospital patients to another medical facility.

The Governor declares a State Of Emergency and formally requests a Presidential declaration of a major disaster. Pending the President's decision to declare a disaster, the Governor asks for Section 403(C) of the Stafford Act. The White House is briefed on the developing incident. Federal officials are notified and agency regional representatives are directed to the Florida State EOC. The State Lab at FDLE, JROC contacts the Lafayette EOC and identifies the chemical agent like Sarin.

Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) agents are dispatched to the State EOC to direct investigation operations.

Exercise Process

The Functional/Field exercise was initiated by venue controller/evaluators. The Exercise Controller made all decisions to conclude the exercise, based on completion of operations and attainment of Exercise Objectives. There was no invasive, ingestive or aggressive medical treatment during the exercise and all communications began with the phrase "This is an Exercise". No "force on force" was used during the exercise and all role players complied with responders. All players stayed within the exercise areas and were instructed to comply with real-world response procedures. Instructions were given to all players that "Real World Emergency actions take priority over exercise actions". Evaluators were present to stimulate and record discussions as well as to capture the findings and recommendations of all players.

Evaluation Process

As indicated above, evaluators served to record both the informal discussions and the more formal findings and conclusions of all players. This after action report and improvement plan document presents the findings and recommendations and observations of the evaluators.

SECTION 3: ANALYSIS OF CAPABILITIES

This section of the report reviews the performance of the exercised capabilities, activities, and tasks. In this section, observations are organized by capability and associated activities. The capabilities linked to the exercise objectives of the Lafayette County Hazardous Chemical Release exercise are listed below, followed by corresponding activities. Each activity is followed by related observations, which include references, analysis, and recommendations.

- **CAPABILITY 1: Onsite Incident Management**
- **CAPABILITY 2: Emergency Operations Center Management**

Objective 1: Evaluate the Lafayette School District to implement their Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) in response to a Hazardous Chemical Release incident on their school property

Activity 1.1 – Upon receiving information, assess and identify current and anticipated resource shortages, community/public affairs, and key policy decisions needed

12:10p, Principal Hancock announced over the intercom that all teachers must observe the “yellow schedule”...all must secure their doors and windows and keep students inside.

Observation: All teachers were aware of the yellow schedule and followed their procedures on securing the doors and windows and making sure that students were safe. The school resource officer along with the principal conducted a walk thru all halls and observed the yellow cards on the outside of the doors.

Analysis: All procedures were followed according to the Emergency Operations Plan of the Lafayette County School District, however, with following the “yellow schedule” policies, all students who had become “ill” were kept in with the students who had not been affected. There is no policy in place with the “yellow schedule” to address the injured or sick. With current policy, this would of forced “others” to become ill. In addition, in the past, “yellow schedule” was used for an intruder on campus, not a chemical release agent.

Observation: First EMS unit arrived on-scene at 12:28p. Students who had fallen “ill” were taken to decon at 1:02p.

Analysis: First responder procedures were followed, however, one questions if 52 minutes is too long for initial contact of “ill” patients. In a similar scenario, arrival of mutual aid first responders with full hazmat or decontamination capability is too late to positively affect the outcome of incident survivors.

Recommendations: It is recommended that Lafayette County Emergency Management continue to offer opportunities for all county agencies to “practice as they play”. It is proven that the more we test our plans, policies and procedures, opportunities for improvement are always gained. In addition, all plans need to be reviewed to determine what changes can be made to benefit the citizens of Lafayette County. Recommend exploring “rapid intervention team” readiness and protocols to improve the opportunity for rescue while maintaining first responder health and safety.

Activity 1.2 – Once requested, provide resource, technical and policy support to the Incident Command by coordinating the actions of off-site agencies, organizations and jurisdictions, implementing mutual aid agreements (MAA’s) and requesting higher-level assistance

Observation: Upon arrival, EMS took Incident Command. All agencies worked well together on-scene, but the EOC had limited communication. The IC did not touch base with the EOC and all information was being gathered via cell phone calls to personnel within the EOC and through radio intel.

Recommendations: It is recommended that further training on Incident Command and communication. The role of emergency management is to request mutual aid and needed resources for agencies within the county. Communication is a must in a major event in order for all resources to be input into EM Constellations for requests to be met. In addition, position specific training for the EOC needs to occur so all personnel within Lafayette County understand their role during an event. Call lists for personnel within the county and the surrounding counties needs to be updated for accuracy.

Objective 2: Evaluate the coordinated primary response activities of the School District, Sheriff’s Office, Emergency Medical Services, Lafayette County and Town of Mayo Fire Departments and the other response and support agencies

Activity 2.1 – In response to activation, perform incident notifications, recall essential personnel and stand-up Emergency Management systems to provide a appropriately staffed and operational Emergency Operations Center

12:18p, the EOC was notified from Lafayette County High School that they are currently dealing with a possible chemical spill on campus.

Observation: Alton Scott accepts notification and was successful in seeking appropriate information, alerting the school personnel to the importance of notifying him if the event escalates.

12:17p, Mr Lyons, Ag Teacher at LCHS uses his cell phone to call the main office to report students were feeling ill, no answer at the main office.

12:20p, Mr Lyons again attempts to call the main office...again no answer.

Observation: All personnel left the main office to move to an alternate location because people were feeling ill...but all communication was lost to office personnel because the phones were not transferred.

12:23p, Dispatch notifies response to stop outgoing/incoming traffic to school campus.

Observation: Sheriff's Office notifies the EOC that an "all-call" of personnel for back-up was issued.

Analysis: Lafayette County worked well at performing the initial notifications, recalling all essential personnel and standing up the EOC. Unfortunately, assigned personnel did not report to the EOC to begin "manning" their respective ESFs. It was at this point that there was a break-down in communications and the EOC was only receiving intel via monitoring the radio communication that was occurring on-scene. In addition, all teachers lost communications with the main office personnel as to what was occurring and next steps...causing a bit of panic with the lack of information.

Recommendations: Lafayette County should continue to conduct exercises and drills where respective agencies can "test" their plans and procedures. All agencies that participated in the exercise should review their plans, procedures and protocols and make needed changes now before the next "test" or real world event occurs. In addition, Emergency Management should offer position specific training on incident command and EOC/ESF roles and responsibilities.

Objective 3: Evaluate the corresponding response and support activities (emergency notification, emergency dispatch and incident communication) of on-scene coordination and information sharing

Activity 3.1 – In response to an incident, arrive on scene and provide initial scene report while beginning response operations, carry out management, planning and coordination of on-site incident.

12:25p, Dispatch advises Fire Rescue to be warned that they are approaching the scene of a level 2 chemical spill...seek appropriate gear.

12:25p, Rescue 5 established command on-scene.

12:27p, Sheriff enters EOC to obtain a briefing from Alton regarding the ongoing

incident. EOC is at a Level 3 and Alton established a “local state of emergency”.

12:30p, EOC notifies the State Warning Point regarding the event at the high school.

12:30p, EOC receives word that 13 children are coughing and some are non-responsive. EOC moves to a Level 2.

12:34p, EOC begins notifying agencies; ARC and DOH regarding the incident and activation of the EOC.

12:40p, Dispatch calls EOC to give an update on the situation at the high school.

12:46p, EOC begins getting calls regarding staff personnel reporting to the EOC; Fire Rescue and EMS.

Observation: Good communication occurred between all first responding agencies, ensuring that all parties were aware of the situation on-hand.

Analysis: Lafayette County responders all work well together and communicate all information given to make others aware of the situation on-hand.

Recommendations: Lafayette County continue to conduct drills and exercises. The more you “practice”, the better you will be in a real event.

Activity 3.2 – Establish a system to order, track, manage and deploy all resources required for effective incident command management

12:41p, requests from on-scene to the EOC were made to notify Suwannee, Taylor Madison and Dixie counties of need for back-up for EMS.

1:09p, EOC receives a call from Suwannee County that 12 beds are available, but no ambulances were available at this time.

1:09p, Alton Scott in turn calls Donnie Land who is on-scene to give the Suwannee report.

1:10p, Alton Scott reports an update in EM Constellations regarding the general information along with fatalities/injuries associated with the incident.

1:11p, Suwannee reports to the EOC that 2 ALS units with 4-5 personnel will arrive in 20 – 30 minutes.

1:26p, Dixie reports to the EOC that 2 ALS units with 2 medics will arrive in 35 minutes.

1:35p, Madison reports that they could send 1 ALS unit with 2 medics within an hour.

Observation 3.2: As previously discussed during the planning of the exercise, Lafayette County personnel were quickly overwhelmed in need of outside assistance.

Analysis: Initial call from Lafayette County High School was 12:10p. ETA of first units from surrounding counties was 1:30p – 1:40p. Alton Scott was very successful in keeping his chain of command informed with up to date information.

Recommendations: Additional personnel be trained in EM Constellations to assist Alton Scott with inputting information and retrieving mission assigned resources.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

As noted several times during the analysis sections of this report, exercise participants performed well under the extreme scenario presented to them. Consistent with the recommendations, several areas could benefit reviewing their plans and procedures and make necessary changes to ensure clarification. In addition, continuing to offer drills and exercises throughout the year will benefit all agencies within Lafayette County.

From an evaluator's perspective it was clear that the exercise participants work well together on a day to day basis. Lafayette County Emergency Management should be commended for its efforts in offering training and exercise opportunities to the agencies within the county.

At the conclusion of the exercise, all players were asked to submit “3 ups” and “3 downs” from the day. The below list of comments can assist the Lafayette County Emergency Management with the design of future drills and exercises and also capture future training and education needs. Players were instructed that they need not provide their name in order to be truthful in the days’ observations.

Ups:

- ✓ Had access to all of the key players
- ✓ On scene responders followed procedures
- ✓ Collaboration of all agencies
- ✓ Great opportunity to evaluate current policies
- ✓ Good leadership and participation
- ✓ Good communication
- ✓ Agencies all came together
- ✓ Helped recognized weaknesses in the system
- ✓ Response/collaboration of agencies
- ✓ Principal/teacher response better than expected
- ✓ Organized incident command
- ✓ Responded on time
- ✓ Department cooperation
- ✓ Mutual aid was available...although it was slow
- ✓ Fire department was knowledgeable on Hazmat procedures
- ✓ County responders worked well together
- ✓ Principals response
- ✓ In county response
- ✓ Working together
- ✓ Contact list for resources
- ✓ Surrounding counties willingness to respond
- ✓ Communication on scene
- ✓ American Red Cross assistance
- ✓ Willingness of participants to help
- ✓ Communication on radios was concise
- ✓ Good leadership/participation
- ✓ Agencies all came together
- ✓ Good communication

Downs:

- ✓ Not enough personnel
- ✓ Decon was set up too far away
- ✓ Radios
- ✓ Not enough EMS/took too long to respond
- ✓ The EOC experienced heavy NO-SHOW of required personnel that were contacted during the exercise
- ✓ In my opinion Lafayette County failed to react correctly to the emergency situations to the EOC...one should practice as if it were the real thing

- ✓ Non responders should under no circumstances interfere with Incident Command
- ✓ Communication through lines other than the EOC...direct communications designed to a specific target suffered
- ✓ Incident Commander never contacted the EOC causing the communications process to be lost
- ✓ Contact list not up to date
- ✓ Delay in response from area hospitals on bed capacity
- ✓ Length of response times from surrounding area EMS
- ✓ Amount of those required to participate yet failed to respond
- ✓ Mutual aid numbers for other counties is not listed on the internet
- ✓ Radios
- ✓ Weather
- ✓ Out of county response
- ✓ Review emergency contact procedures and information
- ✓ Ensure adequate personnel are on hand to work the EOC
- ✓ Improve radio training
- ✓ More training on decon
- ✓ Communication in incident command within each department...have a plan for each department to follow down stream command
- ✓ Lack on in county resources
- ✓ Communication between teachers and the principal
- ✓ District communication
- ✓ Decon was too far away
- ✓ Not enough personnel
- ✓ Too long for response agencies from other counties
- ✓ Communication of information out
- ✓ Being unsure of safety protocol as far as room lock down and evacuation of the sick
- ✓ Alternate office site at the school
- ✓ EOC was isolated from the outside world
- ✓ Unsure as to what was going on...need radios in the EOC
- ✓ Need more LAN cables in the EOC
- ✓ No clock in the EOC

APPENDIX A: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Capability	Recommendation	Corrective Action Description	Capability Element	Primary Responsible Agency	Agency POC	Start Date	Completion Date
On Site Incident Management	Rapid Intervention Team Readiness and Protocols to improve the opportunity for rescue while maintaining first responder health and safety	Schedule a Rapid Intervention Team Readiness Workshop Develop Protocols for rescue	Planning and Training	Emergency Management	Alton Scott	11/1/09	9/30/10
On Site Incident Management	Continue to offer opportunities for all county agencies to "practice as they play".	Schedule drills and exercises throughout the year to test the plans and policies and procedures for all agencies	Exercises	Emergency Management	Alton Scott	11/1/09	9/30/10
On Site Incident Management	Training on Incident Command and Communication	Schedule training on Incident Command and Communication	Training	Emergency Management	Alton Scott	11/1/09	9/30/10
Emergency Operations Center Management	Workshop/Seminar on Mutual Aid and requesting Resources through EM Constellations	Schedule workshop on mutual aid and requesting resources	Training	Emergency Management	Alton Scott	11/1/09	9/30/10
Emergency Operations Center Management	Offer position specific training to identify roles and responsibilities in the EOC	Schedule and conduct position specific IMT training	Training	Emergency Management	Alton Scott	11/1/09	9/30/10

Emergency Operations Center Management	Conduct a workshop/training on EOC/ESF Roles and Responsibilities	Schedule and conduct a workshop on the role and responsibilities of the ESF's within the EOC	Training	Emergency Management	Alton Scott	11/1/09	9/30/10
Emergency Operations Center Management	Conduct training for Lafayette County personnel on EM Constellations	Schedule a training class on EM Constellations to have back-up for EOC personnel	Training	Emergency Management	Alton Scott	11/1/09	9/30/10