Emergency Preparedness
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Emergency Exercise: Operation Enduring Collaboration

By Mike Guditus

Operation Enduring Collaboration – (fake) tornado strikes western Fairfax County! Over a year in planning, Operation Enduring Collaboration, a three day multi-agency functional exercise, was held March 19-21, with great success.

The objectives were to work for three 12-hour operational periods in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Department Operations Centers (DOC), a field Unified Command Post (UCP) and simulated field personnel from affected agencies to test operations and management functions utilizing the Incident Command System (ICS).

Overnight hours were simulated by the contractor, Ascenttra LLC, who in addition to its staff brought on county personnel as subject matter experts to work the simulation cell to make the players' experience more realistic.

Additional objectives were for the EOC and UCP to: develop incident action plans utilizing the ICS planning process; manage the emergency; and mitigate the effects of the simulated tornado. On day three the Senior Policy Group (SPG) met to discuss long-term issues and implement the Pre-Disaster Recovery Plan (PDRP).

There were several firsts with this exercise. It had the largest number of personnel participation to date as well as the longest consecutive running exercise of this scale. The UCP consisted of public safety and other county agencies along with private sector and non-governmental agencies all working together for three days. Three shifts of fire and rescue and police personnel were rotated once per day, providing the challenges that would naturally occur with a shift change.

The EOC was also made up of multiple county, state and federal agencies including private and non-governmental organizations (NGO). Testing the communications from field, to UCP, to DOC and EOC was key and many

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – CDC – has a Web portal that provides links to information, tools and resources to assist in multi-sector planning for older adults in all-hazard emergencies. www.cdc.gov/aging/emergency/

Enduring Collaboration

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lessons were learned on how to improve. Logistics ordering was also an objective where many gaps were identified for further improvements.

The amount of agency participation, energy and drive was beyond expectations.

OEM received accolades from the contractors/evaluators, who themselves are or were government professionals, on how Fairfax County is well beyond the curve in managing and operating during emergencies.

The greatest compliment about the exercise design and implementation was from a senior county agency head who was overheard saying, "I've been to many exercises over the years from terrorism events to natural disasters and this is the first time it really felt like an actual disaster had occurred."

Thanks to all who participated from design to implementation and exercise play. We as a county are now better prepared, "ready and resilient."

Participating Agencies

- Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES)
- American Red Cross
- Central Intelligence Agency
- Fairfax County Community Chaplain Corps
- Fairfax County Department of Code Compliance
- Fairfax County Department of Family Services
- Fairfax County Health Department
- Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services
- Fairfax County Department of Information Technology
- Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority
- Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department
- Fairfax County Department of Public Safety Communications (9-1-1 Center)
- Fairfax County Department of Transportation
- Fairfax County Office of Public Affairs
- Fairfax County Executive's Office
- Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management
- Fairfax County Public Schools
- Fairfax County Police Department
- Fairfax County Sheriff's Office
- Fairfax County Risk Management Division
- Fairfax County Department of Purchasing and Supply Management
- Northern Virginia Hospital Alliance
- Regional Hospital Coordination Center
- Upper Occoquan Service Authority
- Virginia Department of Emergency Management
- Virginia Department of Health
- Virginia Department of Transportation
- Volunteer Fairfax

Mike Guditus, emergency management specialist, is the OEM exercise and training analyst. He holds the master exercise practitioner (MEP) from FEMA, and the professional emergency manager (PEM) credential from the Virginia Emergency Management Association (VEMA).

Statewide Tornado Drill

More than 1.1 million Virginians participated in the annual Statewide Tornado Drill on Tuesday, March 20. Schools, colleges and universities, government agencies, business and families registered to participate in the drill. More business and families registered for the drill this year compared to previous years.

In Fairfax County, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management reports more than 78,000 individuals across the county participated in the annual drill. Within the county government, the Risk Management Division reports 32 county work sites with 4,658 county government participants.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors also participated in the drill at its regularly scheduled meeting. After the alert sounded, Chairman Sharon Bulova said, "While the county government is participating in this drill, I'd also like to encourage our residents to remember to prepare, not only for tornadoes, but for any hazard. Preparedness is a shared responsibility between the government and its residents." (Read the chairman's full statement online at *www.fairfaxcounty.gov/chairman/news/chairman_bulova_remarks_on_statewide_tornado-drill.htm*.)

The National Weather Service kicked off the drill at 9:45 a.m. with a test tornado warning, which was broadcast on NOAA Weather Radios and local TV and radio stations.

The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management is available to deliver emergency preparedness presentations to community organizations and homeowners associations as well as exhibits at festivals or fairs (example above). If interested, contact Marcelo Ferreira at 571-350-1013, TTY 711, or via email at marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Pledge to Prepare: Leading up to National Preparedness Month

National Preparedness Month officially begins in September; however there is a lot you can do now leading up to this important event.

Pledge to prepare today and register for the National Preparedness Coalition, which provides you access to important event information, discussion boards, group activities and other beneficial information. Get involved today and make your community safer, stronger and better prepared to manage any emergency situation.

Learn more: *http://community.fema.gov/connect.ti/readynpm/groupHome*.

Marcelo's Minute

National 9-1-1 Education Month

Marcelo Ferreira

Fairfax County residents can be assured that they are in good hands when reporting an emergency. Ranking as the largest 9-1-1 center in the commonwealth of Virginia and 10th largest in the U.S., Fairfax County receives an average of 400,000 9-1-1 calls and 420,000 non-emergency calls every year. Of those calls, roughly 69 percent are received from wireless devices.

The Department of Public Safety Communications (DPSC) utilizes foreign language interpreters through Language Line Services to assist with non-English speaking callers. Due to its diverse population, Fairfax County 9-1-1 receives around 20,000 calls each year requiring interpretation.

Remember to **only call 9-1-1 for an emergency**, such as a situation where someone is hurt or in danger. It is also appropriate to call 9-1-1 if you are in immediate need of police, fire or medical assistance. The Fairfax County non-emergency phone number is 703-691-2131.

Take the time during National 9-1-1 Education Month to think about the valuable service that employees at DPSC provide and learn about the 9-1-1 service. For additional information, visit *www.fairfaxcounty.gov/911*.

The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management encourages every business, organization and family to get involved in emergency preparedness efforts. If you or your organization are in need of a presentation about emergency preparedness or other emergency-related topics, let me know at 571-350-1013, TTY 711, or by e-mail at *marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov*.

Marcelo Ferriera, OEM community liaison, holds the associate emergency manager (AEM) credential from the Virginia Emergency Management Association (VEMA).

Driving thru 6 inches of standing water can cause cars to lose control and stall. Avoid flooded roads. www.fema.gov

Are You Ready to Ride Out an Earthquake?

By Laura Southard

As we learned Aug. 23, 2011, in Virginia, devastating earthquakes can happen without warning. Do you know what to do?

Families and businesses should prepare ahead of time:
• Securely fasten shelves to walls.
• Keep large or heavy objects on lower shelves.
• Secure your water heater by strapping it to wall studs and bolting it to the floor.
• Keep toxic and flammable items securely stored in cabinets with doors and latches.
• Learn how to turn off electricity, gas and water.
• Be ready to be self-sufficient for at least three days. Have basic supplies on hand.

During an earthquake:

• Stay indoors! The greatest danger is directly outside buildings due to falling debris.
• Get under heavy furniture such as a desk, table or bench. Crouch down and cover your head and neck with your hands and arms. This is the best protection.
• Stay away from large windows, mirrors and other glass.
• If you are in a high-rise building, stay away from outside walls. Get under a table. Do not use elevators.
• If you are already outside, get into an open area away from buildings, power lines, trees, overpasses and bridges.

David McKernan, coordinator of Emergency Management and exercise EOC commander, (standing, white vest and microphone) leads an EOC briefing during the three-day emergency exercise.

Fairfax County, Va., publication.

To request this information in an alternate format, call 571-350-1000, TTY 711.

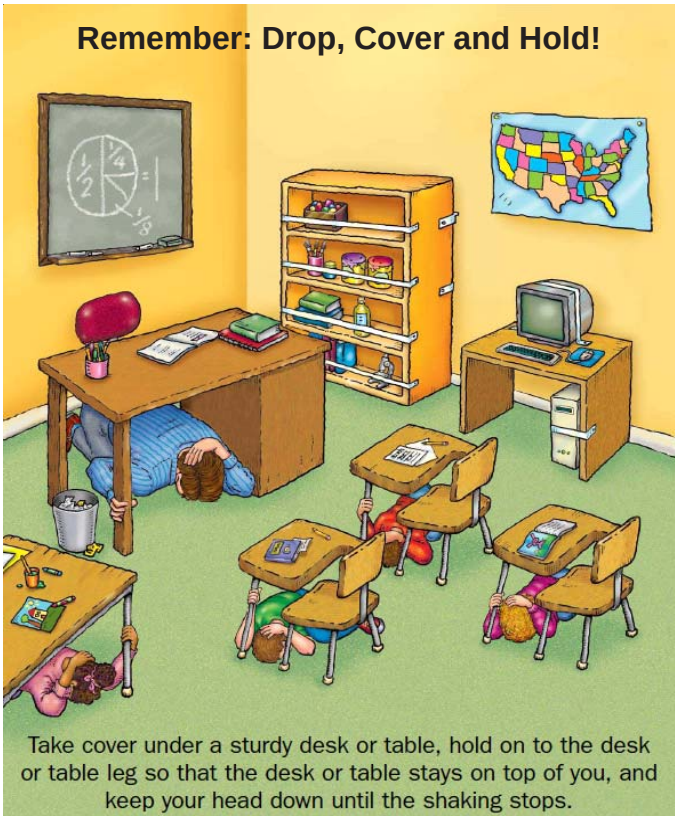
• Expect aftershocks. Smaller quakes – and sometimes larger ones – often follow hours or days after the first shake, causing more damage to weakened buildings and structures.

After an earthquake:

• Check for gas leaks. If you smell gas or hear a hissing or blowing noise, open a window and leave the building immediately. Turn off the gas at the outside main valve, if possible, and call the gas company.
• Turn on your battery-powered radio for instructions from your local officials and news reports from your local media.
• Check your building's foundation, roof and chimneys for cracks and damage.

For more, go to *www.ReadyVirginia.gov* and click on Stay Informed.

Laura L. Southard is public outreach coordinator with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.



Get your poster at www.vaemergency.gov/sites/default/files/DropCoverHoldposter.pdf

FEMA Calls for Nominations to the National Youth Preparedness Council

Are you a 12- to 17-year-old looking to make a difference in your community and who could help save lives? If you have contributed to youth disaster preparedness in your area or lived through a disaster and want to share your experiences, you could be a part of FEMA's Youth Preparedness Council.

FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, is looking for youth leaders who are dedicated to public service, who are making a difference in their community, and who want to expand their impact as a national advocate for youth preparedness.

In September 2010, FEMA hosted a National Summit on Youth Preparedness where the topic of engaging the nation's youth at a national level was discussed. Consensus was that a greater focus on youth preparedness is needed; and what better way to engage youth than to nominate someone to participate on the national council?

Youth Preparedness Council nominees represent a variety of young people. Current and former students, youth members of a local Citizen Corps Council, a youth club or a member of a faith-based organization that is vocal and active in preparing peers, family and neighborhoods for potential emergencies are encouraged to apply.

Similarly, if you know of a young person with any of these qualities, you may nominate him or her to serve on the council.

Nominations must be received by April 6, 11:59 p.m. EDT.

Complete instructions are available at the Youth Preparedness Web page, *http://citizencorps.gov/getstarted/youth/youthindex.shtm*.

Office of Emergency Management
4890 Alliance Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030

Tel: 571-350-1000, TTY 711

FAIRFAX COUNTY citizen corps

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps

The Fairfax County Citizen Corps harnesses the power of individuals through education, training and volunteer service to make communities safe, stronger and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues and disasters of all kinds. There are five core programs:

Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS)

Provides support for the police department by incorporating volunteers so that law enforcement professionals have more time for frontline duty. VIPS includes auxiliary police officers, administrative volunteers, and the Citizen's Police Academy.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/vips.htm

Neighborhood Watch

Brings private citizens and law enforcement together to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods. It brings to life the simple concept of neighbors watching out for neighbors. Volunteers may join an existing group or establish one in their neighborhood.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/nw.htm

Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)

Operated by the Health Department, MRC is composed of medical and non-medical volunteers trained to assist the community in dispensing medication during public health emergencies.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mrc/

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

Trains people in neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools in basic disaster response skills, such as fire suppression and search and rescue, and helps them take a more active role in emergency preparedness.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/cert.htm

Fire Corps

Volunteers are trained to perform non-operational administrative duties at the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Headquarters and at volunteer fire stations.
www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/firecorps.htm

Publish tornado awareness steps in your employee newsletters and Intranet websites. www.ready.gov/tornadoes

The Creation of the FEMA Corps

Reprinted from the FEMA blog

FEMA and the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), this month announced the creation of FEMA Corps, which sets the foundation for a new generation of emergency managers.

FEMA Corps leverages a newly-created unit of 1,600 service corps members from AmeriCorps' National Civilian Community Corps who are solely devoted to FEMA disaster response and recovery.

The full-time residential service program is for individuals ages 18-24, and members will serve a one-year term including a minimum of 1,700 hours, providing support working directly with disaster survivors. The first members will begin serving this August and the program will reach its full capacity within 18 months.

The program will enhance the federal government's disaster capabilities, increase the reliability and diversity of the disaster workforce, promote an ethos of service, and expand education and economic opportunity for young people.

This partnership builds on the historic collaboration between the two agencies and will enhance the federal government's disaster capabilities, increase the reliability and diversity of the disaster workforce, promote an ethic of service, expand education and economic opportunity for young people and achieve significant cost savings for the American taxpayer. When the program is at full operational capability, and in an average disaster year, it is expected to save approximately $60 million in a year.

Read the complete article at http://blog.dhs.gov/2012/03/announcing-creation-of-fema-corps.html.

ReadyNOVA
Family & Business Preparedness Planners

Fairfax County and Northern Virginia residents can use the family and business emergency planners at *www.ReadyNOVA.org*.

Cecilia Muñoz, director of the White House Domestic Policy Council, discusses the new partnership between the Corporation for National and Community Service and FEMA. The new partnership is designed to strengthen the nation's ability to respond to and recover from disasters while expanding career opportunities for young people.

Online Educational Resources:

Emergency Management Institute Independent Study Courses:

• IS-394 - Protecting Your Small Business From Disasters
http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/IS394A.asp

• IS-36 - Multihazard Planning for Childcare
http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is36.asp

• IS-10 - Animals in Disasters, Awareness and Preparedness
http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is10a.asp

• IS-910 - Emergency Management Preparedness Fundamentals
http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is910.asp

• IS-660 - Introduction to Public Private Partnerships Online course
http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is660.asp

Prevent Youth Firesetting; Arson Awareness Week

May 6-12 is National Arson Awareness Week, with a special emphasis on youth firesetting. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA):

• Fires started by children playing accounted for an average of 56,300 fires with associated losses of 110 civilian deaths, 880 civilian injuries and $286 million in direct property damage per year between 2005 and 2009.

• Younger children are more likely to set fires in homes, while older children and teenagers are more likely to set fires outside.

• Males are more likely to engage in fire play than females, as 83 percent of home structure fires and 93 percent of outside or unclassified fires were set by boys when age was coded as a factor.

• Lighters were the heat source in half (50 percent) of child-playing fires in homes.

• A child's bedroom continues to account for 40 percent of child-playing home fires.

The U.S. Fire Administration's National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) data indicate, where age was cited as a factor in a fire's ignition by lighters or matches, 37 percent of these fires were started by juveniles ages 10 to 17.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program:

• Juveniles (under age 18) accounted for roughly 46 percent of arson arrests from 2005 to 2010.

• In 2010, 40 percent of arson arrests were juveniles with 47.6 percent of those children under 16. Arrests of juveniles were higher, proportionally, than for any other crime.

• 34.3 percent of arson offenses cleared involved juveniles, which was the highest percentage of all offense clearances involving only juveniles.

The (ATF) reports that from 2000 to 2009:

• There were 1,637 juvenile-involved fire incidents reported in Bomb Arson Tracking System (BATS).

• More than half of these fires (56 percent or 909 incidents) were classified as arson.

• 29 percent (or 476 incidents) were classified as accidental and 15 percent (or 251 incidents) were classified as undetermined.

• The total dollar damage reported for these fires is estimated at more than $75 million.

Learn more at *www.usfa.fema.gov/fireservice/subjects/arson/aaw12/families.shtm*.

Are You Prepared?

Disasters and emergencies can affect anyone at anytime. Do you have the plans and supplies in place to help withstand the first three to five days after a disaster?

The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management suggests three steps that each individual and family should take to prepare for an emergency:

1. **Make a Plan** – Determine how you will contact your family, and get back together, if you are separated during an emergency. Be sure to identify what you will do in various situations. More information is available at *www.ReadyVirginia.gov* and *www.MakeaPlan.org*.

2. **Assemble a Kit** – An emergency kit should contain basic supplies to help you withstand a disaster. It's best to think first about the basics of survival: fresh water, food, clean air and warmth.

3. **Stay Informed** – The most convenient way to stay up-to-date about local emergencies is to register for the Community Emergency Alert Network (CEAN), which delivers important emergency alerts, notifications and updates during a major emergency, in addition to regular weather and traffic alerts. Register at *www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cean*.

Small Businesses: Encourage your staff to update their computer virus definitions, report security breaches and use secure tokens to enhance their cyber security awareness. www.ready.gov/document/common-sense-guide-cyber-security-small-businesses

Minor Modification of Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale Thresholds

Effective May 15, the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale (SSHWS) will be adjusted slightly to resolve issues associated with the conversion of units used for wind speed. This change follows a public comment period conducted in 2011.

The National Hurricane Center (NHC) and Central Pacific Hurricane (CPHC) assign intensities of hurricanes in 5-knot (kt) increments. For advisory products, these intensities are converted to miles per hour (mph) and kilometers per hour (km/h), and then rounded to the nearest 5-mph or 5-km/h increments.

Challenges occur when the current Category 4 intensity is 115 kt (132.3 mph). Although 115 kt is within the Category 4 range, the equivalent rounded wind speed in mph is 130 mph, which is in the Category 3 range.

To classify the hurricane as a Category 4 in both sets of units (kt and mph), NHC and CPHC must incorrectly convert 115 kt to 135 mph in the advisory products. A similar issue occurs when the current Category 4 intensity of 135 kt is converted to km/h.

Effective May 15, to resolve these rounding issues, Category 4 on the SSHWS will be broadened by 1 mph at each end of the range, yielding a new range of 130-156 mph. This will also result in a minor modification of the Category 3 and 5 wind speed thresholds.

The SSHWS will change as follows:
From:
- Category 3: 111-130 mph (96-113 kt, 178-209 km/h).
- Category 4: 131-155 mph (114-135 kt, 210-249 km/h).
- Category 5: 156 mph or higher (136 kt or higher, 250 km/h or higher).

To:
- Category 3: 111-129 mph (96-112 kt, 178-208 km/h).
- Category 4: 130-156 mph (113-136 kt, 209-251 km/h).
- Category 5: 157 mph or higher (137 kt or higher, 252 km/h or higher).

Summary of the SSHWS change (highlighted in yellow):

Category	Previous range	New range
1	74-95 mph 64-82 kt 119-153 km/h	74-95 mph 64-82 kt 119-153 km/h
2	96-110 mph 83-95 kt 154-177 km/h	96-110 mph 83-95 kt 154-177 km/h
3	111-130 mph 96-113 kt 178-209 km/h	111-129 mph 96-112 kt 178-208 km/h
4	131-155 mph 114-135 kt 210-249 km/h	130-156 mph 113-136 kt 209-251 km/h
5	156 mph or higher 136 kt or higher 250 km/h or higher	157 mph or higher 137 kt or higher 252 km/h or higher

There will be no change to the wind speeds currently assigned to Categories 1 and 2. With this change, a 115-kt Category 4 hurricane will have its intensity properly converted to mph and rounded to the nearest 5 mph (130 mph) and remain within the Category 4 mph range.

Since intensities are assigned using 5 kt increments, neither storms in the historical record nor any future storms will have their SSHWS category changed as a result of this modification to the scale.

The NWS advises that the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale provides information on wind impacts only. The scale does not provide commentary or information on other impacts or characteristics of tropical cyclones.

Additional information on this change can be found at *www.nhc.noaa.gov/aboutsshws.php*.

** Chart courtesy of the National Weather Service*