

Lessons Learned

“Go Home” Command Post Exercise

The exercise “Go Home” was completed on October 25, 2002. A four phase evolution occurred to complete the exercise:

1. The Coast Guard Command Center contacted the members of the Emergency Dismissal Committee to set up a conference call.
2. During the Conference Call the Committee decided to have the Federal Executive Board execute early dismissal procedures.
3. The Committee members performed the phone cascade per Appendix 2 to the Emergency Dismissal Plan.
4. Federal agency directors informed all their employees of the exercise.

Observations:

Phase 1:

- The Coast Guard Command Center contacted all Emergency Dismissal Committee members and had them in the conference call in 8 minutes. The goal was 10 minutes.

Phase 2:

- The Emergency Dismissal Committee met all expectations and made a decision quickly in addition to grasping the objective of the exercise.

Phase 3:

- Messages were left on answering machines and e-mail messages were used to pass the word; however, not all agency heads were contacted. We have to understand that we performed the exercise to find gaps in the plan itself. In case of a real emergency we have to ensure we talk to a live person and not leave messages. We expect this to happen in exercises also. The EPC will look into getting alternate numbers for the agency heads.

- Some phone numbers were reported to be wrong and need to be updated. The Emergency Preparedness Committee recently requested phone number updates from all agencies. All agencies have to respond to these requests so the plan can be useful. To prevent unnecessary issues like this for future events the Emergency Preparedness Committee will do a semi-annual update of appendix 2 to the dismissal plan.

- Some agencies were called by the EPC prior to the exercise notification call. For future exercises EPC evaluators will plan ahead and familiarize themselves with their roles during the exercise.

Phase 4:

- Since some agency heads did not get information regarding the exercise explaining why some federal employees did not get the word. There were also instances where the agency head did get a call and either the wrong information or no information got passed to their employees. It is recommended that all agencies review their interagency communication protocol to ensure the system in place works.

This was the first time this plan has been exercised within the past two years. The exercise went very well, even with the lapse in time between exercises. Overall, the exercise was a success. The Emergency Preparedness Committee noted specific areas of improvement to help improve both the exercise format and the plan itself.

The Emergency Preparedness Committee would like to thank all the federal agencies in the Cleveland area for participating in this exercise. The EPC will be working diligently to improve the Emergency Dismissal Plan so the federal employees working in the Cleveland area are better prepared and equipped with the necessary information to react to all emergencies.