



Integrated Capstone Event Expands Training for Responders

Long known for its unique, hands-on training classes for emergency response personnel, FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP), recently combined three courses and 108 responders into an Integrated Capstone Event (ICE), giving students from multiple disciplines the opportunity to experience the full impact of a mass casualty incident.

Typically, each CDP class culminates with an end-of-course scenario specific to the objectives learned during the training, and many facets are notional. The ICE, however, eliminates much of this artificiality, and provides a realistic setting for the students to perform.

The scenario started with students from the Emergency Medical Operations (EMO) course responding to a simulated explosion at a nearby college. As EMO teams arrived on scene, hazardous materials experts from the Hazardous Materials Technician (HT) course joined EMO as they received the first brief from the incident commander.

"This [training event] gives you an idea of what is going to happen and how the different units are going to work together," said John Combs, a police officer from Fayetteville, N.C. "As a first responder this gives me an idea of how the fire service, hazardous materials, EMS, and healthcare work. As a police officer I normally do not take part in this kind of training—this is a good training day for me."

As the scenario unfolded, calls alerted the local hospital (the CDP's Noble Training Facility) of the on-going emergency. Students from the Hospital Emergency Response Training (HERT) course quickly prepared to receive patients injured by the explosion, and the HERT team would soon see patients arriving by ambulance and on foot.

"I feel we need to practice like this all across the country to prepare ourselves for any kind of emergency or disaster," said Trudy Mueller, an emergency room nurse from Conneaut, Ohio. "This training helps us work together and understand strengths and weaknesses. It is important to train with all the groups together, not just a single group."

"Combining the EMO class, hazardous materials class, as well as the hospital emergency response course is amazing," said Ryan Sell, a fire fighter/paramedic from Iolla, Kan. "We had groups involved from the inception of the incident, through each stage."

The Integrated Capstone Events are scheduled each quarter and combine three or more courses in a variety of response operations. The goal is to work within the Incident Command System (ICS) and demonstrate how response disciplines work together in real-world events.

"This was our second ICE and we continue to find things that we can fine tune and improve for future Integrated Capstone Events," said Chuck Medley, CDP Training Delivery Branch Chief. "We've already identified steps we can take to enhance the scenario, manage our role players, and improve logistics."



The next ICE is scheduled for the end of June. Each event allows students to identify team leaders, recognize planning, logistics, and manpower to fully provide a realistic training experience.

“Integrating multiple courses into a combined event is extremely important because it replicates what will happen in an actual community,” Medley said. “During a mass casualty event, every element of emergency response will engage. Emergency responders need to learn to integrate now, and the CDP is committed to providing the training environment where they can learn to do that.”

CDP training focuses on incident management, and emergency response to a catastrophic natural disaster or terrorist act. The courses are fully funded for state, local, and tribal response personnel.

To learn more about the Center for Domestic Preparedness, visit <http://cdp.dhs.gov> or call 866-213-9553.

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