



East Central Task Force

Incident Management Team (IMT) Exercise

Press Release (FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE)

June 23 – 25, 2009

Kingston Armory, Wilkes-Barre, PA

What do a severe flood, a large public health emergency, and a mass gathering event have in common? They all require the response of a large number of highly-trained personnel, the effects of each can be felt for an extended period of time, and they all require careful management to ensure positive outcomes. From June 23-25, the Kingston Armory in Wilkes Barre provided the perfect backdrop for the East Central Pa Regional Task Force Incident Management Team to participate in a training and exercise experience geared toward managing just such events.

“The exercise was designed to hone the skills of our team to deal with emergency situations that may arise in our region. Each member of the team has completed well over 100 hours of mandatory training in order to serve as an IMT member. Additional educational sessions were conducted on the first day of this 3-day event, and the remainder of the exercise was devoted to real-world application of the theories learned in the classroom,” according to Arthur D. Kaplan, Chair of the East Central PA Regional Task Force.

The Task Force IMT was established in 2008 to support local emergency response organizations in their management of disasters, complex emergencies, pre-planned events and large gatherings. Comprised of various responders from the seven county ECPTF as well as from adjoining Task Forces, the IMT consists of 65 individuals trained and credentialed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security.

Over 40 members of the IMT participated in these simulated crisis situations. The training and exercise allowed team members to refine and practice their strategic skills in a simulated yet realistic manner. Members were provided an event scenario, developed an Incident Action Plan (IAP) for the management of the event, and then established their Base of Operation with equipment available from the ECPTF member organizations. Several counties provided their Mobile Command Units for use during this exercise, further enhancing the opportunity to test real-world capabilities. Computer

systems, mapping and GIS applications, and communication interfacing were all utilized by the groups in responding to their simulation crisis.

Four nationally renowned instructors were brought in to facilitate and guide the IMT through this experience, all of whom are trained and certified to serve on National Incident Management Teams. Together, they represent 100+ years of experience in the field of emergency response and have extensive experience in responding to disasters such as 9-11, Katrina, and major wildfire incidents.

According to George Maier, Chief of the FDNY Incident Management Team and Lead Instructor for the exercise, "These simulated disasters provide our responders with a unique opportunity to put to the test all of the information gained through their classroom training and prior incident response. Working together on these Incident Management Teams in a drill such as this one helps each participant fine-tune his own particular area of expertise, as well as practice working as a part of a larger, cohesive unit. All of this helps to better-prepare team members to respond quickly, appropriately, and effectively in the event of a real crisis. This style of exercise has been completed by few teams in the U.S. and it will prepare the team and the region for a disaster."

Dr. Joseph A. Cocciardi, Program Professional for the East Central Task Force, commented on the benefits of these exercises. "One of the most valuable outcomes of exercises such as this is that they provide a wonderful opportunity to identify potential issues of concern prior to an actual emergency situation. At the conclusion of activities, all participants gather to discuss the experience, providing feedback regarding those areas that worked as anticipated, and perhaps more importantly, identifying areas for improvement that may have surfaced during the drill. Adjustments can then be made ahead of an actual event, thereby enhancing the team's capabilities and response effectiveness."

The IMT will continue to engage in year-round training and exercise experiences, and will partner with other Pennsylvania IMTs to increase overall effectiveness across the Commonwealth.

For pictures of this event, please visit the ECTF website at www.ectf.us and click on the "Press" tab at the top of the webpage to view the pictures.

For additional information contact the IMT Public Information Officer James Major at drj5104@aol.com.