

New Government Web Site For First Responders To Feature Lessons Learned, Best Practices

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First responders next week will get a new, online government resource that collects lessons learned, best practices and "good stories" from emergency-response exercises and actual terror attacks, according to project officials.

Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS) will be available to state and local first responders at a password-protected Web site (<http://www.llis.gov>) starting April 19. There will be a link to the LLIS site at the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) own Web site, <http://www.dhs.gov>.

LLIS, which took 18 months to develop, will speed the process of disseminating emergency management information, which is usually passed along at occasional conferences, said Peter Roman, a senior associate at the Henry L. Stimson Center, a non-profit research center, and LLIS research director.

The National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) in Oklahoma City developed LLIS with grants from the DHS's Office for Domestic Preparedness worth about \$5.4 million. MIPT contracted with the Stimson Center, the Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute and DFI Government Services, all of Washington, to develop the site.

The "good story" section of LLIS is "a really valuable part of the site that gets things that are cutting edge out there for people to see faster," Roman told Homeland Security & Defense April 9.

Local jurisdictions with innovative programs or practices to contribute worked with the LLIS project staff to develop the stories.

One tells about California's Wastewater Response Network, where "water and wastewater utilities in California can quickly access information on resources during an emergency," according to a preview of the site, which includes four pages of detailed information about the utility database.

The lessons-learned section will contain "brief and pointed" information distilled primarily from after-action reports done for the 1995 Murrah Federal Building bombing in Oklahoma City, the 9/11 attacks, the 2001 anthrax attack and the two post-9/11 TOPOFF preparedness exercises.

There are also lessons taken from exercises conducted in 120 cities as part of the Nunn-Lugar-Domenici Domestic Preparedness Program of the late 1990s, according to Jim Gass, MIPT plans and special projects officer.

The site's users, who must apply to LLIS for passwords, will have access to the full text of after-action reports. Users will also have access to secure e-mail to communicate with other first responders about sensitive information on the site. LLIS will also be available to public health and health care officials.

The site will continue to evolve after it goes live, with new content being added. "Over time, there will be hundreds and hundreds of lessons learned" on the site, Gass said. Information from the exercises was validated through a peer-review process of emergency management experts before being included, according to Gass.

The best-practices section has detailed information about how to design and manage complex programs, such as using amateur radio operators to augment emergency communications. There are four pages of information about amateur radio, including links to related LLIS pages on HAM radios and auxiliary communications, sample memos of understanding with radio operators and seven state amateur radio emergency communications plans.

The best-practices section will have lessons and practices that the Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute gathered from the distribution of the national strategic stockpile of antibiotics, vaccines and other medical supplies, according to senior fellow Michael Powers, LLIS project manager for the institute.