

SAFETY:

Using Safety Technical Specialists

The multiple safety-related objectives of the Exotic Newcastle Disease (END) incident were satisfied using combined safety staffs from the Incident Management Team (IMT) and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). APHIS assigns a safety officer to its Regional Emergency Animal Disease Eradication Organization (READEO.) This organization is activated when there is a disease outbreak in a region.

Lesson Learned: A technical advisor or specialist skilled in dealing with biological agents may also be necessary to support the APHIS and IMT safety officers. A resource list of qualified individuals with specific technical skills that might be required should be available in each agency's preplan to facilitate their rapid deployment and integration into an incident organization. These specialists can then be easily incorporated into the ICS organization as either staff assigned to the safety officers or as technical specialists within the Planning Section.

Emergency Plan Drills

IMTs supported FEMA, NASA, and the Texas Forest Service during the Columbia Shuttle Recovery effort. This incident occurred during the Southern states' spring tornado season. The potential for severe weather was therefore a significant safety consideration.

Lesson Learned: One of the IMTs revised the existing Severe Thunderstorm/Tornado emergency plan and executed three live-action drills in a three-week period to ensure familiarization of the crews in Texas with these plans. The IMT equated conducting these drills to proficiency in Standards for Survival and fire shelter deployment. The emergency plan also detailed evacuation and sheltering of personnel at three separate facilities that the IMT managed in the event severe weather occurred. In addition, detection, notification, proper personnel response actions, and resumption of normal operations were covered in severe weather procedures that were all part of the written briefing package given to each crew on arrival. To view the briefing package that contains the emergency plan, go to:

http://www.wildfirelessons.net/Library/Emergency_Mgt/IC_Expectations.doc

Safety Component in Briefings

During all operations briefings, each spokesperson should include remarks about safety concerns specific to their section or unit. These additional remarks by each speaker focusing on safety add emphasis to the various safety issues being confronted. These remarks also broaden the overall safety insight of the entire incident command structure and are easily incorporated.

Leadership by Example

By walking the fire line and talking with crews, the IC, Operations Section Chief and the Safety Officer demonstrate their support for the firefighters and their well being. The overhead can also take this opportunity to review the importance of using personal protective equipment to crew safety, thereby improving compliance.

Prepared by:
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