Revamped Course Receives Thumbs Up

The exercise and training staff of the Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division’s (HSEMD) Preparedness Bureau completed a major project milestone recently when they rolled out a test run of a newly-revamped course.

Over the past three years HSEMD’s exercise staff has been teaching a four day program that merges the Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program course with FEMA’s Exercise Design course (IS-139). Even though this combination received good reviews, it was redundant and time consuming for participants. Over

Continued on Page 2...

Coordinating Infrastructure Assessment is Key to Federal, State Ag Preparedness

State and federal partners recently met to discuss infrastructure assessment and the key role it plays in agriculture preparedness.

Assessing infrastructure in the food/agriculture sector presents unique challenges. Production agriculture is a network of systems while post-harvest manufacturing can usually be analyzed using “bricks and mortar” tools. The challenge is to work with industry in a secure, trusted relationship to gather data and provide value to industry with the result of improving overall security and preparedness.

Representatives from DHS and 22 states discussed how they document and secure assessment data when they met in Atlanta, Ga., for a three-day workshop Jan. 30 – Feb. 1. The value of working with industry

Continued on Page 3...
Tri-State Group Holds COML Training

Members of a tri-state group focused on improving cross-border communications recently had an opportunity to become more familiar with their critical incident roles and responsibilities.

Members of the Iowa/Minnesota/Wisconsin Tri-State Group gathered in Dubuque Jan. 10-13 for Communications Leader (COML) Training. The training, sponsored by HSEMD and the Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System Board, provided National Incident Management System (NIMS) compliant instruction to ensure that trained personnel are capable of coordinating on-scene emergency communications during a multi-jurisdictional response.

The training was the result of a December 2010 Tri-State Communications tabletop exercise held in La Crosse, Wis. An after-action report from the exercise recommended COML training as a corrective action, along with holding a full-scale exercise to enhance the tri-state region’s ability to respond to and recover from all-hazards events. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has provided assistance in holding the full-scale exercise, which is scheduled for March 1, 2012.

HSEMD Revamps Exercise Course

...Continued from Page 1

the past year this curriculum has been under an internal review. With support from the University of Iowa’s Upper Midwest Center for Public Health Preparedness, HSEMD staff were able to update the visual aids and remove the redundancy in the two courses while still meeting the required course objectives from both courses.

This work would not have been possible without the dedication of HSEMD’s Steve Warren and Dena Fife of the Upper Midwest Center who worked very hard to deliver a high-quality product for participants.

"Without their dedication to the project we would not have received so many positive comments from participants," said John Halbrook, HSEMD exercise program planner.

Comments from participants of the test run include:

- "100 percent better than the old training so Kudos!"
- "Done well + very interactive. Great for a beginner in exercise"

With such positive results HSEMD will be offering this course as a best practice to our partners at the National Emergency Training Center.

Wanted: Your Success Stories

HSEMD wants to highlight your emergency management and homeland security success story in an upcoming issue of “Secure & Prepared.”

Submit your story, along with a photo, to HSEMDPIO@iowa.gov for consideration for a future issue of the newsletter.
Agriculture which is comprised of agriculture, homeland security, and emergency management of officials from 14 states. HSEMD coordinates Partnership projects and meetings with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and the Food Safety Bureau in the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals. HSEMD works in close collaboration with partner states on issues that cross state lines.

The Partnership has addressed preparedness for and response to agriculture emergencies, business continuity, risk and crisis communications, and surveillance issues that may cross state borders and have far-reaching impacts. Learn more about the Multi-State Partnership for Security in Agriculture at www.multistatepartnership.org.

Also at last week’s meeting, members from the Multi-State Partnership and Southern Agriculture and Animal Disaster Response Alliance (SAADRA) discussed regional preparedness and capabilities, joint training and exercises, and how the two groups can work together.

States also learned about the revised national food response template, progress in secure product movement agreements, and lessons learned from the earthquake and nuclear power plant disasters in Japan.

In Iowa, PSA Phil Pitzen works with major infrastructure assets and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, along with other agencies and industry leaders, to assess production systems.

Data from these assessments is federally protected but the process helps inform both security and industry leaders as to what steps may be taken to improve overall resiliency.

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Article submitted by Mark Shearer, HSEMD.
NWS Des Moines Makes Changes to Flood Stages and Flood Severity Categories

On March 14, 2012, the National Weather Service (NWS) in Des Moines will make some changes to their warning and forecast services. The NWS in Des Moines will change the values for Flood Stage, Moderate Flood Stage and Major Flood Stage for 44 of its 47 river forecast points. According to the NWS, the new values will be more consistent with the intended meanings for each term and the result will be fewer warnings issued.

For more information, visit http://www.crh.noaa.gov/dmx/ in the “Top News of the Day” section.

Upcoming Training Opportunities

HazMatIQ Training Class

When: Feb. 25, 8 a.m.
Where: Horn Memorial Hospital
701 E. 2nd St, Ida Grove

HazMatIQ is a patented HazMat/WMD Response System incorporating a set of SMART CHARTS formulated from years of HazMat response experience. There is no cost to participants. Registration deadline is Feb. 17.

For information and to register, email idaemes@pionet.net or call 712.364.2533.

Essential Records & COOP/COG Planning

When: Feb. 29, 8:30 a.m.–4 p.m.
Where: Osage Safety Center
432 Main Street, Osage

If disaster strikes your place of business, how will you continue the most essential functions and services you provide? If you have to operate out of another facility, will you have access to all the essential records and resources that you will need? Do you even know what they are?

This workshop will help participants find the answers to these questions. Participants will discover the elements needed to ensure continuity of operations (COOP) and continuity of government (COG) under all circumstances, with a special focus on ensuring that essential records are preserved and available. Workshop participants will learn to identify what records are essential and how to protect them. Risks and hazards will be identified and evaluated. Participants will learn mitigation strategies to ensure the availability of essential records and other resources necessary to continue operations even in the face of disaster. By the end of the training, participants will have a clear understanding of what should be in their COOP/COG plan and even have a start on the plan.

Continued on Page 5...

2012 Session Legislative Update

Things at the Capitol are now in full swing for the year. While much of the public discussion has focused on property taxes, there are several bills that are of interest to the homeland security and emergency management community.

From last year, Senate File (SF) 413, dealing with local emergency management funding, continues to be discussed in the House of Representatives. Also, Senate Study Bill (SSB) 3130, which is a new version of last year’s SF 532 seeking to create a hazard mitigation project fund with funds derived from tax increments, has just arrived in the Senate.

Other bills of interest include:
- SSB 3088 would convert HSEMD from a division to a stand-alone department;
- SF 2011 would place a member of local emergency management on the Statewide Interoperable Communications Systems Board;
- SF 2002 would provide funds for the restoration of the Lake Delhi dam;
- HF 2009 seeks to make changes to the State Individual Assistance Program.

With the General Assembly indicating they would like to finish their work in early April, it certainly will make for an interesting spring.

For more information on legislation visit www.legis.iowa.gov.

This update is provided by John Benson, HSEMD’s legislative liaison.
Upcoming Training Opportunities

...Continued from Page 4
The target audience for this course is county emergency managers, county supervisors, and other county officials. Register online at http://homelandsecurity.iowa.gov/training.

Advanced ICS (ICS 400)

When: March 3, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
March 4, 8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Where: Johnson County EOC
4529 Melrose Ave., Iowa City

Typical required personnel for this course include all federal, state, tribal, local, private-sector, and nongovernmental personnel, including persons serving as command and general staff in an ICS organization, select department heads with multiagency coordination system responsibilities, area managers, emergency managers, and multi-agency coordination system/emergency operations center managers.

To register for this FREE course, contact B.J. Dvorak at 319-356-6762 or bj.dvorak@jecc-ema.org. Please provide your name, address, organization, email address and cell phone number.

Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Planning Seminar

When: March 6-7

Where: Polk County EOC
1907 Carpenter Ave.
Des Moines

The NFPA 1600 Standard establishes a common set of criteria for emergency management and business continuity programs. In addition, the standard provides such programs the criteria to access current programs or to develop, implement, and maintain aspects for the prevention, mitigation, preparation, response, and recovery from emergencies.

This course is normally $800, but the Region One Homeland Security Board is helping supplement the cost, so registration for this session is only $100! For more information and to register, contact Liz Manion at 515-382-7229 or mmanion@storycounty.com.

Crisis Management for School-Based Incidents: Partnering Rural Law Enforcement and the Local School Systems (AWR 144)

When: March 27, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

Where: Iowa Valley Continuing Ed
Room 608 and 610
3702 S. Center St.
Marshalltown

Rural schools, law enforcement, and other emergency responders are often limited in resources, so it is imperative that all potentially affected parties collaborate on planning, preparing, communicating, responding, and recovering from a school-based incident.

This FREE course is beneficial for rural police and sheriff’s departments, school administrators, resource officers and counselors, and others involved in school safety and security. Topics covered include:

- Introduction to incident planning and preparedness
- Proactive threat mitigation
- Incident response/recovery
- Vulnerability assessments
- Incident defusing and debriefing
- Parent reunification
- Anniversaries, memorials, “copycats”

To obtain a registration form, contact Liz Manion at mmanion@storycounty.com or Andrew James at ajames@storycounty.com. If you have any questions, please contact John Kayser at 419-434-5814 or kayser@findlay.edu.