



MEMO



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Quake on the Blue Ridge

Exercise Tests First Responders from Across the State

More than 450 emergency responders from across the state spent five days in late April testing their search and rescue, response and communications skills as part of an earthquake exercise. The training event simulated emergency needs in an urban environment challenging first responders as they encountered an earthquake and subsequent landslide. The scenario tested urban search and rescue teams as they looked for victims in the rubble; law enforcement officers as they secured the scene; medical staff as they triaged, treated and transported patients and emergency managers as they established command and control of the event.

“We chose an earthquake scenario, but the skills used would apply to any disaster,” said Robert Michaleski, Mitchell County’s emergency management coordinator who led the planning efforts for the exercise. “You go through some

of the same things whether it’s an ice storm, a tornado or some other disaster.”

While earthquakes are not common in western North Carolina, they do happen. In 2009, a 2.5 magnitude earthquake struck Laurel Park (south of Asheville), and last year a 2.3 magnitude earthquake struck Hendersonville. And the 5.9 earthquake that struck Louisa, Virginia last August sent ripples across all parts of North Carolina as well as much of the East Coast.

Exercise participants included fire fighters, law enforcement and emergency medical technicians, hospital staff and emergency managers from Avery, McDowell, Mitchell and Yancey counties, along with medical staff from Mission Hospital and Toe River Health District. Members of the Civil Air Patrol, Amateur Radio group, Adult Correction Division, N.C. Forest Service, Buncombe and Caldwell county emergency management agencies and Urban Search and Rescue Task Force 2 also participated in the drill.



First responders and Urban Search & Rescue Team members searched a mock school (red building in middle ground) for survivors to extract students and teachers after the roof collapsed. The crews had to navigate through the collapsed building which contained broken gas lines.

Emergency management crews from NC Emergency Management and the four sponsoring counties - Avery, McDowell, Mitchell and Yancey - have spent more than two years preparing for the event as they built a mock community of homes, schools, a collapsed tunnel and washed out bridge on a 40-acre tract near Spruce Pine.

Mitchell County applied for a Homeland Security grant to develop and pay for the exercise to provide an opportunity for their regional first responders, law enforcement officers and emergency management staff to sharpen their skills.

Fire rescue personnel respond to an overturned school bus wreck as part of the Quake on the Ridge exercise in Mitchell County April 27- May 1.



Practice Makes Perfect

*By Dennis Hancock and Steve Powers,
NCEM Area Coordinators*

Four Piedmont counties tested several of their response capabilities in mid-April as part of their ongoing efforts to maintain a readiness posture for all types of hazards.

Rockingham County Tests Hazmat Response

On April 20, first responders, emergency management and health officials from more than a dozen North Carolina and Virginia agencies met at the Miller-Coors brewery for a hazardous materials exercise. Hazmat technicians from the Miller plant team, RRT-5, and the Danville regional hazmat team responded to a mock anhydrous ammonia leak in an aging tower, then decontaminated and treated several victims. Simulated casualties were transported to Morehead Hospital in Eden, where they were further decontaminated and treated by hospital staff. Brewery staff, assisted by Rockingham

County emergency management, the fire marshal's office and N.C. Emergency Management, managed the incident, using the Incident Command System.

The annual exercise is funded by Miller-Coors and planned by brewery staff and Rockingham EM to validate the training of the brewery's technician level hazmat team, and to integrate county and state responders into their operations. The Rockingham local emergency planning committee helps recruit participants for the drill. This was the first year that the Danville team had participated; portions of Virginia are in the potential evacuation zone in a catastrophic event.

This year's participating agencies included: hazmat teams from Miller-Coors, city of Danville and Regional Response Team 5; Rockingham County fire, EMS, Sheriff's Office and emergency management; Eden police, fire and rescue squad; Reidsville fire department;

Caswell County emergency management; and staff from Morehead and Baptist hospitals. Staff from NCEM and the Office of State Fire Marshall also participated.

Durham Tests Response to Terrorism

More than 120 people from 17 local, state and federal agencies participated in a table top exercise designed to test their crisis response capabilities to a terrorist incident involving weapons of mass destruction. The April 18 exercise, dubbed Environmental Thunder, provided an opportunity for two dozen participants and more than 100 observers to discuss the process of identifying and responding to a weapons of mass destruction event at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences in the Research Triangle Park.

Participating agencies included: NIEHS, EPA, Department of Energy, the FBI, N.C. National Guard, State Highway Patrol, Office of Emergency Medical Services, NCEM and Durham city and county police, fire, sheriff and EMS departments.

Moore County CERT Tests Emergency Response Skills

Nearly 50 members from the Seven Lakes West and Wood Lake Community Emergency Response Teams demonstrated their emergency response skills April 19 by responding to a mock tornado at the West End Boy Scout Lodge. CERT members exercised their ability to assess scene safety and hazards, establish mission priorities, provide medical triage and treatment and communicate both internally and with emergency services personnel. The half-day exercise followed a tabletop discussion earlier in the month.

Moore and Richmond county EM staff, an NCEM area coordinator and personnel from Seven Lakes Fire Department evaluated the team members.

“There are always valuable lessons learned in hands-on exercises that you may not anticipate

during classroom training,” said Steve Powers, NCEM area coordinator. “Providing volunteers with an opportunity to practice what they learn makes all the difference.”



CERT members in Moore County tested their communication, management and response skills during a mock tornado drill. The hands-on training is invaluable to the volunteer teams.

Scotland County Vets Put to the Test

People aren't the only ones included in emergency response plans and exercises. Because pets are considered family members in many households, emergency planners have increased efforts in recent years to provide accommodations, rescue and treatment for animals in disaster plans. That's why veterinarians and veterinary technicians from the U.S. Army conducted an exercise April 19 at Camp Mackall in Scotland County. After the exercise, the group examined working dogs from the Laurinburg Police Department and Scotland County Sheriff's Office, as well as animals from the county animal shelter.

On the Road to Recovery: Rebuilding After the April 2011 Tornadoes

By Julia Jarema, NCEM

Just about any North Carolina resident can tell you that 2011 was one of the worst years for tornadoes in recent state history. The National Weather Service recorded 63 tornadoes last

year, more than twice the state average, with nearly half of those on one day.

On April 16, 30 tornadoes swept across two thirds of the state, the greatest one-day total in state history. Twenty-four people died and hundreds were injured. Residents and business owners in 20 federally-declared counties were eligible for federal grants and loans, while government agencies and non-profit organizations in 18 counties could apply for federal funds to recoup some of their disaster-related costs for storm response and repairs.

In the year since, nearly \$49 million in federal and state funds have been distributed to families, business owners, government agencies and non-profit organizations to help them respond to and recover from the tornado outbreak.

The following is a snapshot of the disaster recovery effort one year after the storms:

- **2,038** households received FEMA grants to help pay for temporary housing and/or replace personal property.
- **\$6.1 million** approved for housing grants, including short-term rental assistance and home repair costs.
- **\$2.3 million** approved to cover other essential disaster-related needs, such as funerals, medical and dental expenses and lost personal possessions.
- **\$13 million** in low-interest disaster loans approved by the U.S. Small Business Administration to help homeowners and business owners repair and rebuild.
- **6,318** homes were inspected after the storms.
- **36** temporary housing units were installed by FEMA so residents would have safe housing while they repaired or rebuilt their homes. Eleven of the units are still being used today; the remainder were turned back over to FEMA.

In addition, **\$27.5 million** has gone to local and state governments and nonprofit organizations

to pay for 462 projects, such as debris removal and repairs to public facilities and infrastructure. Through the federal cost-share reimbursement Public Assistance program, FEMA pays 75 percent of the cost of eligible projects and the state pays the 25 percent nonfederal share. Some of the more notable public assistance projects from the tornado outbreak included:

- **Debris Removal** – more than \$18 million was spent to remove approximately 500,000 tons of vegetative and construction debris in 18 counties.
- **Emergency protective measures** – approximately \$4.6 million was spent to reimburse first responders, emergency managers and law enforcement agencies in 18 counties for overtime accrued while responding to the disaster.
- **Shaw University** – the Raleigh-based school received \$1.5 million to remove debris and repair residence halls, classrooms and athletic facilities damaged in the tornadoes. The funds also paid for a temporary dining facility while the destroyed facility was rebuilt.
- **Cemetery Repair** – more than \$530,000 was spent to remove nearly 50 very large oak trees and repair or replace more than 100 headstones and monuments in three historic cemeteries in Raleigh: Mount Hope, O’Rorke and Raleigh City cemeteries. The work involved a thorough archaeological examination and sifting of the soil from root balls of the fallen trees to determine what artifacts and relics the disaster disturbed.

In addition, FEMA provided \$635,000 to establish a two-pronged crisis counseling program to help people in the impacted communities recover emotionally. In the first part of the N.C. on the Road to Resilience program, a toll-free hotline was established to provide counseling services and information about recovery programs to survivors in 10 counties. The program also included door-to-

door outreach within the affected communities, town-hall style meetings, group education, as well as a hotline available for people to call and receive referrals and other assistance.

Nearly 30,000 people benefited from crisis counseling services, group education and materials within the first 60 days of the disaster. The second part of the Resilience program worked toward rebuilding communities by providing support groups, working with schools and churches and providing motivational speakers to help empower the affected communities. More than 17,000 people in 10 counties used those services.

Volunteer Honored for Outstanding Disaster Recovery Efforts

From SBA News Release

Alfred A. Mignacci, a Raleigh resident who worked tirelessly to help rebuild a mobile home community shattered by a deadly tornado last year, will be awarded the U.S. Small Business Administration's Phoenix Award for his outstanding efforts as a volunteer.

Of the 183 homes in the Stony Brook mobile home community, 50 were destroyed and 98 were badly damaged. The tragedy was magnified by the loss of four children. Al Mignacci, a 74-year-old IBM retiree with a background in mechanical engineering, took the community—comprised mostly of Hispanic immigrants—under his wing.

Working 60 to 80 hours per week for six months, often in the rain or in extreme heat, Mignacci repaired mobile homes, coordinated countless volunteer work crews from all over the country and managed the purchasing and delivery of building materials. He became the “go to” person on all construction repairs, making sure the work was done correctly. Because of the language barrier, gauging the basic needs of each family became increasingly

difficult. So Mignacci recruited translators from neighboring churches to establish solid lines of communication, which allowed the residents to get the assistance they needed. If he heard a missing person report, Mignacci would take the initiative to support search efforts. Mignacci's sense of responsibility, sharp organizational skills, and a compassionate heart made him a central figure in Stony Brook's rebuilding, where he still volunteers today and is giving the residents an energizing dose of hope and self-respect.

For his display of resilience and dedication to Raleigh's recovery, the SBA chose Mignacci to receive the *2012 Phoenix Award for Outstanding Contributions to Disaster Recovery by a Volunteer*.

“The Phoenix Award is an acknowledgment of an individual's heroic efforts and a recognition of the contributions they make to the recovery of their communities,” said SBA Administrator Karen G. Mills. “Al Mignacci displayed tremendous courage and resourcefulness in the aftermath of the tornado, and he exemplifies the spirit one must have to rebuild after a disaster like this.”

The Phoenix Awards will be presented on May 22 in Washington, D.C. Since 1998, the SBA has given the Phoenix Award to business owners, public officials and volunteers who displayed selflessness, ingenuity and tenacity in the aftermath of a disaster, while contributing to the rebuilding of their communities.

Outreach Teams Get \$7.7 million Extra for Irene Survivors

Through a collaborative initiative, North Carolina Emergency Management and the Federal Emergency Management Agency have secured an additional \$7.7 million in disaster assistance to help individuals and families recover from Hurricane Irene. That initiative netted survivors additional funds via FEMA grants, U.S. Small Business Administration

loans and cash or in-kind donations from faith-based, non-profit or other charitable groups.

Since early November, special recovery outreach teams have been working in the 38 counties designated for disaster assistance to find Hurricane Irene survivors who needed additional help recovering. The teams, comprised of employees from North Carolina Emergency Management and FEMA, have provided advice and counseling on topics ranging from how to correctly fill out paperwork to helping survivors obtain assistance with their unmet needs caused by the disaster. Workers also helped applicants with the appeal process, explaining letters they may have received from FEMA and assisting applicants with gathering the documentation needed for their recovery.

In some cases, workers helped families get food stamps, find local child or mental health services, or get volunteer labor to help repair damaged homes. They also have helped dozens of the families find clothing, furniture and appliances to replace what was destroyed by the flood waters.

Mark Your Calendars

- May 23- Greenville **NCEM-ECU Annual Hurricane Conference**
This one-day forum brings together academics, meteorologists and emergency managers to discuss how best to share information and prepare for severe storms.
Contact Website/ Phone number
- May 30- Nags Head **NC/VA Evacuation Conference**
For coastal and inland counties, the annual meeting provides an opportunity to discuss evacuation plans and activities.
- June 13- Raleigh **EM/Department of Defense Annual Summit**
- June 26 - Raleigh **EM Summer Forum**
Join county and state EM practitioners to discuss current funding and program issues.
- October 14-18 Hickory **NCEMA Fall Conference**
The annual fall meeting provides county and state EM staff opportunities to discuss current issues and complete continuing education requirements.

Staffing Changes

Robert Boyd – joined NCEM April 2 as part of the Planning Section.

Mike Cline – who led the NCEM Training Branch for the past several years, left the division April 13. He now works in training for the Office of State Personnel.

Kenny Currie – retired as Cumberland County's Emergency Management director at the end of April.

Allan Griffin – former Montgomery County EM Coordinator, has accepted a new position as fire chief in Carolina Beach.

Carole Ingram – who worked in the Individual Assistance section, left NCEM April 27.

Steve Sloan – who was assistant director for Logistics, left NCEM April 27.

Charles Tripp – joined NCEM as the Area 2 Coordinator April 16. He has been active in emergency management for a number of years both as a member of the Greenville Fire Department and as the Task Force 10 leader.

Emily Young – who was assistant director for Recovery, left NCEM April 27.