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LESSON LEARNED

School Emergency Planning: Identifying On-Campus Sheltering Facilities for Students from Other Schools

SUMMARY

School emergency plans should identify appropriate on-campus sheltering facilities for students who have evacuated from other schools. This can minimize confusion and ensure that incoming students receive adequate shelter upon arrival on campus.

DESCRIPTION

On November 17, 2009, Federal Emergency Management Agency Region III sponsored the Limerick Generating Station (LGS) Full-Scale Exercise (FSE). This FSE involved 3 federal agencies, 19 state agencies, 184 county organizations, and 17 private sector organizations. The exercise scenario simulated a containment failure in the LGS reactor, which resulted in the dispersal of radioactive material. The main purpose of this FSE was to test the response capabilities of local agencies and organizations located in the 10-mile Emergency Planning Zone (EPZ) surrounding the LGS. In addition, this FSE tested the ability of participating schools to implement appropriate protective actions during a radiological release event.

The Limerick Generating Station (LGS) is located in southeastern Pennsylvania on the Schuylkill River. The LGS is surrounded by both a 10-mile and a 50-mile EPZ.

At the time of this exercise, the Spring-Ford Area School District (SFASD) Radiological Emergency Response Plan mandated that SFASD students be evacuated to and shelter in the Western Montgomery County Community College (MCCC) campus after a radiological release event at the LGS. However, SFASD and MCCC officials had not identified the specific Western MCCC facilities in which individual school populations would be sheltered during a release.

The FSE after-action report (AAR) notes that school bus drivers could have encountered difficulties in transporting students to the correct campus locations during an actual event. In addition, the lack of clearly pre-identified sheltering locations for all the incoming students could have hindered on-campus sheltering activities and resulted in confusion. Finally, the AAR notes that this could have impaired the ability of parents to locate their children on the MCCC campus.

School emergency plans should identify appropriate on-campus sheltering facilities for students who have evacuated from other schools. This can minimize confusion and ensure that incoming students receive adequate shelter upon arrival on campus.

CITATION

Federal Emergency Management Agency. *Limerick Generating Station After Action Report/Improvement Plan*. 09 Feb 2010.

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