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AFTER ACTION REPORT

**San Luis Valley Digital Trunked Radio (DTR)
Functional
Communications Exercise
For
Rio Grande County**

**Conducted December 9, 2006 at the Monte Vista School
Central Auditorium in Monte Vista, San Luis, Colorado**

Version 1.2

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Prepared by

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Executive Summary



The purpose of this exercise was to introduce DTR radio protocols utilizing common channels that are already programmed into all DTR radios. Participants used the Rio Grande County Mutual Aid Channel (RGMAC), Fire agencies used the radio-to-radio Simplex 1 (SIMP 1), Law Enforcement agencies used SIMP 2 and Emergency Medical Services used SIMP 3. The SLV Exercise Design Team provided a fictional scenario where exercise participants could use DTR radio protocols to

coordinate their emergency response actions with other agencies.

To limit the complexity and scope of the exercise the San Luis Valley Exercise Design Team decided to restrict the exercise to only Rio Grande and Conejos counties. Additionally, exercise participants were limited to American Red Cross, Fire Department, Law Enforcement agencies and Emergency Medical Services agencies.

Exercise controllers were given short-range hand held “walkie talkie” unit to communicate between themselves.

Several months before the exercise, Jon Montano and Dave Pote provided National Incident Command System (NIMS) training to most of the exercise participants. Part of the NIMS training contained a “DTR 101” class on the general operation of the radio, how to switch channel and functions of various radio buttons and switches.

Monte Vista School Central Auditorium was chosen as the exercise site for two reasons:

- The exercise took place on December 9, 2006 which was a Saturday and there were no school activities planned for that day.
- Exercise planners agreed Monte Vista would be the best location for the event.

Before the exercise started, Jon Montano (San Luis Valley RETAC Coordinator) gave a PowerPoint presentation on the basic principals of the Incident Command System (ICS).

After Jon concluded his ICS presentation, Pam Stewart (CSP Regional Communication Manager) gave a PowerPoint presentation on DTR radio protocols. Pam’s presentation included several “demonstration-performance” steps where participants were required to duplicate radio procedures presented by Pam.

The mock exercise site was along the “5 Mile Road” in the unincorporated community of Plaza. This site was chosen because emergency responders are frequently unclear on which agency has jurisdiction in this area. To make the exercise realistic in this respect,

the initial 911 was purposely misrouted to Monte Vista Police Dispatch instead of Rio Grande County Sheriff's Dispatch. Exercise participants quickly sorted out this "engineered confusion" and proceeded as they would in an actual situation.

Two dispatch center played a role during the exercise: Monte Vista Police Dispatch Center and Rio Grande County Sheriff's Dispatch Center. The reasons both dispatch center were used was because the incident was in the county, outside of any municipality and the close proximity of Monte Vista. Both dispatch centers had to coordinate their activities, as they occasionally do during actual emergencies.

At the beginning of the exercise, participants experienced some awkwardness with the DTR radio protocols. As is with all new technology and concepts, some problems were anticipated and participants quickly adjusted to the situation.

As responders received exercise injects simulating their dispatch center sending them to the incident scene, they were prompted to announce their arrival to the IC on the Rio Grande Mutual Aid Channel (RGMAC).

Once an Incident Commander (IC) was selected, the IC quickly began to assemble his command staff. His staff consisted of representatives from Law Enforcement, Fire Departments and Emergency Medical Services. The IC and his staff left the Monte Vista School Central Auditorium and assembled aboard the Alamosa County Sheriff's Incident Command Vehicle. The vehicle was located in the school parking lot, just outside the auditorium. This unified command configuration provided the IC with an efficient method to coordinate activities between the three disciplines and Rio Grande County Sheriff's Dispatch Center. At this point, exercise participants began to effectively use DTR radio protocols.

The IC followed DTR radio protocol and remained on the Rio Grande MAC to communicate information between him and the Rio Grande County Sheriff's Dispatch Center (hereafter called "dispatch"). Upon their arrival at the incident scene, other disciplines followed DTR radio protocols and communicated on the following DTR channels:

- Fire Department personnel selected Simplex Channel "1" (SIMP 1)
- Law Enforcement personnel selected SIMP 2
- Emergency Medical Service personnel selected SIMP 3

The exercise scenario grew in complexity and the participants responded to the needs of the situation as they were handed exercise injects by the Controllers. After injects identified an ammonium nitrate and fuel oil (ANFO) bomb discovered in a vehicle stopped by the accident, the IC called for a one mile radius evacuation and the exercise was terminated.

After the exercise concluded a debriefing or "hot wash" was conducted with all participants. Then exercise participants were asked to fill out a written critique. One of

the questions was “Please rate the overall exercise on the following scale” (1 being worse and 10 being best). The average score for this question was 8.7.

We thank Valley Community Fund for providing three volunteers who helped with morning snacks and the afternoon lunch service. Having Delfina Maez and Robert Jackson there was extremely helpful!

A special thanks goes out to VCF volunteer Feliz Velasquez who took notes during the “Hot Wash” post-exercise debriefing.

Background Information

Radio communication between various emergency response disciplines has historically been poor to often non-existent. If an agency did not have the frequency of other agencies programmed into their radio, communication was not possible.

About ten years ago, several Colorado State agencies began to build the infrastructure for a Digital Trunked Radio (DTR) system. The purpose of this system was to enable local and state emergency response agencies to communicate between themselves on a statewide basis. These new DTR radios are components to a growing, statewide communication project to provide seamless and reliable interoperable communication between emergency response agencies in locations all around the State of Colorado.

San Luis Valley officials (All-Hazards Committee) came together in early 2003 and made a decision to join the State of Colorado DTR system.

Since late in 2004, emergency response agencies within the San Luis Valley region have been receiving DTR radios through Homeland Security grant programs. At the time of this writing, most agencies have their DTR radios, but a few agencies still have not received them.

The DTR radio system directly supports one of the State Homeland Security capabilities called “Interoperable Communications”. Aside from the nearly crystal clear voice audio on the radios, probably the most important feature is commonality of radio channel talk groups contained in all DTR radios used in the State of Colorado.

San Luis Valley emergency response agencies have been using their DTR radios on a daily basis to communicate and coordinate action with their own agency and their dispatch center. However, during emergency response actions involving multiple agencies communications between emergency responders have been hampered because of a lack of familiarity with common communication channels.

This exercise introduces a new paradigm in communication techniques for each DTR radio user to communicate with other disciplines and coordinate their activities on channels contained in all DTR radios.

Goals and Objectives

Exercise goals and objectives for the San Luis Valley Digital Trunked Radio System tabletop exercise are as follows:

Goal – Establish initial Incident Command structure and utilize communication protocols between all responding emergency response units and personnel.

Objectives

1. Within 5 minutes of arrival at a disaster or emergency scene, the senior emergency responder will assume the duties of Incident Commander and coordinate actions between first responders at the scene and Rio Grande County Sheriff's Dispatch Center.
2. Within 5 minutes after being dispatched to a disaster or emergency scene, each emergency response unit will demonstrate their ability to follow DTR radio protocols to contact the Incident Command to receive initial instructions.
3. Upon arrival at a disaster or emergency scene, each participant will demonstrate their ability to follow DTR radio protocols with appropriate MAC or simplex channels to contact and coordinate actions between responders of the same discipline.
4. Each participant will use the DTR radio to transmit at least two messages during the exercise.

Overall objectives for each discipline are as follows:

Fire Department

- Evaluate the process used to determine the level of response.
- Evaluate the DTR radio coordination with local Law Enforcement and Emergency Medical Services in rescue operations at the incident scene.
- Evaluate the ability to function under Incident Command System.

Law Enforcement

- Evaluate the establishment of scene security and definitive inner and outer perimeters.
- Evaluate the DTR radio coordination with Fire Department and Emergency Medical Service in rescue operations at the incident.

- Evaluate use of pre-established procedures to mobilize all necessary Law Enforcement personnel and resources.
- Evaluate the ability to function under Incident Command System

Emergency Medical Services

- Evaluate the establishment of measures necessary for medical services at the incident.
- Evaluate the DTR radio coordination with local Law Enforcement and Fire Department in rescue operations at the scene.
- Evaluate the establishment of a staging area for all responding medical equipment
- Evaluate establishment of a communication procedure for interaction with other response agencies.
- Evaluate the ability to function under Incident Command System.

Each exercise participant was given a statewide MAC channel to make contact with a representative located in the Colorado Department of Emergency Management Command Post located at the facility in Centennial, Colorado on Mutual Aid Channel 9 Southeast (M9 SE). The purpose of this activity was to demonstrate the long-range capabilities of the DTR radio system.

A number of exercise injects were developed to drive DTR radio traffic between participating agencies to give everyone practice in locating and using various common channels found in all DTR radios. As an example, a Rio Grande County Deputy Sheriff's was given an inject that directed him to contact any Emergency Medical Service unit at the incident scene. Injects similar to the example were developed for all disciplines participating in the tabletop exercise.

Pre-Exercise Activities

Alamosa County Sheriff's Dave Stong provided his Incident Command Vehicle for the last DTR exercise in Costilla County and agreed to provide it again for this exercise. This provided a realistic situation for the Incident Commander and his unified command staff.

Several months in advance of the exercise, representatives from the San Luis Valley Exercise Design Team contacted Monte Vista School District officials to discuss the possibility of using the school as the exercise site. School officials agreed to provide the Monte Vista Central Auditorium, located at the corner of Broadway (SR 15) and Main Street (U.S. Highway 160). The following areas of the auditorium were used during the exercise:

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Main entryway – The registration table was set up in this area. Also refreshments were in the same area.

Stage area – The exercise staff (Senior Controller, Exercise Director and several other team members) were located at a table.

Auditorium seating area – Fire, Law Enforcement, American Red Cross and EMS were located in separate areas of the room. This arrangement provided the exercise staff with visual control over the exercise participants.

Parking lot – The Incident Commander and his unified command group were located in Alamosa County Sheriff's Incident Command Vehicle. From there they coordinated response efforts between dispatch and exercise participants located inside the gymnasium.

Monte Vista School Central Auditorium was also selected because of the following reasons:

- The DTR radio signal strength was good in the area (San Luis has a new DTR tower located on a hill overlooking the town)
- Plenty of parking space for exercise staff, participants and observers.
- The school location was well known to everyone involved in the exercise

Participants and Agencies

The following agencies (in alphabetical order) and individuals were the exercise participants:

Alamosa County Sheriff's

- Gary Thomas
- Ron Goodman

Alamosa Fire Department

- Don Chapman

American Red Cross

- Danny Fox
- Barbara Robbins
- Kim Schaefer
- Sheryl Steving
- Peter M. Krauss
- Dianna Widener
- Michelle Pomeroy



Colorado Department of Emergency Management

- Patricia Gavelda

Colorado State Patrol Alamosa Regional Dispatch Center

- Kenric Holman
- Pam Stewart

Del Norte Fire Department

- Claude Trujillo
- Dale Weaver
- Narsiso Rodriguez
- Stephen Trujillo

Del Norte Police Department

- Fermin G. Moreno
- Frank Archuleta
- Joseph M. Ruybal

Monte Vista Ambulance Service

- Cheryl Archuleta
- Tanya Avila
- Merlinda Lopez

Monte Vista Fire Department

- Glenn D. Slingerland
- Michael L. Valdez
- Jim Clare
- Scott Taylor

Monte Vista Police Department

- Corey Housekeeper
- Ivan Garcia
- Evan A. Lopez
- Samuel O. Maestas
- Duane Oakes

Monte Vista Police Dispatch Center

- Austin Valdez
- Bill Yohey

Rio Grande County Commissioners

- Doug Davie

Rio Grande County Office of Emergency Management

- Larry Messoline

Rio Grande County Sheriff's Department

- Jon Gonzalez
- Larry Messoline (also Rio Grande County Emergency Manager)
- Ivan Garcia
- Amos Medina

Rio Grande County Sheriff's Department Dispatch Center

- Emily Lopez

Saguache County

- Sheriff's Mike Norris
- Ron Gilbertson (Saguache Fire Department)

San Luis Valley Community Fund

- Robert Jackson
- Delfina A. Maez
- Feliz Velasquez

San Luis Valley Homeland Security

- Jeff Babcock
- John Baker

South Fork Ambulance Service

- Dustin Atencio

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The following Exercise Design Team members, with their exercise positions, were present during the exercise:



Exercise Director and Senior Controller

Dave Pote

Assistant Exercise Director and Senior Controller

Glenn Slingerland and Jeff Babcock

Registration Desk

Charlie House (San Luis Valley RETAC)

Controllers

Duane Oaks – Law Enforcement

Merlinda Lopez – Emergency Medical Services

Ron Gilbertson – Fire Departments

Gary Thomas – Incident Command

Danny Fox – Controller for Red Cross

Lorrie Crawford – Monte Vista Police Dispatch Center

Mike Norris – Rio Grande County Sheriff's Dispatch Center

Evaluators

John Baker – Law Enforcement

Jon Montano – Emergency Medical Services

Jim Clare – Fire Departments

Don Chapman – Incident Command

Kim Schaefer – Red Cross

Kenric Holman – Monte Vista Police Dispatch Center



Pam Stewart – Rio Grande County Sheriff’s Dispatch Center

Observers

- Doug Davie – Rio Grande County Commissioner and President of the Monte Vista Fire Board
- Brian Norton – Sheriff of Rio Grande County

Description of the Exercise Scenario

The exercise scenario starts with a two-vehicle accident in Rio Grande County in the unincorporated community of Plaza on County Road 5 North and the bridge over the Rio Grande River. The scenario builds in complexity, requiring participants to coordinate activities with their DTR radios.

1. A 14-passenger van full of senior citizens traveling East on the County Road 5 North collides with anhydrous ammonia truck traveling West on the County Road 5 North.
2. 12 senior citizens are injured, and one is dead; driver of the anhydrous ammonia truck is injured and trapped inside his vehicle.
3. Smoke and flame begins to issue from the vehicle engine area; anhydrous ammonia is not leaking from the tank at this time
4. A citizen living near the bridge calls 911 on their land-line home telephone to report accident (the caller does not report any injuries, just two car accident). The caller hangs up before the 911 operator can get more information.
5. Monte Vista Fire Department and Monte Vista Ambulance Service are notified by CSP Alamosa Regional Communication Center (this is intentionally the wrong notification).
6. Monte Vista Fire or EMS notifies Monte Vista Police Dispatch of the CSP Dispatch error; Monte Vista Police Dispatch notifies Rio Grande County Sheriff’s Dispatch and provides situation report.
7. Weather conditions: Sky is clear with scattered clouds, temperature is 35° F, relative humidity is 25% and no wind.
8. The first person to respond to the 911 call is a Rio Grande County Deputy Sheriff’s and calls Rio Grande County Sheriff’s Dispatch for assistance.
9. Fire and EMS Departments from Del Norte and South Fork are called for mutual aid assistance.
10. The U.S. Department of Transportation Hazardous Materials placard on the side of the truck reads “1005” for anhydrous ammonia.
11. Red Cross is notified and requested to provide support to first responders with food and water.
12. Law Enforcement stops traffic in both directions on the County Road 5 North and decides on which detour is best.
13. The Incident Commander contacts Rio Grande County Sheriff’s Dispatch Center to request the Alamosa County Sheriff’s Incident Command Vehicle.

14. One of the stopped vehicles is an older Volkswagen mini-bus covered with anti-war slogans and two occupants.
15. Anhydrous ammonia vapors begin to leak from the truck – vapors migrate down onto the river and begin spreading up and down.
16. The Incident Commander requests Hazardous Materials support through Rio Grande County Sheriff's Dispatch.
17. A fisherman located 50 yards west of the bridge is overcome by anhydrous ammonia vapors.
18. Newspaper reporters from the Valley Courier and Pueblo Chieftain arrive and want information.
19. Weather conditions: Sky is clear with scattered clouds, temperature is 35° F, relative humidity is 25% and wind is now moving slowly northwest at 2 miles per hour.
20. Red Cross Disaster Action Team (DAT) coordinates with Rio Grande County Sheriff's Dispatch and begins to locate shelter and food for evacuees.
21. Incident Commander organizes Law Enforcement assets on scene to begin notification and evacuation of citizen living downwind in Plaza.
22. A Monte Vista Police Officer starts to talk to the driver of the VW mini-bus because he appears very nervous; the Monte Vista Police Officer grows suspicious of the driver when he smells fertilizer and fuel oil odor and sees an AK-47 partially covered by a coat.
23. The driver hits the Monte Vista Police Officer with the truck door, knocking him down – driver starts running east on County Road 5 North. Passenger runs west.
24. The Monte Vista Police Officer thinks the VW mini-bus may contain ammonium nitrate and fuel oil (ANFO) bombs.
25. The Incident Commander orders first responders to evacuate upwind and cross wind from the anhydrous ammonia vapor plume.
26. The Incident Commander calls Rio Grande County Sheriff's Dispatch for a bomb squad to evaluate the VW mini-bus.
27. Rio Grande County Sheriff's Dispatch contacts Fort Carson Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team for assistance, but dispatch is informed they are all deployed to Iraq. The closest bomb squad is located in Colorado Springs.

Accomplishments

Exercise goals and objectives were all accomplished within the allotted time.

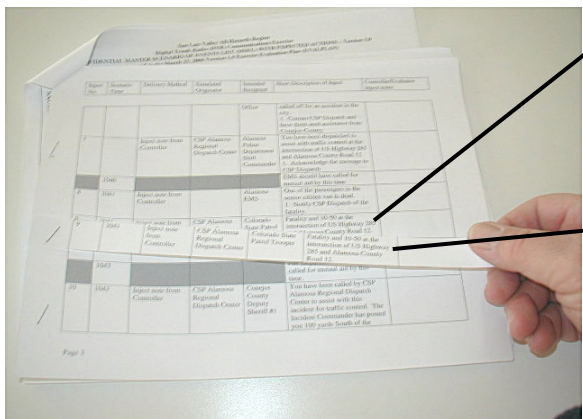
A Rio Grande County Deputy was given an inject that made him the first exercise participant to arrive on-scene. He assumed the roll of Incident Commander in a timely manner. This was a critical first component of the Incident Command structure.

According to Jack Cobb, Communications Manager, Colorado Department of Emergency Management in Centennial, CO approximately 12 exercise participants had an opportunity to make radio checks using their portable DTR radios. Participants were given an inject slip which instructed them to select "M9SE" (State-wide Mutual Aid Channel 9 South East) and asked to make a radio check with Denver area CDEM

personnel. This gave the DTR radio users a sense of how powerful even the small portable DTR radios were. Most users were impressed and a came away with a new sense of confidence in their equipment.

Controllers handed written “injects” from the Master Scenario of Events Listing (MSEL) to exercise participants at pre-selected times. There were actually two versions of the MSEL. One version was the standard MSEL with a description of each inject. The second MSEL version contained all the same information plus expected or anticipated actions on the part of the exercise participants.

Controllers cut the first MSEL version into paper strips, each strip containing one inject. These strips were then stapled to the second MSEL version containing expected actions. At the designated time, the Controller simply pulled off the inject and handed it to an exercise participant. Since the Controller still had the second MSEL version in his hand, it was intended to keep track of which injects had been handed out and which had not. This photo shows how this process was managed:



This area of MSEL contains the inject information along with the expected action on the part of the recipient.

This slip of paper is the actual inject that the Controller handed to each recipient.

Each time a Controller passed an inject to an exercise participant, the Controller announced the inject number on their “walkie talkie” radios. Even though there were only a few minutes between injects, this procedure helped all Controllers stay on time with exercise injects.

Written material handed out to participants was easily understood and worked well.

Several senior Rio Grande County officials attended the exercise as observers:

- Doug Davie – Rio Grande County Commissioner and President of the Monte Vista Fire Board
- Brian Norton – Rio Grande County Sheriff’s
- Dale Weaver – Del Norte Fire Board Member

Shortfalls

Red Cross Disaster Action Teams were needed in the scenario, but the actual act of contacting them to perform their services was lost during the exercise.

Many of the exercise participants were not familiar with their DTR radios (buttons, switches, etc.) This was especially true of the smaller volunteer fire departments. Motorola (the manufacturer of the DTR radios) has held two “train-the-trainer” seminars on how to use the XTL2500 radio. These seminars were lightly attended. The intent was for the attendees to travel back to their agencies to conduct “DTR 101” training to their colleagues. That has not happened to the level hoped for.

When exercise participants of each discipline communicated with their peers on SIMPLEX channels, there appeared to be electronic “cross-talk” between users. After team members looked at this problem closer, the actual problem centered on some participants leaving their DTR radios in the “scan” mode.

Del Norte Ambulance Service did not participate in the exercise. Ambulance service members complained they were not notified or invited to the exercise. Exercise design team member attempted to contact all Rio Grande County agencies to invite them to participate.

San Luis Valley Exercise Design Team Comments Regarding Exercise Goals and Objectives:

Goal – Establish initial incident command structure and establish communication between all responding emergency response units and personnel.

Objective 1 – Within five (5) minutes of arrival at a disaster or emergency scene, the senior emergency responder will assume the duties of Incident Commander and coordinate on-scene activities with Rio Grande County Sheriff’s Office Dispatch Center and Monte Vista Police Department Dispatch Center.

John Baker (Evaluator for Law Enforcement)

- The first law enforcement officer on the scene accomplished Objective 1 within two minutes of arrival.

Pam Stewart (Evaluator for Rio Grande County Sheriff’s Dispatch Center)

- Monte Vista Police Department Dispatch Center notified Rio Grande County Sheriff’s Dispatch Center of the misdirected 911 call.

Kenric Holman (Evaluator for Monte Vista Police Dispatch Center)

- The first Rio Grande County Sheriff’s Deputy to arrive, notified Rio Grande County Sheriff’s Office Dispatch in a timely manner.
- Responding Monte Vista Fire Department units advised Monte Vista Police Dispatch Center that the incident was not in their jurisdiction. This was intentionally scripted into the exercise and the fire personnel continued to respond

- Monte Vista Police Dispatch Center was quick to notify Rio Grande County Sheriff's Office Dispatch of the misrouted 911 call.

Kim Schaefer (Evaluator for Red Cross)

- Once the Incident Commander was identified, this information should have been announced several more times, as some exercise participants did not hear the first announcement or were distracted with other exercise activities.

Objective 2 – Within five (5) minutes after being dispatched to a disaster or emergency scene, each emergency response unit will demonstrate their ability to follow DTR radio protocols to contact the Incident Command to receive initial instructions.

John Baker (Evaluator for Law Enforcement)

- It took some time for the Incident Commander to get law enforcement operations personnel on the appropriate SIMPLEX channel.

Jim Clare (Evaluator for Fire Departments)

- It took some time for the Incident Commander to get fire department operations personnel on the appropriate SIMPLEX channel.
- When the Incident Commander began assembling personnel for a Unified Command, there was some confusion between fire departments on which they were going to send to be a member of the Unified Command.
- Law enforcement personnel were slow to use DTR protocols, but as exercise progressed, they all started using protocols.

Jon Montano (Evaluator for Emergency Medical Service)

- Agencies were unfamiliar with the DTR protocols at first, but as the exercise progressed they became better.

Kenric Holman (Evaluator for Monte Vista Police Dispatch Center)

- Monte Vista Police Department Dispatch Center was not contacted by the Incident Commander as to which channel he was using (Rio Grande County Mutual Aid Channel). This was eventually corrected.

Objective 3 – Upon arrival at a disaster or emergency scene, each participant will demonstrate their ability to follow DTR radio protocols with appropriate MAC or SIMPLEX channels to contact and coordinate actions between responder of the same discipline.

John Baker (Evaluator for Law Enforcement)

- Law enforcement personnel were slow to use the DTR protocols at first, but as the exercise progressed personnel began to follow the protocols.

Jim Clare (Evaluator for Fire Departments)

- Fire department personnel were slow to use the DTR protocols at first, but as the exercise progressed personnel began to follow the protocols.
- As the exercise progressed, use of the DTR protocols increased.

Jon Montano (Evaluator for Emergency Medical Service)

- EMS units did not have arrival times to the incident
- Law enforcement and Incident Commanded asked on several occasions how many casualties.

Ron Gilbertson (Controller for Fire Department)

- Several participants did not know what channels they should use. Agencies need to become more familiar with their DTR radios and the protocols.

General Comments from Exercise Team Members:

John Baker (Evaluator for Law Enforcement)

- Officer approached the VW Microbus, but did not apply principles of RAIN (Recognize, Avoid, Isolate and Notify). Also, this individual used his radio and cell phone within 300 yards of a suspected explosive device, which could have caused premature detonation.

Kim Schaefer (Evaluator for Red Cross)

- Around inject #22 more ambulances were requested, but the actual page did not go out for several more minutes. This is a continuing problem for the Monte Vista Ambulance Service as well. We hear the request from the Monte Vista Police Dispatch and it takes what seems like an unnecessarily long time for the page to actually occur.
- At inject #36 a call for help from more Emergency Medical Service units was requested, but the Incident Commander doesn't know how many people are on the scene yet. Several calls were made for a head count of the injured, but that remained virtually unknown. Also some confusion when the Incident

Commander called for a count if they wanted number of people or number of ambulance units on standby and enroute. Maybe this could be (or was) handled by assigning someone to count ambulance units and personnel at the Incident Command Post. This is probably why fire departments announce how many people they have on board when they leave their fire house. This is probably a good idea as someone needs to be counting people going in and then counting people as they go out right from the beginning, not just when the Incident Command Post finally gets set up.

- At inject #45 when personnel were told to evacuate to 1,000 feet, some of the first responders were already contaminated. Red Cross had still not been notified of the disaster at this time.
- At inject #56 it sounded like an ambulance that was already enroute to Rio Grande was diverted to San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center in Alamosa. Then the remaining personnel at the site were told to go back to the decontamination area. It was hard to decipher at times who the information was going to and if people copied that info. I couldn't tell if that particular ambulance was diverted or just subsequent traffic or if the ambulance was supposed to go back to the decontamination area before or after it dropped it's patient.
- Inject #62 finds the Incident Commander still requesting the number of people and ambulances on scene. We do know how many ambulance units are enroute but no count of EMS personnel has taken place yet. EMS stated wind was blowing but no direction given. Didn't hear South Fork Ambulance page on our radios. All EMS units told again to stay at decontamination set up. Did that mean all the ones enroute also?
- Inject #68 finally finds Red Cross being notified that the Plaza area may need to be evacuated. Also, the location of possible Red Cross set up located at Ski Hi was announced before the facility caretaker was notified. That piece of information leaking early could cause a lot of confusion.
- Inject #76, describing the fisherman overcome by anhydrous ammonia fumes, was not paged to ambulance services. The scene was called unsafe, EMS told not to respond because Hazmat would retrieve person and take to them.
- Inject #78, calling for EMS and rescue for fisherman overcome by anhydrous ammonia fumes, also was not paged. The next inject had the Incident Command calling for South Fork Ambulance service to provide EMS support for the fisherman. There was confusion as to who from Del Norte and Monte Vista Ambulance services were responding to help South Fork Ambulance Service. Again, number of ambulance units and personnel were in question.
- Even though Red Cross Disaster Action Team was new, they got very good directions from Danny Fox and they used really good problem solving skills

taking things into their own hands even though they didn't have an updated phone listing. Red Cross needs to make sure a telephone recall list is available to any Red Cross employee who is required to notify the DAT to respond to an incident.

- My initial impression was that this was a very valuable exercise. I learned a lot personally and will attempt to incorporate some radio practices into our monthly ambulance meetings so entire staff can learn to use radios better. We also need to get familiar with the radio reporting codes - can we use the ones in the draft we were given, now? We do need to have an updated radio channel list in each rig and have a way to update that list and, possibly, have Jon send it out each month or so to each organization (including Red Cross.) This will be a critical element in any disaster being handled well. I came away from the exercise realizing that these new radios have been a total pain in ways, but they really are going to help our communication. Every exercise I have been involved in throughout the past 9 years has had severe communication problems. These radios are really the best solution to those problems. Thank you for letting me participate as an exercise team member.

Jim Clare (Evaluator for Fire Departments)

- There were electrical load problems with coffee pots. They were initially on one circuit and the power required exceeded the amperage, causing the circuit breaker to keep tripping until more circuits were put into use.
- Need to have more “hands on” practice periods for participants before the exercise starts. Some were uncomfortable asking questions in the large group, but readily ask questions within their own department.
- Agencies need to practice using DTR radios and protocols during department meetings and in-service training sessions.
- Groups such as fire, LE and EMS should have had more distance between them, due to noise in the auditorium.

Jon Montano (Evaluator for Emergency Medical Service)

- Several participants kept their DTR radios on “scan” mode which caused the impression of “bleed over” to other channels.
- Ambulance services did not have much to do after arrival on scene; need more injects for them during the next exercise

Pam Stewart (Evaluator for Rio Grande County Sheriff's Dispatch Center)

- Was not contacted by Red Cross Coordinator early in the exercise, as required by an inject handed to Red Cross Coordinator.
- San Luis Valley HazMat team did not participate in the exercise as planned. Pam Stewart attempted to function as the HazMat team representative.
- Red Cross Coordinator arrived on scene and called Rio Grande County Sheriff's Dispatch Center on time with inject.
- Rio Grande County Sheriff's Dispatch Center simulated using Emergency Preparedness Network (reverse 911 system) to notify Plaza residents located downwind of the Anhydrous Ammonia leak.

Kenric Holman (Evaluator for Monte Vista Police Dispatch Center)

- One of the dispatchers contacted the State Emergency Operations Center, but did not use proper radio procedure. Kenric discuss this with the dispatcher.

Summary of the “Hot Wash” debriefing

Exercise participants were, for the most part, very pleased with the chance to use their DTR radios in a coordinated fashion. This has been a point of frustration for many emergency responders.

Exercise participants were asked to complete an eight question critique form. We received 18 critiques. Participants were asked the question, “Please rate the overall exercise on the following scale [1 being least and 10 being best] and the participants gave the exercise an average rating of 8.7, which shows they were pleased.

Cheryl Archuletta – “I am on the Monte Vista EMS. There was a lot of information that was very informative. The whole exercise was very well organized. Everybody did a good job.”

Tonya Avilla – “I am also on the Monte Vista EMS. Everything went well I thought. It made some aspects of the DTR radios more relevant. I learned a lot more about how these new DTR radios work and it was helpful. Before I only used one channel.”

Ivan Garcia – “I am with Rio Grande County Sheriff's Office. I learned more structure in trying to control a situation. I also learned some new aspects of better communication skills with the new DTR radios.”

Jon Gonzales – “I am a Captain with Rio Grande Sheriff's Office and had the role of Incident Commander. The exercise went really well and all participants seemed to be having fun. The realization of this technology that is available to our organizations and agencies in the San Luis Valley set the stage for an overall good time. Working with other agencies ended up being a great experience. Incident Command Center (Alamosa

County Sheriff's Incident Command Vehicle) took a very impressive control of the exercise. The exercise was a good learning experience, demonstrating the power of the DTR system.”

Claude Trujillo – “I am with Del Norte Fire Department. Learning about SIMPLEX and the DTR radio in general was great. Communication between different organizations can fail, in turn hindering the capabilities of all emergency responders involved. To make DTR an effective and efficient communication resource, “practice makes perfect” is the way to go. We also need more roadside markers in the valley to help make emergency response more efficient.”

Narsiso Rodriguez – “I am with Del Norte Fire Department. This experience is a first with me. DTR is a definite improvement. The ability to communicate directly with responders instead of 2 or 3 different agencies promotes better, more effective emergency response.”

Mike Valdez – “I am with Monte Vista Fire Department. Our department practices the use of “department divisions”. Separating into divisions during this exercise was an issue that was not addressed. Agencies who are familiar with being involved in using divisions will help achieve the objectives during all exercise injects.

Jon Gonzales – “Agencies should be aware of the use of division during any event and should try to incorporate divisions. They were overlooked in this exercise. It would benefit all agencies to implement divisions in future training exercises.

Kim Shaffer – “I am with Red Cross. All our participants today are still relatively new to the Red Cross, except for Danny Fox. This did not obstruct the ability to follow directions and use their fresh problem solving ideas in utilizing knowledge offered by Danny. The participation of Red Cross is often hindered by:

- Not being promptly notified of an emergency. This, in turn, causes delays in emergency response time, and
- Not having an accurate head count of clients which also effects timely response.”

Mike Norris (Controller for Rio Grande Sheriff's Office Dispatch Center) – “There were several things I learned about Rio Grande Sheriff's Office Dispatch Center:

- Mineral County Mutual Aid Channel is not used because DTR does not operate in that area at this time.
- Rio Grande Sheriff's Office Dispatch Center logistics organized the DTR system to work super during emergencies to make things a lot easier to handle.
- Excellent exercise; Rio Grande Sheriff's Office Dispatch Center is really ‘state of the art’.

- A noticed downfall was some injects and/or radio traffic did not make it to dispatch. Pay attention to communicating information to all agencies and dispatch.”

Larry Messoline – “I am the new Emergency Manger for Rio Grande County. This was a great exercise:

- Members of the Unified Incident Command in the valley worked well with each other.
- Exercise Controllers did well with talking or walking everyone through.
- All in all, it was a good exercise – great job!”

Written comments from exercise participants follow:

“This exercise has helped show how chaos can come about at a minor or major incident and how Incident Command can manage those issues to make the scene flow smoother.”

“At this time Red Cross does not have radio communication. All coordination with dispatch centers handled with a cell phone. Red Cross needs radio communications, preferably a DTR radio.”

“Go over DTR radio information in more detail, especially for the newer employees.”

“The DTR protocols clearly showed the versatility of the system. It is impressive.”

“Awesome experience for us to brush up on skills not always used on a daily basis.”

“Use separate rooms next time; this will help control all the radio noise.”

“I need to work with my DTR radio more to understand all it will do.”

“Using the DTR radio protocols was confusing at first, but came together fast.”

“Very educational”

“This exercise should be done annually.”

“The exercise team did a very good job. Do this again and again!”

Recommendations

Training needs

Emergency responders need more Incident Command System training, beginning with ICS-100. This is especially true for those who will have a leadership role during emergencies or disasters.

Conduct more DTR radio exercises around the San Luis Valley. Expose as many emergency responders to the DTR radio protocols as possible.

Emergency responder agencies should include DTR radio training and use of the protocols during period in-service training sessions.

Changes in the Emergency Plan

The County Emergency Manager should consider adding the DTR radio protocols to their County Emergency Plans.

**Improvement Plan Matrix for Rio Grande County
Public Safety Agencies**

TASKS	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE PARTY/ AGENCY	COMPLETION DATE
<p>First responders need to attend INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM training for managing incidents during emergencies.</p>	<p>Managers of first responder agencies should insure all personnel who would respond to an emergency or disaster scene attend awareness training for managing incidents.</p> <p>Evaluators should follow up with agencies within their respective discipline to ensure training is completed.</p>	<p>All first responders should attend Incident Command System (ICS) ICS-100 training.</p>	<p>Law Enforcement/ John Baker</p> <p>Fire Departments/ Jim Clare</p> <p>Emergency Medical Services/ Jon Montano</p> <p>Incident Command/ Don Chapman</p> <p>Rio Grande County Sheriff Dispatch/ Pam Stewart</p> <p>Monte Vista Police Department Dispatch Center/ Kenric Holman</p>	<p>September 30, 2007</p>
<p>First responder agencies should become more familiar with the Digital Trunk Radio (DTR) system.</p>	<p>First responders should become more familiar with the interoperable communications capability available with DTR radios.</p> <p>Evaluators should follow up with agencies within their respective discipline to ensure training is completed.</p>	<p>First responder agencies should include practice sessions using DTR radios and the DTR radio protocols during regular in-service training meetings.</p>	<p>Law Enforcement/ John Baker</p> <p>Fire Departments/ Jim Clare</p> <p>Emergency Medical Services/ Jon Montano</p> <p>Incident Command/ Don Chapman</p> <p>Rio Grande County Sheriff Dispatch/ Pam Stewart</p> <p>Monte Vista Police Department Dispatch Center/Kenric Holman</p>	<p>September 30, 2007</p>
<p>First responders should become more familiar with terrorist bombings and improvised explosive devices.</p>	<p>First responders should become more familiar with terrorist bombing concepts and how to recognize improvised explosive devices (IED).</p> <p>Evaluators should follow up with agencies within their respective discipline to ensure training is completed.</p>	<p>First responders should attend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Incident Response to Terrorist Bombings b. Prevention and Response to Suicide Bombing Incidents c. Understanding and Planning for School Bomb Incidents 	<p>Law Enforcement/ John Baker</p> <p>Fire Departments/ Jim Clare</p> <p>Emergency Medical Services/ Jon Montano</p> <p>Incident Command/ Don Chapman</p> <p>Rio Grande County Sheriff Dispatch/ Pam Stewart</p> <p>Monte Vista Police Department Dispatch Center/Kenric Holman</p>	<p>September 30, 2007</p>