

Butler County EMA

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT MONTHLY



WEST CHESTER EOA EXERCISE SERIES

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Training Opportunities:

- January 22—MGT 414—Advanced Critical Infrastructure Protection
- January 22—AWR 209—Working with the Media
- February 11—G 402—ICS Overview for Executive and Senior Officials
- March 17-18—Tank Truck Emergency Response Workshop
- March 31-April 2—G 393—Mitigation for Emergency Managers

Information for registering for any of the above courses can be obtained on our website at butlercountyohio.org/ema

Butler County EMA

315 High Street, Suite 670
Hamilton, Ohio 45011
Office (24 Hr) - (513) 785-5810
EMA Hotline - (513) 785-5800

Butler County EMA Mission Statement

Coordinating people and resources to protect the lives and property within Butler County by working together to achieve one goal for Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery for Disasters and Emergencies

Throughout 2019, the Butler County Emergency Management had the opportunity to assist West Chester Township practice and develop procedures to better respond to natural and man-made disasters through the facilitation of three functional exercises.

West Chester Fire Chief Rick Prinz and Fire Captain Troy Bonfield approached the Butler County EMA earlier this year and asked if we would be willing to provide training for the West Chester EOA, a collection of key government officials tasked to support emergency response and disaster relief activities during a disaster or other extended emergency. This meeting resulted in the Butler County EMA working with West Chester to develop exercises which exposed the West Chester EOA staff to the various issues they would likely face during a disaster, including resource management, logistics, and cost tracking.

"We wanted to start with fundamental ideas to ensure that all members of the EOA staff were able to start from the same basic level of understanding," Butler County EMA Deputy Director Jim Bolen said. "From there, we built our exercises to gradually increase in complexity to simulate the stress a disaster would put on the EOA staff. It is truly remarkable how well the EOA staff did throughout the exercises."

The Butler County EMA facilitated a total of three exercises for the West Chester EOA with a plan to facilitate a fourth exercise focused on disaster recovery in the future. Each exercise utilized a common scenario to allow the facilitators to build



Members of the West Chester EOA receive instructions from Butler County EMA Deputy Director Jim Bolen on how to complete an Incident Command System form. These forms are used to track information related to an emergency response to a large-scale incident or disaster.

upon the experience and knowledge gained during each exercise. The first exercise facilitated by the Butler County EMA worked to provide an overview of what happens during a disaster. "Those of us in public safety often take for granted that everyone understands what fire departments, law enforcement agencies, and public works departments do during a disaster," Jim Bolen said, "but the truth is that many are unfamiliar with how our roles and duties change during a disaster. We wanted this first exercise to really focus on what is happening at the ground level, and from there we were able to identify ways that the EOA staff could support those responders in the field."

The second exercise focused heavily on the Incident Com-

mand System (ICS) forms used to document an incident. Jim Bolen said, "While there are many ways to manage and document the actions taken during a disaster, the ICS forms provide a standardized way of tracking, ordering, and documenting resources and actions taken to ensure that this crucial information is tracked. This can definitely be boring, so we tried our best to incorporate the forms in exercises that helped the EOA staff understand the purpose and importance of this paperwork without lulling them to sleep."

The third exercise put all of the components together, requiring EOA staff to track requests, share messages, and simulate the ordering of resources.

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WEST CHESTER EOA EXERCISE SERIES (CONT)



Members of the West Chester EOA work to coordinate response efforts during the third West Chester EOA exercise. West Chester EOA, a collection of key government officials tasked to support emergency response and disaster relief activities during a disaster or other extended emergency.

"The third exercise is when we really started to see this all coming together," Butler County EMA Director Matthew Haverkos stated. "The first two exercises were really focused on identifying how the EOA staff would operate and how they would track resources, but the third exercise

provided them an opportunity to actually perform these tasks." In addition to the Butler County EMA staff, the EOA had the opportunity to work with other talented emergency responders to help gain perspective. Matthew Haverkos said, "We were fortunate to get Miami Township

(Clermont County) Fire Chief Steve Kelly and Warren County EMA Coordinator David Wood to assist us in facilitating this exercise. Both of these gentlemen have worked with us on the Butler County Incident Management Team and have experience managing some of the nation's most significant disasters. We also had members of our CERT Team who were able to assist the EOA staff as 'runners,' delivering messages and other items throughout the room. We are genuinely thankful

and Miami Township as a 'thank you gift' for Chief Kelly and Coordinator Wood's time," Jim Bolen said.

Exercises provide an invaluable means to test policies and procedures against simulated scenarios. The information collected at the end of the exercise can then be used to update plans and procedures, guide training development, and identify necessary equipment. This ensures that our communities are better able to withstand a disaster. Matthew



West Chester EOA Staff hold a "Business Meeting" prior to the second West Chester EOA Exercise. The Business Meeting is used to determine the resource request process, procurement process, and information cycle used during an activation. This meeting ensures that all participants understand how information is shared and decisions are made within the room.



The West Chester EOA receives an incident update briefing from the Administration section during the third West Chester EOA Exercise. The third exercise provided participants with an opportunity to exercise the skills they had developed during the previous two exercises.

that they were able to join us for this exercise."

While these exercises were intended to help West Chester develop better policies and procedures for disaster, their impact will be felt throughout southwest Ohio. "The great thing about these exercises is that they can be easily modified to fit another community. We have several communities who are interested in such an exercise series, and we are talking with them about how we can make this happen. We also provided the exercise materials to Warren County

Haverkos stated, "These exercises provide us with an excellent opportunity to provide some guidance to our local jurisdictions on how emergency management works with local government and local stakeholders to ensure our citizens get the help they need during a disaster. Exercises such as these really help us illustrate the fact that all disasters begin and end locally." ■ For more information on the 2019 West Chester EOA Exercise Series, go to butlercoun-tyohio.org/ema/

THE BUTLER COUNTY EMA STAFF WOULD LIKE TO WISH YOU AND YOUR FAMILY A SAFE AND HAPPY NEW YEAR