

Exercise – External Chemical Spill

Introduction

Time: Early December. The temperature is 40 degrees Fahrenheit outside, the sky is overcast, and the air is still with occasional light breeze from the west.

Inject Set One

1:00 p.m. A train derailed and crashes against vehicles and buildings near the school before coming to rest. The accident site is just across the large school yard and field adjacent the school. The scene is in view of classrooms and the main office. Several railroad crossings near the school are blocked. There is a tanker car leaking a yellowish gas. The gas is hovering close to the ground. As the leaking gas spreads away from the rail car, people can be seen attempting to run out of the area. Some are overcome and collapse to the ground. You do not know if they are alive or dead.

1. What should school staff and administrators be doing?
2. What actions do teachers take with students at this time?

Inject Set Two

1:05 p.m. Staff members outside the building are coughing, suffering from shortness of breath, experiencing a burning sensation in the throat and nasal passage, and complaining of headaches.

1:06 p.m. A patrolman is on the scene and assumes incident command. Arriving law enforcement and emergency responders have begun to establish an outer perimeter one mile in all directions from the accident site. Fire trucks and ambulances are in route from surrounding communities.

1. Do you have school emergency response teams? What is their status at this time?
2. Do you set up a school command post? Where is your command post at this time?
3. What transition in the incident command system is taking place now, if any? If a transition is taking place, how is it done?

Inject Set Three

1:07 p.m.: Media has begun reporting on the train derailment. Family members begin to call the school office to check on the status.

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1. What information do you need to respond to media and family member requests for information?
2. What action can you take to get the needed information?
3. What information do you provide to the staff, students, parents, media, etc.? What information, if any, do you possibly not share?

Inject Set Four

1:15 p.m. A decision is made by the incident commander to relocate students/staff further from the release site.

1. What should be announced? Who should announce it?
2. How do you keep parents out of the area?
3. Where will students go if the area within walking distance is unsafe? How will you move them quickly? Can buses be deployed fast enough to ensure the safety of students?
4. What options do you have to protect students and staff?