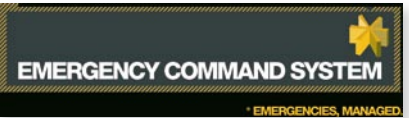


# Exercising emergency management



VectorCommand has been supporting a busy period of resilience exercising in the UK, Europe and the US, writes **Stephen Prendergast**

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Organisations in the UK, the United States and Europe have been driving a busy period of emergency management exercising using VectorCommand's Training and Exercising System. Resilience organisations have been exercising to prepare and improve their response to potential crises ranging from pandemic flu and Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear terrorism, to hurricanes and massive coastal and inland flooding.

VectorCommand supplies both the core technology for delivering exercises – the Training and Exercising System – and specific exercise injects customised for local conditions – incident information, email, fax and phone communication, weather injects, simulated television news broadcasts and simulated newspapers – that are designed to create high levels of event realism and robust testing of emergency management staff and systems.

## SCOTTISH RESILIENCE

Scottish Resilience, the resilience arm of the devolved Scottish government, has been using the Training and Exercising System to support an innovative programme of professional development seminars across all eight Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) regions of Scotland (Strategic Co-ordinating Groups are the Scottish equivalent of Local Resilience Forums).

The seminars are staged for senior executives who have a statutory requirement to participate in SCGs. As part of this programme, chief executives of local authorities and hospitals, senior fire, police and ambulance officers, senior hospital and health services staff and legal officers (such as the Procurator Fiscal) participate in one-day crisis management seminars facilitated by a former senior police officer with extensive emergency management experience. The objective is to help SCG members and their deputies learn how to contribute more effectively to an SCG in emergency session and to lead their own organisations' responses to an emergency.



*In the US, the Training and Exercising System was used in July this year to support a major Hurricane Preparedness exercise hosted by the Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness*

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The course involves delegates in presentations and analysis of key issues such as team co-operation, crisis leadership skills, managing public communication during an emergency and the importance of establishing a Joint Agency Information Cell. It also looked at effective crisis decision making such as the follow-on effects of the various, sometimes conflicting, options an SCG may have to make under critical time pressure and using limited resources, and how to identify the primary causes of crisis management team failure. Other sections covered practical issues associated with mutual aid between local authorities, such as who pays labour costs and which employer carries employment liability.

News media injects, interactive sessions and a varied, stimulating and highly interactive programme ensured high levels of delegate participation and learning. Following both of the one-day seminars held for members of the Strathclyde SCG, delegates gave very high ratings for the quality of the course and the facilitation.

The UK's South Central Strategic Health Authority is using the Training and

Exercising System and VectorCommand exercise injects to run a major pandemic flu exercise within its region. The threat of a resurgence of pandemic flu remains a high risk throughout the world, despite its absence as a major news item over the past year.

Hampshire Local Resilience Forum in England used the Training and Exercising System in November to manage LiveEx, a major exercise to test response to a large scale coastal and inland flooding scenario, with the exercise running over an extended two-day period.

In the United States, the Training and Exercising System was used in July this year to support a major Hurricane Preparedness exercise hosted by the Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. The exercise was focused on preparing federal, state and local agency personnel to exercise the following capabilities during the response to a catastrophic hurricane: Onsite incident management; citizen evacuation; communication; emergency operations centre management; emergency public information and warning; and mass care (sheltering, feeding and related services). Confirmation of the value of this exercising came just two months later with the evacuation of New Orleans in the path of Hurricane Gustav in early September. **CRJ**

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