



FEMA

Hazard Assessment and Response Management (HARM) Course
HARM Students Drive Training Procedures
—**Shannon Arledge, CDP Public Affairs**

Hands-on training that provides both mental and physical challenges to emergency responders is difficult to duplicate. Few training courses require students to demonstrate solid response skills, while providing parameters and developing plans to a hazardous materials or WMD response. As the year 2010 unfolds, preparedness and response training continues to play a large role in the readiness of today's response forces.

The Hazard Assessment and Response Management (HARM) course is the first of its kind at the Center for Domestic Preparedness, located in Anniston, Ala. The students are provided a scenario, but the class determines the tempo, and plans the response.

“All CDP courses have instructors directly involved with training,” explained Rick Dickson, assistant director of training delivery. “In HARM our instructors step back, let the students make the decisions. Sometimes they meet with difficulty, others times they succeed immediately, ultimately the information and learning tools they have gained are invaluable,” he added. “This is about as real as it gets for WMD or hazardous materials training.”

Course prerequisites include ICS 100 and 200 as well as successful completion of one of the following CDP courses in the last 36 months: WMD Technical Emergency Response Training, WMD HazMat Technician, or WMD Hands-On-Training (8 or 16 Hour).

The goal of the HARM course is to provide responders with a realistic operational WMD environment in which the students operate within the incident command system, and decide procedures, equipment, and tactical approach to an emergency event.

“We were forced to work in a unified command,” said Sue McManus, Memphis, Tenn., Fire Department. “If we had a real incident we would work with multiple agencies and jurisdictions,” she added. “Most agencies do not practice like this, and should, because any real event will be similar to this experience.”

This three-day course consists of up to 45 responders from multiple disciplines and multiple jurisdictions, with different levels of training and experience. The students appoint their incident commander and determine response elements based on the number of students and response background and experience of each person.

Day One

The situation: The teams choose their equipment, determine their level of competency, and conduct individual and collective refresher training in preparation for their mission.



Hazard Assessment and Response Management (HARM) Course (Cont.)

“This was a great learning event,” said LeLand Hopkins, Memphis, Tenn., Fire Department. “There were students who knew more than others, but that worked to our advantage,” he added. “Some people’s strengths can plug holes in other’s weaknesses. Today was an excellent blend.”

Day Two

Execute: The response element must conduct life safety actions, determine the toxicity within the complex, mitigate the threat, and identify and contain any toxic spills.

“We came here with general knowledge from previous courses,” said James Johnson, Arlington, Va., hazardous materials technician. “We had to put into play what we have learned, both here at the CDP and from our technical knowledge based on our occupation,” he stressed. “We were able to demonstrate our competency and show we could respond to a disastrous event.”

Day Three

The teams mitigate and contain CBRNE material consisting of nerve agents. The HARM course incorporates the CDP’s toxic agent facility that allows for hands-on training using actual nerve agents.

“This was a great training experience,” said Hector Cintron, Portsmouth, Va., U.S. Coast Guard. “I’m better prepared. You never know when you’ll be in a hazardous situation and possibly required to collect evidence or work on a decontamination line. This course has increased my versatility.”

“The final day of training allows the students to continue mitigation and hazardous materials containment at our toxic agent facility,” said Dickson. “These responders have a familiarity from previous nerve agent training, but today they make entry into a toxic agent environment, locate the threat using the tools they have chosen, and render the location safe. All the while our instructors maintain a comfortable distance, note observations, provide critical feedback, and ensure the student responders operate safely.”

The CDP is a component of the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s National Preparedness Directorate in the Department of Homeland Security. The Anniston training center is the nation’s only federally-chartered Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) training facility for civilian responders.

Learn more about the CDP at <http://cdp.dhs.gov>.