

CDC Prepares for National Exercise

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The National Exercise Program Capstone Exercise (NEPCE) 2014 scenario is based on the Great Alaska Earthquake of 1964, which occurred 50 years ago.

CDC's Emergency Management Program is preparing for the upcoming National Exercise Program Capstone Exercise (NEPCE) 2014, a congressionally mandated preparedness exercise. The Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response (OPHPR) and the National Center for Environmental Health and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry have been working closely with CDC's Centers, Institute, and Offices (CIOs) on exercise preparation and their participation in this event.

NEPCE 2014 is designed to educate and prepare the whole community to prevent, mitigate against, protect from, respond to, and recover from acts of terroristic and catastrophic incidents. This will be the first Capstone Exercise, formerly known as National Level Exercise, incorporated into the newly revised National Exercise Plan. NEPCE 2014 integrates eight pre-existing exercises within one scenario and control architecture. Within this architecture, three of the primary exercises will involve CDC support:

- Alaska Shield (March 27–April 3, 2014)
- Eagle Horizon (April 1–2, 2014)
- Silver Phoenix (two phases: March 27–April 3, 2014 and April 22–24, 2014)

As a part of the new National Exercise Plan, a national seminar was conducted on November 18, 2013, and a national tabletop exercise was conducted on February 20–21, 2014.

OPHPR Lead Exercise Coordinator Bill Howard commented, "The NEPCE 2014 event affords CDC an opportunity to integrate with other partners and to practice response operations in a nonthreatening environment. It also enables our offices and programs to 'deepen their bench,' if you will, by placing new leadership in IMS structure positions. This gives our senior leaders more flexibility once an actual event occurs in the future."

The exercise scenario centers on a major earthquake in Alaska that causes catastrophic damage across multiple communities, requiring Federal response and recovery assistance. The earthquake results in multiple tsunamis with substantial threat and damage to critical infrastructure, injuries, deaths, and population displacement. While national officials confront earthquake and tsunami impacts, disruption to the National Capital Region results in a requirement for government entities to relocate to alternate sites.

During NEPCE 2014, CDC's exercise objectives are to:

- Verify procedures for data sharing among HHS, other federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and CDC with state, local, and tribal health officials following a catastrophic earthquake.
- Evaluate and verify command and control procedures among HHS, CDC, and deployed staff.
- Verify information flow plans, policies, and procedures, to include public information, following a catastrophic earthquake.
- Assess CDC's deployment response processes and procedures for people and materiel upon request by HHS.
- Assess the ability to identify and report on the status of CDC assets in the region and CDC personnel permanently assigned to states within areas affected by the earthquake.

One of CDC's primary missions is to ensure that we are prepared to assist the nation to respond to, recover from, and mitigate the impacts of public health disasters. Participation in NEPCE 2014 will enhance our overall ability to support our nation during emergency situations.

CDC Intranet: CDC Connects. March 6, 2014.