

Partners in Planning – Durham School Services and OEM

Cotton candy...ice cream cones...movies. Some things are just so much better when they are shared!! That certainly is true in planning and exercising for emergencies and disasters!

Durham School Services certainly came through as one of our positive partners earlier this month! Dennis Sword, General Manager of our local branch of Durham was instrumental in bringing together training and a functional exercise for over 50 responders, volunteers, and their families. (Be sure to check out our Facebook site and last week's edition of the Meteor to see some of the photos from the event.)

Participants from the age of two and up enjoyed a chili supper, watched an informative training video, and then loaded up on two of Durham's yellow school busses, complete with drivers and helpers. Everyone got to check out the safety equipment and learn about evacuation procedures and accountability of riders. Drivers and helpers then took the lead in evacuating the busses a variety of ways. These employees train and practice regularly to keep up to date with safety procedures and to help deliver on their goal of "Getting kids to school safe, on time, and ready to learn...everyday".

Partners from Madisonville, Midway and Bedias volunteer fire departments and St. Joseph EMS also joined in on the fun with others and our volunteers, as we gathered everyone, divided into teams, and ran through a couple of mock scenarios.

Team A responded to a scenario involving a busload of students with various injuries and conditions. Units responded, assessed the situation, triaged the patients, and then evacuated the bus. On-scene management was tested, as was communication and requests for additional resources with the Emergency Operations Center. Special procedures were used to remove some of the victims, with provisions made for their specific type of injury or condition.

Team B responded to a bus and hazardous materials transportation accident, complete with a "spray mist" simulating the spread of the "hazardous material". "Contaminated" patients were removed using various methods, then passed through a simulated "decontamination shower". Responders from different departments worked closely with one another and the Durham School Services team.

Lastly, a core team of responders ran through an additional scenario where they were forced to pass a patient on a backboard out of one of the emergency windows on the bus. Following the scenarios, the group gathered once again for an After Action Evaluation of the exercise.

Dedication, knowledge, and strength were all obviously displayed through this exercise and each person there contributed to its success. Exercises, such as this one allow our responders and volunteers to work with one another in a less stressful environment, learn about each other's way of performing tasks, and even have a little fun while learning together! We hope we never need to use these skills, but we're better prepared in case we have to! Meanwhile, Be Safe Out There!
