

The following article is an excerpt from the Providence Journal on Thursday, June 9, 2005. TeamTracer was purchased by the Providence Emergency Management Agency to be incorporated across multiple agencies, and was used in this drill to ID first responders.

The original web page can be found at:

http://www.projo.com/metro/content/projo_20050609_pdrill9.250a45b.html

Port's evacuation procedures put to the test

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BY KAREN A. DAVIS
Journal Staff Writer

PROVIDENCE -- The nearly two dozen employees calmly filed off theRIPTA bus and walked single file to the rows of seats arranged in a cluster in Collier Point Park.

In yesterday's mock disaster, the workers had just been evacuated from their waterfront companies because a chemical spill.

Volunteers in Collier Point Park, off Allens Avenue, were ready and waiting:

The American Red Cross had inflated a large emergency tent, recently purchased for \$24,000 with money from the Department of Homeland Security.

The Providence Emergency Management Agency had volunteers at a station to provide photo ID cards to authorized volunteers and rescue workers within minutes.

Officials from companies around the port and public-safety agencies were in constant contact via radios and emergency communication networks.

The purpose of the drill was not to test the response of hazardous-material units but to see if companies based at the port could quickly

evacuate employees and account for anyone missing during an emergency, said Leo Messier, director of the Providence EMA.

An accurate accounting will "save the Fire Department from having to rescue people who are not there," Messier said.

The drill was also designed to test the city's radio communications system and the ability of agencies to work together.

Only a few employees from each company participated in the drill so the companies would not have to close during the exercise.

Michael Kirkwood, of KeySpan, said the exercise went "quite smoothly."

Typically, companies develop their own emergency evacuation plans. Yesterday's drill was different because it gave all the companies at the port the opportunity to carry out a simulated drill in coordination with each other.

The drill marked the first time the city was able to test the ID system for volunteers. The equipment, which cost \$30,000, was paid for with Homeland Security money. The system is meant to provide quick identification of people who are authorized to be in the emergency response area.

"We're really better prepared than ever before," Mayor David N. Cicilline said after the exercise. Cicilline gave much of the credit to Messier, a former state police officer whom he hired to run the emergency management office in 2003.

Messier has "established himself as a leader" by forming partnerships with such agencies as the American Red Cross, RIPTA, Johnson & Wales University and the Volunteer Center of Rhode Island, Cicilline said. Motiva and Univar were among the companies that participated in the exercise.

"As a result, we now have emergency shelter volunteers so that if there is ever an emergency we now have the resources and the people who are prepared and ready to respond," Cicilline said.

Cicilline said PEMA has been instrumental in securing more than \$1 million in grants from Homeland Security. The money has been used to buy equipment and to train public safety workers, he said.

The city has created an emergency control board and emergency operations center on Charles Street, established a medical response team and appointed Monty Montiero, a 32-year veteran of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, to a new Police Department position as emergency management liaison.

Nick Logothets, director of disaster services for the Red Cross, said its new shelter holds 24 cots, can be air-conditioned or heated and comes with lighting. He said it could be used to supplement a hospital emergency room, or as a shelter after a hurricane, tropical storm or major fire.

The Red Cross bought a smaller tent for \$15,000.

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