

Training from 1A

Seven specially trained hospital staff donned hazmat suits in preparation for the arrival of the contaminated victims.

This was not a simple drill by any standards.

The timing for a multi-agency drill requiring decontamination worked well for all the agencies involved.

Peace Harbor Emergency Management Coordinator and Manager of Facilities Pat Kirby said, "Peace Harbor had just finished developing what we call our Hazardous Emergency Response Team (HERT). We have a group of seven people that have been trained through the FEMA

program to a contamination event."

The hospital is required to hold an annual disaster plan event.

Both hospital and SVFR representatives felt the drill was a success. But the primary function of a drill like this is to find weak links and correct them.

According to SVFR Division Chief of Operations Jim Dickerson, on the scene decontamination is one of the areas that needs improvement.

"We need to make sure people are clean of any chemicals or contaminants before we start transporting them away from what we call the hot zone," Dickerson said.

With any disaster of this size, real or staged, communication is one of the keys to success. The difficulties of coordinating multiple agencies and

multiple tasks within agencies can be daunting.

Both Dickerson and Kirby felt that communications, both internally and between agencies, could use improvement.

Kirby said, "One of the lessons we have to learn here is that communication between the scene and the hospital is always a tough issue, as well as communication within the hospital staff."

"It was real-time, real action," Dickerson said. "We had some shortcomings. We've updated our communication plan. We know where we need to be and where we can improve to serve everyone better."

"One other thing that came out of the drill was how to get a school bus

on the scene faster to transport ambulatory victims to the hospital and clinic"

Dickerson had praise for the other agencies involved in the exercise.

"EMS and fire work well together, but adding in the Coast Guard is another asset that is important for a coastal community," Dickerson said.

He spoke of the importance of group planning and working with City of Florence Public Works to set up, block streets and arrange signs.

Kirby said, "I want to give a big shout-out to all the first responders who participated. It is great that they take time out of their day to make this happen. A lot of these people, it was their day off, and they responded and helped out with the drill."

In addition to WLEOG members and the Coast guard, Lane County Search and Rescue sent personnel to the drill.

"Lane County Manager Linda Cook was here from the county to liaison with us," Dickerson said. "If this had been a real event there would have been a lot more county fire and rescue vehicles."

He added, "I think (the drill) came out 99 percent positive. The crews reacted well and it was real enough that we got some good real-time training."

There is no word yet on what WLEOG's next disaster drill will cover.



PHOTOS BY LARRY FARNSWORTH AND JACK DAVIS/SIUSLAW NEWS

Above, WLEOG agencies set up a command center at the Port of Siuslaw to direct communications. EMTs, firefighters, Coast Guard crew members, Lane County management, hospital personnel and more were involved in the four-hour drill.

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Triage from 1A

The board I had been placed on was hard as a rock, but it was better than the cold wet ground and the hard chill emanating upwards from the mud.

I was cold and quiet as the differently clad first responders

from Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue, Western Lane Ambulance District and the Coast Guard shared information — on their radios and directly — about my and others' conditions.

I was labeled a "code red," tagged for decontamination and then artificially intubated to ease my respiratory symptoms. These procedures were simulated and I was confident of the first responders assessment and actions.

A few minutes later, I was lifted up to a gurney and rolled into a waiting ambulance along with one other victim. We rode a short distance in the vehicle, while the attending medics checked my intubation tube and my vitals. They continued to ask me health-related questions, making sure I was as

comfortable as possible.

When we arrived at the hospital, there was some slight confusion as to the process for getting my theoretically contaminated body into the decontamination chamber, which for the purpose of this exercise was a number of large blue tarps.

I was wheeled into the tarped area, where my clothes were symbolically stripped from my body and I was washed and wiped down with a decontaminant and water.

This process was not as much fun as I had anticipated, but it did allow me to enter the last stage of my treatment.

This consisted of a short discussion with a doctor about my injuries and the need for a follow up assessment.

I was then released, more

mindful than ever of the dedication of Florence's first responders.

My overall impression of the training exercise was extremely positive. The individuals involved were focused and actively sharing information with other teams and the hospital.

The seriousness of the potential emergency was clear by the intensity of those involved. The opportunity for different agencies to work together and to assure proper treatment of victims was clearly paramount in the minds of the participants.

Strangely, I was pleased to have been a "victim," as it allowed me the opportunity to see, up close, the professionalism and determination of the community's first responders.

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Who's Who in Health, Mind & Beauty

The Pink Parlor
Melissa Bishop completed Beauty College in 2006 and has been in the beauty field ever since. She is the owner of The Pink Parlor Salon. Melissa specializes in color and enjoys working with her clients to give them beautiful color as well as cuts. Melissa also offers manicures and pedicures, waxing and facials. Melissa encourages you to stop in and visit her at the Pink Parlor.
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Kreations Hair Studio
Twila is the owner/operator of Kreations Hair Studio. She purchased the salon in 2014. Twila enjoys getting to know her clients and helping them with new styles, color and cuts.
Twila has been a hair stylist for over 20 years. She moved to the Oregon Coast from Idaho and is glad she did! She loves everything about the Oregon Coast.
The salon offers top quality product including Vegan products. Twila also offers Tanning at the salon in a very private, relaxing setting. Stop in and she will be happy to help you with your tanning needs as well as hair, color, cuts, perms and top quality product!
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Twila Lenington
Owner