



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Regional Response to a Radiological Public Health Emergency to be Exercised

Full-scale exercise to be held on Oct. 25 in Burlington, Waterbury and Pittsford

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BURLINGTON – Vermont's plan to respond to a radiation emergency caused by a transportation incident or a radiological dispersal device ("dirty bomb") will be tested on Thursday, Oct. 25 during a full-scale exercise.

Details of the exercise are known only to a few state, regional and federal planners. All other responders to the exercise scenario will be operating as if it was a real event. An estimated 200 local, state, New England and federal responders are expected to participate as players, evaluators or observers.

The full day exercise (9:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.) will take place at three locations: the Vermont Fire Academy in Pittsford (the incident scene), the State Emergency Operations Center in Waterbury, and the Health Department's Operations Center in Burlington.

"We must be ready for anything – from a natural disaster, to an infectious disease outbreak, to a biological, chemical or radiological release," said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. "We must put our plans, training and inter-operational systems to the test, and the best test is a realistic, real-time full-scale exercise."

The full-scale exercise – along with a tabletop discussion-based exercise, workshops, presentations and tour of the Health Department's laboratory – is being sponsored as part of the 43rd annual meeting of the New England Radiological Health Committee to be held Oct. 22-26 at the Hilton Hotel in Burlington.

Also at 10 a.m. on the morning of Wednesday, Oct. 24, a helicopter used to measure radiation on the ground will land at Waterfront Park along Lake Champlain across from the Hilton and will be available for public tours through 2 p.m. This aircraft, which sends data back for mapping purposes, is part of the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration Aerial Measuring System.

State organizations with a major role in the exercise are the Department of Health, Department of Public Safety (Homeland Security, Emergency Management, Fire Safety, HazMat, State Police), Agency of Natural Resources, Agency of Agriculture, the Vermont Fire Academy, local fire, police and EMS, University of Vermont and Vermont 2-1-1, along with the state health departments that make up the New England Radiological Health Compact: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island. Connecticut is also sending its Mobile Radiological Laboratory.

Participating federal agencies are EPA Region 1, Department of Energy, FBI, Department of Health & Human Services/Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, FEMA, Department of Defense, Food & Drug Administration and the U.S. Coast Guard.

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