

YOLO COUNTY BIO-HAZARD EXERCISE

May 24, 2006

In the event of an exposure to an infectious agent in Yolo County, a regional taskforce spearheaded by the West Sacramento Fire/HazMat Department and the Yolo County Health Department was formed last year to develop a rapid response plan to protect the health and safety of the general public. This plan requires the orchestration of the activities of multi-jurisdictional emergency response organizations from throughout the greater Sacramento region and thus, presents a complex problem in integrating the activities of these diverse resources.

To exercise these plans and to ensure rapid and efficient response by multiple agencies, an emergency notification test was conducted earlier this month and a full scale multi-agency response was exercised on Wednesday, May 24 in West Sacramento.

By early morning, nearly 200 members of response teams from throughout the Sacramento-Yolo region assembled in a West Sacramento facility.

Fire Department and HazMat response teams from the cities of West Sacramento, Woodland and Davis, Yolo County Health Department, Sacramento County and UC Davis implemented real-time decontamination of nearly 50 volunteers. Volunteers who agreed to “strip & shower” were comprised of postal service workers, Red Cross, Yolo County Citizen Emergency Response Teams and Health Department HazMat technical support personnel.

At the same time, HazMat trained teams were assembled at a second location to gear up in protective suits to remove the detection system cartridges that collect samples of the infectious agent and to go through decontamination before the samples were safely delivered for testing at the reference laboratory located at the Sacramento County Health Department. FBI and local law enforcement also responded as part of the real-time exercise.

Yolo County Health department personnel rapidly assembled a mass medication dispensing clinic to screen and dispense prophylaxis “jellybean” antibiotics to 50-100 decontamination volunteers and additional medication volunteers. Personnel from health departments in Sacramento, San Joaquin, Shasta, San Francisco, Placer, El Dorado, UCD Medical School and the Sacramento Regional Medical Reserve Corps assisted in the mass dispensing clinic.

Public Information Officers from multiple agencies and cities as well as congressional aides attended the multi-agency event. De-briefing took place immediately after the exercise. It almost seemed like a surprise to the Yolo County Taskforce to find out from section coordinators that this multi-agency and multi-jurisdiction exercise was so successfully implemented. Further debriefings will be done by each agency to address problems and suggestions for improvement.