



GRAND ISLE CERT



After Action Report – Commodity Point of Distribution May 30, 2009

In November 2007 a request was made by the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC 13) to establish a site for a point of distribution in Grand Isle County. The task was assigned to the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and the site eventually chosen was at Knight Point State Park. That site was situated in the center of the county and had a good network of roads within which would contribute to a smooth traffic flow. A profile and preliminary layout was prepared and submitted to Vermont Emergency Management (VEM).

In December 2008, CERT Director Dick Trudell attended a CPOD Manager's Course in Waterbury sponsored by Homeland Security and VEM. At that course it was announced that an exercise was planned to set up and run CPODs in several locations in Vermont. Trudell requested that Grand Isle be selected as one of the sites, but was told that the sites had been selected already.

At the February 2009 LEPC 13 meeting, it was announced that Grand Isle would be a site since the Chittenden County site would not be operational. Chuck Woessner, Vermont State Parks, was notified of the May 30th date. A few days later he replied that a wedding had been scheduled for that day at the park, but upon discussion it was determined that the wedding was small and only the wedding party would be there to take some pictures; consequently it could be easily accommodated.

A CPOD Manager's course was scheduled for May 2, 2009 with Dick Trudell as instructor. Grand Isle CERT along with Grand Isle County Emergency Management Directors and Franklin County CERT were invited to attend. In addition two Boy Scouts troops, Grand Isle and Jericho, offered to assist. A total of 15 people attended the training course. The material provided by FEMA for the course was used, but in addition to the classroom presentation, the trainees took an on-site tour of Knight Point State Park, were given an aerial photo of it, and asked to design their own version of a CPOD at this site. All options were discussed and the final concept determined. This exercise was followed by

laying out the site at the end of classroom work, and determining what equipment and materials would be needed to set up a CPOD in an efficient manner. At the next monthly CERT meeting, and during the time between the training and the exercise, members of the CERT hand painted signs and secured the materials needed. Members were assigned to certain positions and a site layout prepared (attached). A forklift from a local contactor was secured, but in the last week before the exercise, they backed out. One of the Grand Isle CERT, Tom LaBombard, volunteered to use his Bobcat as the forklift/loader. Advertisements were placed in the local paper, The Islander, seeking volunteers to act as recipients of the commodities at site and nine individuals were recruited. The Sheriff's Department and Grand Isle Rescue were also recruited to provide security and emergency medical services.

On May 21st Dick Trudell met with Jessica Stoltz at the site. He was told that we would have several soldiers from the Vermont National Guard who would also be volunteers at the site to assist the CERT. There was a "no weapons" policy for the exercise site and for that reason, Trudell and Stoltz agreed that the Sheriff's Department would be deployed at the front gate outside of the exercise area (since they would have weapons), and the VNG would be used for exercise security. In an actual emergency, the "no weapons" policy would not apply.

On May 28th, Dick Trudell was informed that the wedding party would consist of approximately 100 people. He met with Park Ranger Angele Paul to discuss how to address this change in plans. They determined there would be sufficient area for the wedding party to park away from the exercise area, but we would have to be able to get the party through without disruption to them.

On May 30th we met at Grand Isle School and received a briefing on the "player" roles. CERT members present were Dave Barton, Kelly Barton, Chuck Besterman, Susanna Jaeger, Tom LaBombard, Tracy Masse-James, Ilyo McCray, Carl Sourdiff, Shawn Toof, Dick Trudell, Kay Trudell, and Jodi Verba. At 0930 we were released to go the site and to have the site prepared by 1030.

The CERT, Boy Scouts, and VNG members were given a general safety briefing and description of the site. The group was then broken into separate groups. Those who had not attended the CPOD training on May 2th were given "Just-in-Time" instructions for the area they would be working in. The Loading Team Leader, Dave Barton, worked with the assigned loaders; Traffic Controller, Shawn Toof, worked with those assigned on the line and those getting information from the drivers., Dick Trudell, CPOD Manager explained site security to the VNG, and Carl Sourdiff, Support team Leader, set out the lights and began setting out equipment. Tom LaBombard and Ilyo McCray began unloading the tractor trailer; Susanna Jaeger directed parking for the (now enlarged) wedding party; and Kay Trudell deployed as photographer for the event. Dave Barton got the tent set up; and Jodi Verba, Kelly Barton, Tracy Masse-James, and Chuck Besterman assembled and put our signage. The Boy

Scouts helped set out cones for the wedding party parking, and stacking cases at the loading stations. The Sheriff's Department was stationed at the front gates. The site was completely set up at 1030 and VEM was notified by phone that the CPOD was open and ready to operate.

Just prior to the "actors" arriving, the decision was made to allocate sufficient water and food for three days for each family coming through the CPOD. To avoid breaking apart the cases of food (which were scheduled to be delivered to Brattleboro), an allocation of one case of water and one case of food would be given to families of 1 or 2 people, two cases of water and food to families of 3 or 4 people, and three cases each to families of 5 or more. To make it easier for the loaders, we used yellow sticky pad notes attached to the cars to mark the number of cases that should be loaded. This allowed the traffic line to gather that information while the cars were in line waiting, and freed the loaders to concentrate on loading cars only.

The wedding party started arriving at the same time as the "actors". They were asked at the front gate if they were part of the wedding party, and if so, would be directed to a special parking area. A 40 space parking area had been marked off and approximately 45 cars arrived for the wedding. The extra cars were accommodated in a second parking area. There was no disruption to either the CPOD exercise or to the wedding, and the wedding party left before the exercise was concluded.

At the supply trailer site, it became apparent that the gravel path between the parking areas did not have sufficient subbase on it, and the Bobcat was tearing up the soil. In the parking lots there was sufficient subbase and the Bobcat worked efficiently there. The decision was made to limit the use of the Bobcat to the area around the supply trailer and to use park carts to transport cases from there to the loading areas. This worked for the exercise scenario, since there was no actual "burn rate" of commodities; but in a real situation the tearing up of the park would have to be tolerated, or a load of gravel ordered for the site (see recommendation below). The unloading team continued to unload all the food pallets and relocate the water pallets to the front of the trailer. A full pallet of water was more than what the Bobcat could handle and five pallets of water had shifted and spilled. These broken stacks were used to supply the loading stations and the remainder restacked and wrapped. In an actual situation the top two layers of bottles would be removed by hand so that the Bobcat could handle the remaining load. The floor of the truck was ribbed, which made it difficult to use the pallet jack, but fortunately the wheels on the pallet jack just spanned the ribs, and with a little extra effort the pallets were movable. There was a lot of personnel movement in the area of the Bobcat unloading, so a safety officer was assigned to stick with the Bobcat and make sure there were no accidents.

There were some initial confusion at the loading sites which was straightened out and the line ran smoothly. During the exercise, several situations arose:

1. Car broke down (moved out of line)
2. Medicine needed for driver (car taken out of line and driver escorted to ambulance)
3. Man wanted to help (politely declined)
4. Woman complaining about food and getting out of car (security called to assist)
5. Worker with sprained ankle (escorted to ambulance)

Workers were shifted at the loading sites to enable everyone to have a chance of participating (particularly the Scouts). Hard hats and vests were swapped so that current loaders were properly equipped with PPE. During exercise play a total of 113 people were provided with three days of rations, a count of 43 cars went through the lines; a total of 13 pallets of water (836 cases) were moved, and 20 pallets of MRE's (1000 cases) unloaded.

Since the park had not yet opened, the park dumpster was not on site. An area was designated for trash and a pallet used to prevent trash from blowing around. During the exercise a brief storm occurred. Personnel donned raingear and the sides of the tent were enclosed. The operation continued without disruption. When the exercise was concluded VEM was notified by cell phone that the CPOD was closing down and the exercise completed.

Overall the exercise was very successful, and the CERT functioned in a cohesive and efficient manner. Other volunteers (VNG and Scouts) were incorporated into the exercise easily. Incidents that arose were addressed quickly and decisions were made by several individuals that improved their area of responsibility. The exercise also proved to be very good for CERT morale and instilling pride in a job done well.

Observations:

1. Although the CPOD Manager originally thought that we had more personnel than needed, everyone was utilized. In an actual event, even more people could be put to good use, particularly if shifts were instituted.
2. There was no bill of lading with the FEMA trailer, the count noted above was taken during the operation. We could have been more organized with the accounting of the commodities.
3. Assigning "Just-in-Time" training to several individuals worked well in getting everyone moving together quickly.
4. The wedding party removed one of our planned traffic & interview members (along with a VNG soldier) to handle parking for them, but we were successful in that it did not interfere with either event.
5. We needed all the time allocated (1 hour) to get to the site, have a safety meeting, do just-in time training, and set up the set. In an actual

- emergency we could have taken a little more time to refine some of our paperwork and establish communications.
6. The CERT had pre-made and laminated the signs prior to the event. The rain storm we encountered reinforced the decision to laminate signs.
 7. Radio communications were not established among the CERT. The close proximity made communications possible, but the radios would have helped. The loaders themselves would not need radios.
 8. Reinforcement of the connecting path between the trailer locations and the loading areas is needed for this site.
 9. When a problem arises on the line (car broke down, illness, etc) a method is needed to handle the problem quickly, by getting the car out of the line.
 10. Having extra personnel at the beginning of the line, gathering information on family size, and addressing any problems, frees up the loading area to be more efficient.

Recommendations

1. Our home made signs worked well and the laminating was effective. If a CPOD is envisioned for each site, I would recommend that pre-printed signs made of corrugated plastic be used. The signs that would work well would be the same material and shape as political yard signs used during elections (in fact we used some as part of our signage). With sufficient numbers of CPODs throughout the State, VEM could order them in bulk and distribute them as part of a kit.
2. We did not have sufficient hard hats and vests for volunteers that showed up. The VNG and some of the Scouts had brought their own, but sharing was necessary. A supply of inexpensive plastic mesh safety vests could be kept in the CPOD kit, along with extra hard hats.
3. Each site should prepare a site specific detailed layout of the interior of the CPOD with dimensions and labels for placement of signs, cones, and other items. Our plan allowed the CERT to set up site without having to remember what had been discussed in previous training.
4. Site radio communications should be established at the initial safety meeting.
5. A few inexpensive hand-held marine air horns should be included in the CPOD kit. These "blasts" would alert everyone that an emergency or special situation had occurred on the line (i.e. a car had to be moved out of line, security personnel are needed, an injury has occurred).
6. Funds should be sought to reinforce the path at Knight Point State Park
7. CERTs are probably the logical choice to run a CPOD, but the team has to be functioning and active to take it on successfully.

Submitted by:

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