

Exercise ALERTEX 2017
17-18 November 2017
Summary Report as of 2017-11-18-24:00 EST

Purpose: Exercise ALERTEX 2017 was conducted to:

- (1) provide training in receiving emergency alerting and warning messages and making availability reports using a preformatted ICS Form 213 Message,
- (2) provide training in assessing capabilities based on REACT resource Typing in accordance with National Incident Management System requirements, and
- (3) provide baseline availability data to identify training needs.

As the frequency and intensity of disaster events continues to increase, no single Team will be able to meet the needs of their community for disaster response. The ability to alert and warning our teams, and to have those messages understood and practiced, has the potential to allow mobilization and deployment of REACT resources to assist Teams in the disaster impact zone.

History: This is the first organization-wide exercise of any type attempted by REACT International with an intent to engage all possible teams.

Scenario: The scenario was chosen to present a disaster event that would impact to some degree all of the Teams in the United States and Canada. On Friday night a major earthquake shook the area of the Yellowstone caldera in Wyoming. On Saturday a supervolcanic eruption of historic proportions emptied built up magma in the caldera ejecting approximately 2,500 times the amount of material ejected in the Mount Saint Helens eruption. The result would be ashfall across the United States and lower Canada with disruptions to communications, electric power distribution, transportation, and water supplies. Ash depths would reach 1-3 millimeters over the entire United States and southern Canada, 10-30 milimeters from Chicago and Saint Louis to Los Angeles to Seattle to Winnipeg, up to 1000 milimeters in Billings. Multi-year climate impacts would be experienced with significant impacts on agriculture. This appears to be a likely event over the next thousand plus years, but of low probability in our lifetimes.

Outcomes: The following Teams participated in the exercise and successfully reported availability information using either the preformatted ICS 213 Message form or standard radiogram message format. In total 11 Teams reported having 109 members available for response. The Teams reported being able to field 44 Type IV communications teams (1 Team Leader + 1 Radio Operator) available for 12 hours as established in REACT Typing documents. For exercise purposes, we assumed that a Type IV Team available for 12 hours would operate deployed within 25 miles of its home station. Of the 44 Type IV teams, 34 reported the ability to deploy for 72 hours outside the 25 mile radius.

Teams that reported data:

- Region 1
 - Southeastern Massachusetts REACT Inc.
 - Northern Rhode Island REACT
 - York County REACT

 - Total region resources:
 - 21 members available
 - 9 Type 4 Teams available for deployment within an area 25 miles or less from their home station
 - 6 of these Type 4 Teams were also available for deployment for 72 hours or more outside the 25 mile radius

- Region 2
 - Louisville Metro REACT
 - Howard County REACT
 - Prince George's County REACT
 - REACT Warning Team

 - Total region resources
 - 10 members available
 - 4 Type 4 Teams available for deployment within an area 25 miles or less from their home station
 - 0 of these Type 4 Teams were also available for deployment for 72 hours or more outside the 25 mile radius

- Region 3 – no teams reporting – no resources reported
- Region 4 – no teams reporting – no resources reported
- Region 5 – no teams reporting – no resources reported
- Region 6 – no teams reporting – no resources reported

- Region 7
 - Dallas County REACT

 - Total Region resources
 - 6 members available
 - 3 Type 4 Teams available for deployment within an area 25 miles or less from their home station
 - 2 of these Type 4 Teams were also available for deployment for 72 hours or more outside the 25 mile radius

- Region 8
 - Los Angeles County REACT
 - Southwestern REACT of San Diego
 - Total region resources
 - 62 members available
 - 29 Type 4 Teams available for deployment within an area 25 miles or less from their home station
 - 27 of these Type 4 Teams were also available for deployment for 72 hours or more outside the 25 mile radius
- Region 9
 - Trinidad and Tobago REACT
 - Total Region Resources
 - 10 members available
 - 1 Type 4 Team available available for deployment within an area 25 miles or less from their home station

In addition, the following teams either acknowledged the Friday night earthquake message or the Saturday volcanic eruption message, but did not submit an availability report:

- Nassau County REACT – Region 1
- Punxutawney REACT – Region 1
- Frostburg REACT Team – Region 2
- Alert REACT Response Team – Region 4
- REACT Don Valley – Region 9
- REACT County Caroni – Region 9

Analysis: Regional participation varied. Four Regions did not have a Team that reported its staffing and available resources, although one Team in these four Regions did report receipt of an alerting or warning message; five did.

The planned schedule for the exercise was designed to have messages distributed to Regions in a phased sequence to ensure that the workload would be manageable. In practice this proved not to be necessary. REACT Warning Team new member Michele Snyder deserves recognition for her quick work in dispatching messages to her assigned Regions in spite of a lack of any prior experience in radio communications, emergency management, or disaster response work.

The two messages (Friday night earthquake and Saturday volcanic eruption) were sent to 110 addressees, including 11 Regional Directors and 99 Teams for which we had confirmed e-mail addresses prior to the exercise (we have no working e-mail address for 11 teams, 10% of the Teams which are members of REACT). A total of 3 e-mail addresses experienced communications

failure. The initial alerting and major impact warning messages were delivered to 96 Teams. Key data:

Percentage of Teams for which we have valid e-mails	87.3%
Percentage of Teams with valid e-mails which submitted availability reports	11.5%
Percentage of Teams responding in any way to the alert or warning message	17.7%
Percentage of total Teams responding with availability reports	10.0%

We used the free, small business version of MailChimp, an e-mail marketing system, to send the Saturday morning message to teams in Region 4 and 5. This is a limited sample as it only addresses two Regions, and these two Regions had lower participation than others. MailChimp allowed us to identify the percentage of the warning messages opened and the percentage of click throughs to the online form for reporting team availability in those two regions. The data:

- 9 of the 28 e-mails were opened (32.1%) by 0700 on 19 November, the day after the exercise,
- 3 of the teams clicked through to the page with the reporting template (10.7%),
- 1 team acknowledged receipt of a message (3.6%)
- 0 of the teams reported their readiness status (0.0%).

Teams using the preformatted ICS Form 213 Message template on the website appeared to have no difficulties making appropriate entries. However, discussions prior to the exercise suggested that there is limited understanding of resource Typing, and that REACT lacks any database of Typed teams.

Recommendations:

1. The Training Committee should design and conduct a regular series of quarterly alerting exercises to improve our ability to alert member teams and to develop the framework for coordinating response.
2. The Training Committee should develop training materials that Teams can use to increase proficiency in response as a Team to major events, including deployment of Typed resources to support other REACT Teams in disaster impact areas.
3. REACT International and its Board of Directors should encourage Teams to participate in training to enable coordinated response to major events.
4. Increased attention should be devoted to the development of the Typing system established by the Board in 2012 to ensure that REACT response is to a consistent level among Teams. In the immediate future this should concentrate on training and formally recognizing Type IV qualified individuals and Teams.

5. REACT Warning Team 6247 should be formally tasked by the Board to perform the alerting and warning function for REACT International.
6. Consideration should be given to paid use of a more capable platform than Mail Chimp to allow better tracking of which Teams receive e-mail alerts.

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