FIRE AND EXPLOSION SCENARIO

It is November, and a cold rain is falling. The temperature is 34 degrees, and the wind is blowing from the northwest at 18 miles per hour. At 10:15 a.m., the science area of ______ School is rocked by an explosion. In less than a minute, the fire alarm sounds. For the most part, teachers begin an orderly evacuation of the school but, because everyone knows that, this time, it is not a drill, tensions are high and some students begin pushing to get out of the school.

Because no one had time to get their belongings—and because the school has a policy that prohibits the wearing of outdoor coats and hats in the classroom, students, teachers, and staff quickly become soaked.

Scenario Questions:

1. Draw your initial emergency organization, including personnel assigned to each position (by title), in the space below.

2. Where will you establish your Command Post for this incident?

FIRE AND EXPLOSION SCENARIO (CONTINUED)

3. After establishing command, what will you do first? Why?

4. What is your first concern in this situation?

5. For what contingencies should you plan?

FIRE AND EXPLOSION SCENARIO UPDATE #1

[Distribute this update 20 minutes into the exercise!]

It is now 10:25 a.m. and both fire and police have arrived. The police have set up a cordon around the school as the firefighters begin to extinguish a fire that has erupted in the area of the explosion. Firefighters have also requested additional trucks to organize a search and rescue operation for the 32 missing students and two teachers who were in adjacent labs at the time of the explosion. Firefighters are having difficulty extinguishing the fire because it is being fed by the natural gas jets in the lab.

The temperature is forecast to drop through the day, with the rain changing over to freezing rain by mid-afternoon.

Update #1 Questions

1. What information will you provide the incoming Incident Commander (the fire captain) as you transfer command of the incident?

2. How does the new information affect your planning?

FIRE AND EXPLOSION SCENARIO UPDATE #1 (CONTINUED)

- 3. How will you work with the Incident Commander throughout the remainder of the incident?
- 4. What will you tell parents? How will you notify them?

5. What does the fact that the natural gas was not turned off tell you about your emergency plan?

FIRE AND EXPLOSION SCENARIO UPDATE #2

[Distribute this handout 35 minutes into the exercise!]

It is now 10:35 a.m. After checking with the bus company, you find out that it is impossible to arrange for bus transportation before 11:30 or 12:00. Some buses may not be available until later than that. Several students have begun exhibiting symptoms of hypothermia.

Several students have begun to wander off the campus. Others have realized that their friends are missing and are crying and trying to console each other. A crowd of onlookers has begun to gather.

Media representatives are arriving en masse. All are requesting interviews with the principal, the superintendent, teachers, students, and staff members. Several have approached students who are visibly upset to ask them about "how they're feeling right now."

Parents are also arriving. Some are extremely upset because they know their students have classes in the lab area but do not know if their children are safe.

Update #2 Questions:

1. What are your options for getting the students out of the weather?

2. What will you do about the students who are wandering off campus?

3. What will you do about the students who are upset?

FIRE AND EXPLOSION SCENARIO UPDATE #2 (CONTINUED)

4. Draw your current organization in the space below.

5. What will you do about the media?

FIRE AND EXPLOSION SCENARIO UPDATE #2 (CONTINUED)

6. How will you deal with the parents?

7. For what long-term contingencies should you plan?

FIRE AND EXPLOSION SCENARIO UPDATE #3

[Distribute this handout 60 minutes into the exercise!]

It is 12:30 p.m., and the fire has been extinguished. Some firefighters are in the building ensuring that the fire remains out. Others have begun search and recovery operations. At least seventeen sets of remains have been located, and extrication is underway. Search and recovery teams have reported that the remains are burned beyond recognition.

Several students and one teacher survived the explosion and fire but are suffering from burns and smoke inhalation. Three are unconscious. Rescue efforts are underway. Ambulances have been called to the scene for transport and rescuers are trying to identify the survivors.

There is a roof collapse in the area where the explosion occurred. The science wing of the school also suffered heavy smoke and water damage, including the area below the labs.

Several students have had to be transported to local medical centers for treatment of hypothermia.

Update #3 Questions:

1. What are your long-term recovery concerns?

2. What is your school's/district's procedure for notifying the parents and spouse of the deceased?

FIRE AND EXPLOSION SCENARIO UPDATE #3 (CONTINUED)

3. What insights has participating in this exercise provided you about your school's or district's state of readiness for an emergency situation involving a fire and explosion? What revisions would you recommend to your emergency plan as a result?