



Exercise Summary

Emergency Support Function 11 (ESF11) participated in Alaska Shield Exercise March 28 to April 2, 2014 in FEMA Region X. ESF11 is the Agriculture and Natural Resources Annex of the National Response Framework supported by the United States Departments of Agriculture and Interior. Alaska Shield was a full scale exercise sponsored by the Alaska Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management utilizing a catastrophic 9.2 magnitude earthquake and tsunami scenario. The exercise tested immediate response coordination of local, state, and federal Incident Management Assistance Teams and mid-response coordination of FEMA Joint Field Office with the State of Alaska and other federal agencies. ESF11 staffed the FEMA Region X Regional Response Coordination Center in Bothell, Washington from March 28- 29, 2014 with a transition to the FEMA Joint Field Office in Anchorage, Alaska from March 31st to April 2nd. A FEMA National Incident Management Assistance Team led response operations in Anchorage from March 31st to April 2nd and the FEMA National Response Coordinator Center in Washington, DC participated.

ESF11 was activated March 28. The ESF11 Coordinator for the exercise requested resources from APHIS and ESF11 partner agencies under a Federal Operations Support pre-declaration Mission Assignment to USDA. APHIS dispatch documented the exercise in the Resource Ordering Status System and provided resource orders to APHIS field participants. Staff attached to the incident included an ESF11 Coordinator, ESF11 desk officers, animal subject matter experts, natural cultural and historic resources subject matter experts, IT support, and dispatch. Congregate feeding and food safety subject matter experts supported ESF11 with virtual participation. Primary agriculture and natural resources topics included responder health and safety due to extreme cold temperatures and hazardous conditions, housing and food shortages for humans and animals, tribal impacts, and animal emergency response topics for domestic animals, livestock, and wildlife. ESF11 demobilized on April 2nd.

Lessons Learned

Successful

1. USDA ESF11 Coordinators supporting other regions in cohesive national program
2. ESF11 primary functions of nutrition assistance, animal and agricultural health and emergency management, food safety, and natural, cultural and historic resources considered by both state and FEMA
3. Dispatch, resource orders for those deployed, and ESF11 resource request process worked as per the ESF11 activation checklist
4. Request for 15 assets to support animal assessment was quickly filled by personnel from APHIS Wildlife Services, Veterinary Services, and Animal Care
5. USDA APHIS Plant, Protection and Quarantine supplied Desk Officers. APHIS Veterinary Services and Animal Care and Department of the Interior provided subject matter experts. APHIS Wildlife Services, Investigative and Enforcement Services, FNS, and FSIS provided virtual support.
6. Coordination with Department of the Interior and FEMA Tribal Liaison regarding tribal issues such as dietary concerns for sled dogs.



Challenges/Areas for Improvement

1. Duplicative resource ordering of USDA assets and mission assignment issuance to USDA from multiple FEMA coordination centers is not consistent with principles of National Incident Management System and puts responders at risk. Single source resource ordering is recommended. Similarly, division of authority between the ESF11 desk at the national response coordination center and ESF11 Coordinator in FEMA RX.
2. Relocating ESF11 under FEMA Mass Care (Individual Assistance) in the current Regional Incident Support Manual (RISM) model puts primary agriculture and natural resources functions of ESF11 at risk of not being fully supported during the response
3. Winter weather gear required by FEMA for responders. Process for USDA responder gear and equipment procurement should be established prior to deployment and written in employee resource order. Sprint phone service was sparse in Alaska, consider backup equipment to include radio, satellite phones, wireless priority service.
4. Continue to emphasize responder flexibility and ability to work effectively in fast-paced, high-stress environment of a FEMA coordination center. If this were a real event, travel would have been by Department of Defense (DOD) air support and sleeping arrangements would have been at FEMA Base Camps with potential for 30 day deployments to isolated hardship environments.