



KENT COUNTY SHERIFF DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Emergency Management Prepares for Large-Scale Exercise

GRAND RAPIDS – “Prepare for the worst; hope for the best” is a mantra in emergency preparedness. The ability to respond quickly and seamlessly in times of crisis is critical when minutes make the difference between life or death. Exercising our response efforts on a large scale helps us develop a better understanding of what each of our agencies would need to do in a time of disaster. Emergency Management Coordinator Jack Stewart updated the Kent County Board of Commissioners this morning regarding Exercise Northern Exposure, which is scheduled for June 23-27, 2015.

Here in Kent County, the exercise will simulate an explosion of a “Dirty Bomb” (Improvised Nuclear Device) that would create severe damage in a 0.75 mile radius in Grand Rapids on June 24. The exercise will be mostly run by Department of Public Works, HAZ-MAT teams, and Fire/Rescue personnel, using the Butterworth Yard Waste Facility in Grand Rapids and Crestwood Middle School in Kentwood.

“An exercise of this magnitude helps responders at all levels to coordinate and communicate together,” said Kent County/Grand Rapids Emergency Management Coordinator Jack Stewart. “We selected locations for the exercise that are considered low-traffic areas. We do not expect the exercise to interrupt daily activities. Most people in Kent County will not see the exercise unless they watch for it on the news.”

Neighboring counties are also taking part in various activities based on their capacity. “We have worked well together in this region on various exercises,” says Dan Stout, Muskegon County Undersheriff. “We’ve practiced for school safety, hydro-dam emergencies, cyber-attacks and more. This type of exercise allows us to reach across county lines to exercise our capabilities.”

Training will be restricted to daylight hours. Plans for the scenarios involve smoke, debris, and other disaster-related items intended to make the exercise as realistic as possible. Additionally, role-players will be used to simulate casualties and affected community members who are in need of life saving or assistance on a large scale. Local hospitals will participate, but the exercise will not impact patient traffic.

MEDIA NOTE/NOT FOR BROADCAST: We are planning to make exercise leaders available for interviews and provide video/photo opportunities from 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m on June 24 at the Butterworth Yard Waste Facility. These must be pre-arranged and we do need RSVPs in advance. Please let Lisa LaPlante know if you will be attending or sending someone from your organization.

Agencies scheduled to participate include: Michigan State Police, FEMA Region V, Michigan Emergency Management & Homeland Security, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Michigan Task Force 1 (Search and Rescue), Michigan District 6 Emergency Management & Homeland Security, Muskegon County Sheriff and HAZMAT Team, Muskegon County Emergency Management, Muskegon Heights Fire Department, Eggleston Fire Department, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MI-DEQ), Michigan District 5 Emergency Management & Homeland Security, City of Battle Creek Police Department, Kent County/City of Grand Rapids Emergency Management, Calhoun County Public Health Department and the Region V Health Care Coalition, Kent County Road Commission, Kentwood / TriCom, Walker, and Plainfield Fire Departments; Cities of Grand Rapids, Walker, Grandville, Kentwood, and Wyoming; Kent County Departments of Public Works, Local Hospitals, and the Salvation Army.

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