

**U.S. Department of
Homeland Security**



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Smart Practices

Spotlight

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Disaster Drill Involves Local Boy and Girl Scouts Racine County, Wisconsin

Summary: On Saturday, September 21, 2002, anyone wandering into the local Scout Camp in Burlington, Wis., might have been surprised to see dozens of Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts strewn throughout the camp looking like they'd been hurt in some kind of an accident. It may have looked real, but it was only a disaster drill meant to test the response capabilities of camp staff and emergency responders throughout the area.

The first ever Southeast Wisconsin Disaster Camporee and Exercise was organized to accomplish two objectives. One to test disaster response plans and second to educate local Boy and Girl Scouts about emergency preparedness and safety.

“We are required to conduct in our community a number of exercises each year and I thought this would be the perfect opportunity to expose the boys and girls to our local emergency services while also testing and training emergency responders,” said Racine County Emergency Management Coordinator David Maack. “Safety precautions must of course be carefully observed when using youthful volunteers in exercises.”

Over 250 Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts from Racine and Kenosha counties participated in the day-long event, which began in the morning with safety and emergency operations demonstrations, including search and rescue with search dogs, water rescue, gas and electric safety, and emergency communications, including communications with rescue planes and emergency medical technicians in the field. At noon, the Salvation Army and the Southeast Wisconsin Tri-County Red Cross Chapter fed the scouts from their mobile disaster canteens.

The afternoon began with a SWAT demonstration by the City of Racine Police Department and culminated with a realistic disaster exercise involving the response to a tornado striking the camp, resulting in mass casualties. The scouts played mass casualty victims and shadowed first responders. Amateur radio operators were part of the exercise and were able to provide back up when communications broke down because the different departments were operating on different frequencies. And the Racine County Emergency Medical Services unit was able to test its new field vehicle designed to handle mass casualty events.

Twenty-five different agencies participated in the drill, including fire departments from 11 local jurisdictions in Racine and Kenosha Counties; the City of Racine HAZMAT Team; Burlington and Salem Rescue Squads; Great Lakes Search and Rescue Canine, Inc.; Racine County Emergency Management; and the Racine County Dive Team; the Salvation Army and the Southeast Wisconsin Tri-County Chapter of the American Red Cross; the Civil Air Patrol; and the Wisconsin State Patrol.

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Smart Practices Spotlight highlights practices and ideas that members of the emergency management and responder community have found useful and effective; they are not necessarily advocated or endorsed by FEMA. For more information about this initiative, contact David Maack, Racine County Emergency Management Coordinator at davidm@racineco.com.