Emergency Management and Response Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC)

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NOTE: *This INFOGRAM will be distributed weekly to provide members of the Emergency Services Sector with information concerning the protection of their critical infrastructures. For further information, contact the Emergency Management and Response- Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC) at (301) 447-1325 or by e-mail at emr-isac@fema.dhs.gov.*

GIS for the Emergency Services

(Source: FEMA)

Having received recent inquiries, the Emergency Management and Response—Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC) reexamined the applicability of geographic information system (GIS) technology for the Emergency Services Sector (ESS). According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), GIS is a database system with software that can analyze and display data using digitized maps and tables for planning and decision making. It can assemble, store, manipulate, and display geographically referenced data, tying this data to points, lines, and areas on a map and table.

FEMA maintains that GIS is a useful tool for ESS departments and agencies because the technology supports emergency response, planning, exercises, mitigation, homeland security, and national preparedness. "In addition to its ability to manage and display data, GIS has robust modeling capabilities, allowing its users to adjust data and scenarios for prediction, planning, and estimation."

For operational purposes, GIS facilitates work with tactical, location-based information such as floor plans, utility control points, response plans, hazardous material contents and locations, surrounding exposures, aerial imagery, and hydrant locations. Access to this information while en route to or on scene allows responders to deploy more quickly, effectively, and safely.

The Environmental Systems Research Institute (PDF, 2 Mb) listed the following ways by which GIS helps ESS organizations:

- Prevent emergencies from occurring or reducing their consequences.
- Provide the best information to make optimized safety decisions under stressful conditions.
- Recover from emergencies quickly and providing operational continuity.

The FEMA GIS Tutorial, U.S. Geological Survey, Geospatial Information and Technology, and National Alliance for Public Safety GIS have additional information on this subject.

Air Bag Dangers for Responders

(Source: FireRescue1)

The integration of air bags and air type devices in vehicles has proven to save civilian lives. However, experience substantiates that they can be hazardous to first responders if the air bag system is not properly identified and deactivated.

An article in FireRescue1 highlights some basics about vehicle air bags and the dangers they present at an emergency scene. It explains that air bags are gas inflated, nylon fabric constructed bags set off by a small detonation triggered by "deceleration, the angle of impact, force of impact, the severity, and seat occupancy sensors."

Air bags are most often located in the steering wheel and dashboard, but can also be found in areas such as the doors, roofs, seat, or cushions. "Knowing these locations will aid first responders in operating at a vehicle-involved emergency."

The author recommends the following considerations when working on a vehicle with air bags, abbreviated by the Emergency Management and Response—Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC):

- Wear full PPE at all incidents.
- Conduct a thorough air bag size-up.
- Deactivate the air bag system if circumstances permit.
- Understand that non-deployed air bags can be dangerous.
- Expect explosions with projectiles if there is a vehicle fire.

See Emergency Rescue Guidelines for Air Bag Equipped Vehicles (PDF, 192 Kb) for more information.

Infectious Disease Exposure List for Emergency Responders

(Source: National Institute for Occupational Health & Safety)

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and partners in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently announced the availability of revised and updated resources to help prevent exposures of emergency response personnel to potentially life-threatening infectious diseases in the line of duty.

Through NIOSH sources, the Emergency Management and Response—Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC) confirmed that the resources include the following:

- A list of potentially life-threatening infectious diseases, including emerging infectious diseases, and specifying those diseases routinely transmitted through airborne or aerosolized means.
- Guidelines describing the circumstances in which emergency responders may be exposed to such diseases while attending to or transporting victims of emergencies.
- Guidelines for medical facilities making determinations whether such exposures have occurred.

This action was taken as a result of provisions in the Ryan White HIF/AIDS Treatment Extension Act of 2009. The notice of the action and further details can be found in the Federal Register.

Public Information Officer Awareness Training

(Source: Emergency Management Institute)

The Emergency Management and Response—Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC) was notified that the new Public Information Officer (PIO) Awareness Training Course (IS-29) is now available online. Developed by the Emergency Management Institute (EMI), the course discusses basic information for a new or less experienced state or local PIO.

The goal of this awareness course is to provide an orientation to the public information function and the role of the PIO in the public safety and emergency management environment. Included in the course are the following topics: understanding the PIO role, using tools and resources, communicating effectively, preparing the community, and communicating in an incident.

EMI awards 0.2 CEUs this for course, which takes approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes to complete. There are no prerequisites for participation.

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