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CHDS Expands Educational Portfolio

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Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School

<http://hdl.handle.net/10945/39125>

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Monterey CA - February 2014



CHDS Expands Educational Portfolio

The Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security is at the forefront using education to better the preparedness and security at the nation's nuclear power plants within its Radiological Emergency Preparedness (REP) Executive Education program.

The REP Executive Education second session was held January 17-14 in Monterey, following up on a pilot session in February 2013. The course is sponsored by the FEMA Technical Hazards Division, which was assigned to oversee domestic off-site nuclear power security following the Three Mile Island meltdown in 1979; the Nuclear Regulatory Commission oversees onsite security.

"What the REP does is ensure the health and safety for people living around nuclear power plants," said Andy Mitchell, Director of the Technical Hazards Division. "That's the mission focus."



Attendees ranged from federal regulators to local police chiefs and emergency managers as well as the industry representatives whose area of responsibilities encompasses nuclear power plants. Topics ranged from those specific to the industry to broader homeland security topics taught in other CHDS programs. The same kind of critical thinking and planning fostered in the CHDS Executive Leaders Program is finely tuned into the REP Executive Education.

"The program at CHDS opened my eyes to new possibilities in the REP program and forced me to think more critically about how and why we do what we do," said Tom Murray, Deputy Director of Operations for the Will County (Ill.) Emergency Management Agency. "The interaction between students, facilitators and instructors was extremely useful. It helped to see how other organizations deal with issues that I face on a daily basis. Although change comes slowly, I am already challenging the 'conventional' wisdom in our programs. I'm excited about the possibilities as the REP program continues to grow and mature."

The area Murray oversees epitomizes what the REP seeks to address. With two power plants in the vicinity, Will County's EMA has a full web page devoted to nuclear power and safety tips for residents in case of an accident.

CHDS Master's degree alumnus Michael Biasotti, Chief of the New Windsor (N.Y.) Police Department, found the executive education beneficial to thinking about the security of a plant near his town.

"Besides the opportunity to think in a strategic and conceptual way with professionals from such a diverse group, many exchanges occurred between myself and facility management which exponentially increased my understanding of the needs of the facility," Biasotti said. "I also believe that many conversations provided insight to facility representatives as to the needs of emergency services surrounding their facility during events. A huge benefit to me is that it has expanded my personal professional network to a group with whom I had had no prior contact."

While nuclear safety was studied afresh following the 9/11 attacks, it behoves the nation to view those concerns through the new lens of Fukushima, said Charles Castro, former regional administrator with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission who attended the first session. The Fukushima accident, triggered by an earthquake and accompanying tsunami, added greater concern to the fear management aspect of nuclear disaster response, he said.

As agencies in proximity to nuclear power plants exercise their response plans, Mitchell said the new security realities necessitate flexibility. Agencies are graded by the NRC on an array of areas in these plans, but Mitchell said non-graded sections, which free decision makers from the distaste of scoring poorly, have been added to reviews to spur innovation.

"What we're looking for in this group is their willingness to try new things and look at how to push the envelope forward in safety planning while maintaining accountability," Mitchell said. "We want to discuss things that help people view their job in a different

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