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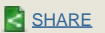
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New York emergency management instructional program benefits from CHDS expertise

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New York officials Terry Hastings and James Sherry have exported their Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS) experiences into a required educational program at the state's Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) that utilizes CHDS' leading-edge instructional videos.

Both men are CHDS Executive Leaders Program (ELP) alums who have also completed the Center's Executive Education Seminar presentations conducted in their state.

County executives and emergency managers in New York are required to complete the educational sessions to qualify for homeland security grants awarded by the DHSES. The agency has created an Emergency Management Academy to deliver the education.

"We wanted to move away from just using Power Point presentations and we wanted to facilitate dialogue," said Hastings, Senior Policy Advisor to the DHSES Commissioner. "We want this training to be valuable and relevant."

Among the CHDS footage used was a scenario of a train derailment and hazardous materials incident as well as a massive power outage such as the one that paralyzed the region in 2003, only the exercise occurs in freezing weather. The video also included a potential terrorist attack. The topics facilitate discussions on county planning, what it would take to improve the organization's capacity to respond and more precise tasks such as how many generators could be made available.

The videos are produced in broadcast news style to simulate the rush of information flow and shifting conditions decision-makers face during catastrophic events.

"Within just a few minutes many issues pop up and facilitate discussion about prioritizing what needs to be done," said Sherry, DHSES Deputy Commissioner for Downstate Operations. "We want to condition emergency managers that this is part of what they will face. They will have media scrutiny and the communication will be confusing early on. It's also helpful that the production value is as high and realistic as it is."

Gov. Andrew Cuomo initiated the program as a way of training county executives, emergency managers and local-level elected officials to ensure they have a baseline understanding of the state's emergency management framework.



Terry Hastings



From shore-battering storms originating from the Atlantic Ocean, such as 2012's Superstorm Sandy, to tornadoes and freezing winter tempests, Cuomo has spoken prominently about extreme weather trends.

"Gov. Cuomo and our Commissioner (Jerome Hauer) are really engaged and focused on this issue, and they are raising the bar on how we do emergency management in New York State," noted Hastings.

The DHSES educational sessions are categorized into three tiers: Tier 1 is for county executives and the New York City Mayor; Tier 2 for emergency managers; and, Tier 3 for other county partners in the homeland security enterprise.

Similar to CHDS programs, the value of the training goes beyond professional practice by providing a medium for contacts among public officials in New York, creating a cadre of homeland security professionals just as the Center does.

"It has strengthened the network that is there and, in some cases, exposed people to the fact that they can be part of a larger network of people who have similar challenges," Sherry said.



James Sherry

One of the Center's missions upon its establishment was sharing its educational resources with other institutions and agencies to spread homeland security learning across the nation.

"The Center's mission is to enhance national capacity for homeland security," said CHDS Director Glen Woodbury. "We accomplish this by sharing our programs and resources across local, state, tribal, territorial and federal agencies so they in turn can enhance their internal strategies and policies. In these austere budgetary times, homeland security agencies have to be creative in how they maintain their mission while looking ahead to the next threat. For over a decade, the Center has been working with agencies across the country to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards."

The CHDS videos were first used during a recent training academy in June, and DHSES is planning to conduct the training academy annually. Each event also showcases CHDS assets such as the Homeland Security Digital Library and its stable of educational offerings such as the Master's Degree Program and the ELP.

"It's our agency's responsibility to ensure public officials receive training they need to make informed decisions," Hastings said. "This program is really central to that. I believe we will be working with CHDS in the future."