

**Objective #8 Population Protective Actions** Demonstrate, or discuss in a tabletop exercise, the ability to identify and implement appropriate protective actions based upon projected risks posed to the public.

### **A Basic Intent**

To develop protective actions, responders must promptly assess the severity of the hazard and the impact it poses the general public. The Objective focuses on the decision-making process, the implementation of the actions, and the support needed by special populations.

### **B Discussing the Points of Review**

1. *Did personnel determine how and which geographical areas could be at risk?*

Responders need to clearly identify how the released materials will impact the surrounding area. They should identify the risks posed to both the public and the environment. They should consider how the release impacts a congested urban or residential area as well as the impact to a park or farmer's field. Personnel should determine if it may poison crops, kill wildlife, or contaminate well water. They should determine how the topography (rolling hills, open fields) affects the movement or impact of the released materials. They should identify if the material will collect in low-lying areas (heavy gases such as propane). Also, responders should determine how long this impact would last. It may last for days, it may disperse quickly, or it may exist until it has been physically removed.

2. *Was an appropriate protective action decision made based on the risks posed and the area to be impacted?*

Based on hazards and the surrounding area, responders must then decide what actions will best protect the public and environment. Responders can evacuate the area, or have people shelter in-place, or use a combination of these actions. Responders should also consider the impact that the time of day and season has on the protective action. There may not be enough time to evacuate. To shelter in-place during the cold of winter or heat of summer may create a greater hazard. They should also determine if this is going to be a short-term incident or if it requires a long-term isolation and subsequent restoration of the area.

3. *Were protective actions implemented in a timely manner and effectively coordinated among organizations?*

Once the protective action is chosen, its effectiveness will be influenced by how fast responders can safely implement and coordinate the action. If evacuating, responders may be exposed to a hazard and thus may need to don PPE and this will delay the response. Also, there may not be enough trained personnel to accomplish the task and additional agencies will need to be mobilized to help implement the action. Local law enforcement personnel may be enough to go door-to-door, but may need support from other agencies to establish roadblocks. Also, the shelter lead will require advance notification so they have time to mobilize personnel if a shelter is needed. In the meantime, local responders will need to care for the evacuated public or advise them where to go for assistance. The IC may even delegate the oversight of these actions to an activated EOC and thus allow the IC to stay focused on containing the release.

4. *Were media alert/notifications implemented in a timely manner?*

Part of any protective action is the need to promptly alert the public via the media. Responders may initially rely on door-to-door notifications but the process will also likely include using local media assets to broadcast warnings.

5. *Was the content of instructions appropriate to the protective action made?*

Media techniques include the use of cable television alerts, live radio/TV broadcasts, or the activation of the EAS, social media outlets and mass notification systems (ie: IPAWS). Regardless of the tool used, responders will need to insure the message provided is clear, concise, and understandable to the common person. Some typical points that should be made include, but are not limited to, what routes are and are not to be used. Or, it may include instructions on caring for pets, assisting elderly or disabled, or having proper medications on-hand. Responders also need to remember that the general public may not understand why or how to implement the action. Therefore, the information must clearly instruct the public on how to implement the protective action.

6. *Did response personnel take appropriate steps to address access and functional needs groups and special populations?*

Responders must identify what procedures and resources they will need to have in order to alert and protect special populations. A special population is one that needs special assistance to receive and implement the protective action. It may include people with disadvantages such as elderly or disabled. This may include populated areas such as schools, shopping centers, prisons, or medical facilities. It may also include vacation areas such as campgrounds, or special events such as county fairs and high school football games. Finally, this may include those with cultural differences such as migrant workers who speak a foreign language or groups difficult to contact like the Amish/Mennonites.

7. *Were proper methods followed to assess/monitor hazards to the general public and environment, and were the protective actions updated as required by changes?*

As the incident progresses, responders must continuously assess how the public and environment are impacted by changes in the incident status. Responders should relax or expand the protective actions as required. Changes in wind direction will move an airborne toxic. Rains may spread a contaminant or create a new danger if the material is water-reactive. As the materials are absorbed or the leak is plugged, the actual threat is diminished. Responders need a method to determine these changes and then implement a process to alert the public and support agencies implementing the protective actions.

8. *Was the process to return evacuees to their homes effectively coordinated between traffic controllers, shelter managers, and the command system?*

Responders ultimately need to show how they determine the surrounding area is safe and can be returned to its normal use. This may be through the use of air monitors to show an airborne toxic or flammable gas has dispersed, or that the liquid has been diked and/or absorbed. Responders then need to show what procedures, personnel, and resources are used to return people home in an organized manner. This includes developing public information messages, going back door-to-door, closing shelters, briefing the media, etc.

9. *Were records kept of protective action decisions made, instructions issued, and actions*

*implemented?*

Command staff should have noted what protective action was implemented and how it was concluded. They should note any unique concerns or actions that occurred in regards to the protective action. For example, noting that some people along a given street did not want to evacuate. Documentation is used to ensure actions have been implemented or to identify what additional actions may still be needed. After the event, the documentation will be used to improve procedures and/or guidelines, or to resolve a liability issue.

*10. Were the actions taken based on existing plans and/or operating procedures?*

The LEPC plan must contain evacuation procedures to include measures taken to establish alternate traffic routes. The plan must also include procedures to communicate with the public in a timely and effective manner. Plus, the hazard analysis section should identify what geographic areas will likely be impacted by a release (i.e. at/around EHS Facilities, along transportation corridors, etc.).

### **C Exercise Design and Control Issues**

The most common problem encountered when testing this Objective is that the scenario often does not have a significant impact to the general public or environment. For example, a transportation incident may only stop traffic flow, or a facility spill only impacts the on-site employees. The Exercise Design Team needs to create a scenario that impacts the off-site population and the environment. Scenarios need to allow responders to alert and protect more than just a couple homes or dike the ditch along the roadside. It should also include an impact to some special population or event such as the county fair, a high school sporting event, a migrant farm, or a nursing home.

For Tabletop exercises, defining the scenario and generating a full discussion of the local impact can be particularly challenging. The scenario should input various public concerns and impacts so that responders discuss a full-range of problems. Worst-case scenarios are well-suited for such discussions. The Controller will need to ensure personnel fully discuss the coordination needed among agencies and the time constraints imposed when implementing the public protective actions.

For Functional and Full-Scale exercises, the common problem associated with this Objective is that the Players do not “physically” complete the tasks. The Points are often only simulated. This simulation does not demonstrate how the procedures are implemented or if they are effective. Field exercises must physically demonstrate the actions. Therefore, the Exercise Design Team needs to ensure the scenario and the exercise setup allow personnel to physically complete each task. To help test this Objective, the Team should also make arrangements to have the general public participate in the exercise. The public can be informed that an exercise will test a given protective action and their support is needed. They can be asked to actually evacuate and report to an opened shelter. If the public is not going to participate, they should be advised that responders will be conducting an exercise in their area and please excuse any inconvenience.

As a safety issue, responders must be briefed as to how much of the procedure they will actually be required to carryout. For example, they should write-out each press release and not just say they have notified the public. Or, they should go door-to-door and not just say the area is evacuated. The same is true for establishing roadblocks, moving people, or opening shelters.

In any case, the Exercise Design Team will need to establish how far each Point must be demonstrated. Exercise Controllers will then acknowledge when the Point has been adequately demonstrated.

#### **D Evaluation Needs and Issues**

The Evaluator for this Objective should be knowledgeable in response procedures as it applies to implementing protective actions. Typically, this will be someone with a fire or law enforcement background.

This Objective may need to have more than one Evaluator should the Functional or Full-Scale exercise include activities away from the immediate incident site. For example, Evaluators can shadow responders as they go door-to-door, setup roadblocks, and interact with the general public. Meanwhile, one Evaluator would stay at the command structure to observe the decision-making process and how actions are coordinated among the response agencies. Evaluators may have to query Players to see if they know how or why the particular protective action was chosen or to understand how they overcame problems while implementing the action.

This Objective can be evaluated along with Objectives #2, 3, 4, 8, and 10.