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U.S. ARMY MANEUVER SUPPORT CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FT. LEONARD WOOD, MISSOURI



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Twister of a full-scale exercise

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – Missouri experiences more than 30 tornadoes yearly. The aftermath of these violent rotating columns of air is severe exposure to high winds or impact by flying debris.

In any case, emergency response is a challenge.

Fort Leonard Wood was put to the test when a simulated twister hit Tuesday, causing warning sirens that signaled the beginning of a full-scale exercise.

The purpose of the three-day exercise was to rehearse response actions and crisis management following a disaster or event.

"It is so important to train as we will respond and recover for real natural disasters in order to save lives, reduce human suffering and restore quality of life back to pre-event conditions. It takes a team-of-teams, to include our supportive community, to accomplish these imperatives," said Col. Andy Herbst, Fort Leonard Wood Garrison commander.

According to Troy Carney, a Fort Leonard Wood emergency management specialist and

The full-scale exercise is an annual requirement from the Installation Management Command, according to Lisa Stewart, Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security, chief of Plans and Operations.

Stewart said they started with a simulated event Monday responding to the aftermath of a

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tornado to get further into recovery planning.

"The second tornado (Tuesday) was to test the boots-on-the-ground response to a mass-casualty event. The crisis action team continued to work further on the recovery phase of the first tornado as the scenario advanced forward several days," Stewart said.

Herbst said he was impressed by the crisis action team's response to the hypothetical disasters.

"We have a very competent Fort Leonard Wood crisis action team manned by the most motivated and competent members who work hard every day to make our base safe and secure," Herbst said.

To make the events seem more realistic, debris, like telephone poles, trees and vehicles, were moved to the old Pershing Elementary School to test the first responders' abilities to extricate individuals trapped in vehicles as well as indoors under a simulated roof collapse.

"The hospital provided realistic injuries to 44 personnel by using (mock injuries). Several local emergency management services and fire partners participated in the exercise to test their triage and recovery skills. Soldiers were moved to both on-post and off-post medical facilities for treatment, as they would be during an actual mass-causality incident," Stewart said.

According to Herbst, the first responders evacuated, transferred and treated all of the victims within one hour and 10 minutes.

"This is really amazing," Herbst said.

The realism continued through the day, as phone calls rang in to several offices around the installation, and a mock press conference was held at the front gate.

In addition to the obvious damage to buildings, there were simulated environmental concerns such as leaking fuel, ruptured natural gas lines, contamination of the water supply and the recovery of pets.

Evaluators from IMCOM graded the event using a checklist to ensure Fort Leonard Wood personnel followed the standardized responses to events.

Herbst said overall the Fort Leonard Wood community responded very well, but there is always room for improvement.

"We will spend several weeks developing our after-action review and improvement action plans with metrics for checking if we are improving. There will be an overall effort to improve situational awareness and to improve community partnerships, which enable improved response," Herbst said.

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Local partners from Phelps County Medical Center and the City of Waynesville participated in this year's event.

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For more information contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

Encl (s) Photos

Photo cutlines:

Exercise_1: Members of the Fort Leonard Wood Fire Department evacuate a simulated victim injured from a tornado that was part of an exercise that tested the post's response actions and crisis management during a disaster.

Exercise_2: Fort Leonard Wood first responders extract a simulated victim.

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains about 80,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, one of only four reception stations in the Army, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, a large Forces Command unit that is responsible for all deployable capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood. A colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.
