



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2020.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: LOUDOUN County Full-scale High Threat Response

Program Title: LOUDOUN County

Program Category: CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

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Loudoun County Full-Scale High Threat Response Exercise



2020 Achievement Award Submission Criminal Justice and Public Safety Category

Submitted by Loudoun County, Virginia

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Executive Summary

On October 10, 2019, Loudoun County conducted a Full-Scale High Threat Response Exercise at the Patrick Henry College in Purcellville, Virginia. After nine months of planning and coordination, over 300 participants and 50 role-players participated in an exercise to evaluate the County's response to an Active Violence Incident (AVI). This exercise was led by the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office (LCSO), Loudoun County Combined Fire Rescue System (LC-CFRS), and the Loudoun County Department of General Services (DGS), and included approximately 15 other departments and agencies within Loudoun County. It was the culmination of years of preparation for an AVI. Developed to evaluate Loudoun County's readiness for such an event, it meets all of the criteria for recognition by the Virginia Association of Counties Achievement Awards Program. As a model for other localities, the Loudoun County Full-Scale High Threat Response Exercise was innovative and demonstrated unparalleled intergovernmental cooperation.

Introduction

On October 10, 2019, Loudoun County Public Safety Agencies conducted a full-scale active shooter exercise at Patrick Henry College in Purcellville, Virginia. This exercise was the culmination of years of preparation for an Active Violence Incident (AVI). Developed to evaluate Loudoun County's readiness for an AVI, it meets all of the criteria for recognition by the Virginia Association of Counties. These criteria are innovation, intergovernmental cooperation, a model for other localities, and customization by the local government. The 2019 Loudoun County Full-Scale High Threat Response Exercise meets all of these criteria for recognition under the 2020 Virginia Association of Counties Achievement Awards.

The Challenge

AVIs are becoming increasingly more common throughout the United States. The April 2019 FBI Report Active Shooter Incidents in the United States in 2018 "designated 27 shootings in 2018 as active shooter incidents," which caused 213 casualties, 85 killed (excluding the shooters), and 128 wounded. Loudoun County, like many jurisdictions, has increased its level of preparedness by continuing to evolve its training. Previous training and exercises focused on the initial response of the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) and the Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System (LC-CFRS). A review of these previous trainings provided recommendations for improvement to Loudoun County's AVI preparedness. The most prominent training recommendation was to conduct a full-scale, complex exercise to evaluate Loudoun County's readiness to respond to an AVI. Building on the previous success of collaborative training efforts between the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office and the Loudoun

County Combined Fire and Rescue System, the AVI Exercise Planning Team set about developing a full-scale exercise.

Planning a Full-Scale AVI Exercise

In January 2019, the AVI Exercise Planning Team began developing a full-scale exercise. The overall goal was to create a realistic scenario to challenge the tactical training and procedures of first responders during an AVI, with multiple shooters and mass casualties, while also considering the safety of first responders, participants, educational staff and students, and the general public. The exercise location incorporated a large building and surrounding area at a local private college (Patrick Henry College). Additional goals included testing the



Law enforcement and fire and rescue personnel operating in unified command at the Loudoun County Full-Scale High Threat Response Exercise.

Emergency Communication Center's (ECC) capabilities, the establishment of unified command and joint assembly areas, and the formation and deployment of contact teams, rescue task force teams (RTF), and extractions teams. LC-CFRS EMS units would evaluate their capabilities

to transport patients to local participating hospitals, while LCSO would evaluate their capability to transition the crisis site to a crime scene.

Exercise Scenario

Before the exercise could begin, safety briefings and equipment checks were conducted to ensure participant safety. Staging sites, response paths, and the incident site were all monitored and secured by law enforcement throughout the exercise. Evaluators positioned throughout the exercise site to monitor the performance of the first responders. The exercise was initiated by role-players dialing 911 and reporting “someone is shooting” to the Emergency



Law enforcement officers deploy towards the Barbara Hodel Building to neutralize a threat during the exercise.

Communications Center. Law enforcement and Fire-EMS resources were dispatched to the exercise in the same manner as a real incident. Upon arrival, the initial law enforcement officers were confronted with multiple active shooters that immediately began to engage them while continuing to harm role-playing casualties. Law enforcement participants were required to directly engage and eliminate these threats. After the multiple active shooters were

neutralized, LCSO and LC-CFRS supervisors would form unified incident command to further direct the response. Unified command's goals would be to locate, treat, and remove wounded role-players while continuing to protect responders and begin the investigation of the incident. As wounded role-players were removed from the scene, they would be transported to nearby hospitals to evaluate EMS care and hospital coordination. In addition, during the early response, suspicious explosive devices were identified near the scene, which required the coordination of the Explosive Ordinance Response team and the Loudoun County Fire Marshal's Office.

An Innovative Solution

The Loudoun County Full-Scale High Threat Exercise demonstrated an innovative solution to preparing for an AVI in several ways. The size, scope, and complexity of the exercise showed the innovation of the AVI Planning Team. Three stories of the Barbara Hodel Building were incorporated into the scenario. Role-playing casualties were moulaged with artificial wounds that required treatment by responders. Some of the initial calls to the ECC were conducted via text-to-911 technology. This allowed ECC personnel to communicate with role-players to get situation updates and descriptions of the shooters. The "shooter role-players" were well-trained LCSO officers armed with Simunition® weapons to provide realism. To record the exercise, LCSO utilized body cameras and a drone to capture the exercise as it unfolded. As the exercise progressed, the LC-CFRS Medical Director requested activation of the "FACT*R Program." This request brought blood products to the scene via a helicopter. These are just a few examples of this innovative approach to conducting a full-scale AVI exercise.

Promoting Cooperation

Promoting intergovernmental cooperation, cooperation with other government entities, and cooperation with private organizations in preparation for an AVI was the most significant outcome of the Loudoun County Full-Scale High Threat Exercise. Although strong cooperation between LCSO and LC-CFRS already existed, it became stronger through the planning process. This same cooperation became pervasive across other intergovernmental departments who supported the exercise. For example, the Loudoun County Department of General Services helped secure the exercise site’s perimeter with fencing installed during the night before the exercise. Outside government entities provided support and participated in the exercise. For example, the Purcellville Police Department participated in the initial response while the Arcola Volunteer Fire and Rescue Support Unit provided drinks and logistics. The cooperation provided by private organizations was also significant, particularly by Patrick Henry College, which allowed the use of the Barbara Hodel Building and the surrounding area, encouraged students to be role-players, hosted planning meetings, and served as an important advocate for the exercise. The tremendous level of cooperation is evident when these agencies are listed (Table 1).

Table 1: Participating Organizations	
Patrick Henry College	Purcellville Police Department
Loudoun County Sheriff’s Office	Arcola Volunteer Fire Department Support Services
Loudoun County Fire and Rescue	Purcellville Volunteer Fire Company
Loudoun County General Services	Purcellville Volunteer Rescue Company
Loudoun County Office of Emergency Management	Round Hill Volunteer Fire and Rescue
Loudoun County Fire Marshals’ Office	Virginia State Police
Loudoun County Medical Reserve Corps	Town of Leesburg Police
INOVA Loudoun Hospital Center	Fairfax County Police Department
StoneSpring HCA Hospital Center	Loudoun County Health Department

A Model for Other Localities

The Loudoun County Full-Scale High Threat Exercise provided a model to other local governments preparing for an AVI for four reasons. First, the AVI Exercise Planning Team was inclusive. Local law enforcement and volunteer response agencies may have had little capacity to take a lead role in planning, but they were included as valuable participants in the exercise. Second, support from the leading organizations' leadership was essential. LCSO and LC-CFRS senior leadership was committed to supporting a successful full-scale AVI exercise.



Loudoun County Sheriff Michael Chapman and System Chief Keith Johnson address the participants at the exercise's debriefing.

Third, the exercise was realistic. A realistic scenario provided validity to the participants and valuable lessons learned. Fourth, the AVI Exercise Planning Team remained flexible. Limitations on the use of the exercise site and the need for site security requirements required flexible solutions.

Financing and Staffing

The cost of the exercise was estimated to be \$42,669.18. This cost largely accounts for overtime utilization from law enforcement, fire and rescue, communications personnel, and emergency management, to ensure no disruption to normal public safety response systems. Some of the participants and role-players

Table 2: Exercise Assessment Criteria
1. Effectively receive voice and text messaging 911 calls from an AVI.
2. Communicate critical information to responding law enforcement and fire agencies to glean situational awareness.
3. Advance to a structure using paramilitary assault counteroffensive plan (PACOPS) to detain or neutralize a threat.
4. Identify the presence of a second shooter.
5. Form contact teams to locate, detain, and neutralize the second shooter.
6. Introduce TECC equipment and initiate treatment for patients in the hot zone.
7. Establish a command post.
8. Identify the presence of a “warm zone.”
9. Establish a unified command.
10. Establish Joint Assembly to form Rescue Task Force (RTF) Teams and Extraction Teams.
11. Establish RTF Teams and deploy them into “warm zone.”
12. Establish Extraction Teams and deploy them into “warm zone.”
13. Identify the presence of a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED).
14. Based on the presence of a VBIED, change operating tactics.
15. Communicate the presence of a VBIED and request appropriate resources to mitigate it.
16. Initiate “warm zone care” in a timely fashion.
17. Extract patients from the “warm zone care” to appropriate EMS resources.
18. Maintain location accountability of teams operating in the “warm zone care.”
19. Working cooperatively (Fairfax SWAT and Loudoun SOS), conduct a joint ‘hard clear’ to completely clear the structure of additional suspects, IEDs, or patients.
20. Successfully transition the scene from an active threat scene to the Criminal Investigative Division as a crime scene.

were volunteers, including the Loudoun County Medical Reserve Corps, Patrick Henry College students, local volunteer fire and EMS system members, and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Auxiliary. This softened the overtime cost. There was also a personnel cost associated with planning the exercise. This overtime cost was nominal as the planning team developed the exercise in conjunction with their normal duties. Law enforcement purchased weapons' parts and Simunition® ammunition designed to mimic real law enforcement equipment. Over 300 responders and 50 role-players staffed this exercise. A local restaurant (Mission BBQ®) donated refreshments at the conclusion of the exercise. This is one of the largest one-day public safety exercises ever conducted by Loudoun County.

Results of a Full-Scale AVI Exercise

The AVI Planning Team developed exercise assessment criteria early in the planning stages (Table 2). These assessment criteria were developed to evaluate past training (i.e., establishing unified command, RTF deployment, etc.) as well as evaluate untested challenges (i.e., second shooter, presence of a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, etc.). These assessment criteria helped identify lessons learned from the exercise. A full account of the lessons learned is beyond the scope of this document; however a few important lessons require mentioning.

Developing a Full-Scale Exercise

- Although realism was sacrificed in some aspects for the safety of participants and the practicality of the exercise, the scenario successfully created a realistic response from law enforcement and first responders.

- The mere planning to develop and conduct a full-scale exercise improved communication and coordination across multiple county agencies.
- Public information officers (PIO) across multiple county departments successfully coordinated messaging to the local community, the media, and regional partners.
- The Loudoun County Department of General Services was an invaluable partner in preparing the exercise site.

Emergency Communications Center

- Communications personnel effectively utilized text-to-911 technology to obtain important information about the incident and shooters' locations.
- Communications personnel effectively maintained and communicated overall situational awareness about the incident.

Law Enforcement

- Law enforcement effectively implemented PACOPS and active shooter protocols to rapidly deploy personnel and neutralize threats.
- Criminal Investigative Division (CID) personnel responded and immediately supported the command post by gathering intelligence and interviewing witnesses. Through the effective teamwork of the investigators and command post, the presence of two shooters was quickly identified.

Fire and Rescue

- All role-playing patients were treated, transported, and tracked from the scene to area hospitals.

- The system to bring blood products to the scene of a major incident (FACT@R) was effectively executed via a local helicopter service.

Conclusion

With over 300 participants, the Loudoun County Full-Scale High Threat Response Exercise may be the largest one-day public safety exercise ever conducted by Loudoun County. It meets all of the criteria for recognition by the Virginia Association of Counties. Characterized by innovative exercise design and wide-ranging intergovernmental cooperation at all levels this achievement is a model for other localities.