

Montana Disaster and Emergency Services

PRESS RELEASE

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Vigilant Guard 2009 - Montana to Test Disaster Response Capabilities

Helena - The Prickly Pear Fault ruptures near Helena violently shaking the community with a 6.5 magnitude earthquake. Destruction and chaos smack the area impacting people, communities and infrastructure for miles.

For now, this is only a test.

The State of Montana will exercise its disaster response capabilities September 15-17 during Vigilant Guard 2009. Even simulated, the scenario is quite grim, and very realistic. The destructive jolt will result in collapsed buildings, fires, chemical spills, injuries and fatalities. The widespread effects will prompt hundreds of calls for help that challenge responders and the system that functions to protect and serve their communities.

The overload will require prioritization of incidents, use of established mutual aid partnerships, testing of leadership, and a reliance on specialized teams for assistance. There will be a variety of hazards and a multitude of challenges to address the many problems that will face over 1,200 participants involved.

An exercise of this size is a colossal undertaking and just the vast numbers of participants is a testimony to its importance and significance according to Ken Mesch, administrator for Montana Disaster and Emergency Services. However, an important element that is difficult to measure is public involvement. "I hope everyone is as excited about this exercise as we are. Hundreds of responders will be out there training for the worst, we can all do our part by ensuring our homes and families are prepared for disaster." Mesch recommends putting together a survival kit, making a plan, and being informed of the hazards in your area.

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Additional Resources and Details:

* Vigilant Guard is a Full-Scale Exercise. The scenario is simulated but the actual response is carried out utilizing personnel, equipment, resources, and procedures.

* Vigilant Guard will run September 15 - 17, 2009

* Preparedness websites www.ready.gov <blockedhttp://www.ready.gov/> or www.ready.mt.gov <blockedhttp://www.ready.mt.gov/>

* Get a kit: <http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/index.html>
<blockedhttp://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/index.html>

* Make a Plan: <http://www.ready.gov/america/makeaplan/index.html>
<blockedhttp://www.ready.gov/america/makeaplan/index.html>

* Be Informed: <http://www.ready.gov/america/beinformed/index.html>
<blockedhttp://www.ready.gov/america/beinformed/index.html>

* Highlights of this exercise will include response to a rubble pile, building fire, hazardous materials railway spill, medical emergencies and triage. Response will include local law and fire, EMT, hazmat teams, National Guard Civil Support Team, medical military teams, local and state operations centers, private industry and volunteer organizations.