



Board of Commissioners

PRESS RELEASE

lakecountyohio.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 10/06/2022

County Contact: Jason W. Boyd
440.350.2745
jason.boyd@lakecountyohio.gov

Lake County Officials Prove Commitment to Public Safety in Hostile Action Based Exercise

PAINESVILLE, Ohio, October 6, 2022– On September 27, 2022 over 500 Lake County Officials, including the Board of Lake County Commissioners and Sheriff’s Office, participated in the Radiological Emergency Preparedness, Full Participation, Plume Exposure Pathway Hostile Action Based (HAB) Exercise for the Perry Nuclear Power Plant.

“Lake County is extremely fortunate to have such a professional and dedicated emergency planning team. The expertise displayed our EMA Department, local police and fire, the Health District, County Sheriff and many more is second to none. This year’s HAB, along with our nationally recognized virtual drill completed in 2020, clearly shows our commitment to emergency preparedness in Lake County,” said Commissioner John Hamercheck.

The Hostile Base Action Evaluated (HAB) Exercise, for the Energy Harbor Perry Nuclear Power Plant (PNPP), was a culmination of over 18 months of planning by both public and private agencies. In the end, the drill included over 511 participants, being evaluated over multiple days, the week of Sept. 26th. The exercise includes portions of Ashtabula and Geauga County as well.

“We are very proud to state that FEMA advised, during the Participant Briefing, that their report will state there were no findings. This means they will be able to confirm to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) that they have reasonable assurance that we, the off-site response agencies, can provide protection to the public, if there was an incident at the PNPP. As always, we need to be proud of the public service provided here in our county, which includes many agencies who continuously collaborate to ensure we are prepared should an emergency situation occur. These partnerships expand beyond our county border to include Ashtabula County, Geauga County and the State of Ohio,” said Lake County EMA Director Joseph Busher.

All participants in the drill were closely observed by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) controllers to ensure compliance with policies and procedures. Lake County selected 12 Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program (REP) Capability Targets for evaluation, and all 12 Capability targets were met.

According to post drill reports from HAB evaluators, “All three Lake County Commissioners, John Hamercheck, John Plecnik, and Mark Tyler were in attendance and took a very active role in the decision-making process. They asked pertinent questions and were persistent about getting all the information necessary before taking actions. The Commissioners had a wealth of experience in industrial settings and

were familiar with the operations of the Perry Nuclear Power Plant. They demonstrated a genuine concern for the safety and health of the populace and did not minimize their role in the exercise. The relationship between all members of the Executive Groups was one of mutual respect and cooperation. The safety of the public was paramount in the thought process of the actions taken. Their cooperative attitude was exemplary.”

“There is nothing more important than the safety of our residents in Lake County. I am grateful to the hundreds of local, state and federal participants who continuously train and drill for emergency situations in Lake County. This is not just a drill that occurs every two years. Rather, our team engages critical daily preparedness training. I am honored to do my part in ensuring we are professionally prepared to address, react and respond to any and all emergency events that may occur in our communities,” said Commissioner John Plecnik.

Post drill evaluation results indicate the Emergency Management Director Joe Busher “did an excellent job of keeping the Executive Group on task and informed. All incoming information was immediately shared with the group. Potential problems were discussed calmly and questions were answered promptly.’

“Proper training is vital to keeping our community safe. Director Busher and his team did an amazing job leading the three counties through a very important simulated attack at the plant,” said Commissioner Mark Tyler. “I feel more prepared than ever.”

During the post drill debrief on September 20, 2022, Sean O’Leary, FEMA Region 5 Regional Assistance Committee Chair said, “In September of 2020, the Perry community participated in the first REP (Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program) exercise in the country, which was 100% virtual. This was during COVID, before the vaccine, during the midst of the public health emergency in Ohio. The Perry community decided to move forward and do this exercise. Thank you all for demonstrating your capabilities during the exercise. Capabilities we had not seen before, during the public health emergency. What was great, is not only did you build your virtual capabilities for your REP exercise, but you also built those capabilities for use in your daily operations during the public health emergency.

O’Leary continued to highlight Lake County’s sustainable efforts moving through the pandemic exercise to the 2022 HAB, “What is fantastic is how everyone has kept those additional capabilities after the emergency phase died down. While we were, “shut down” you would think not doing REP activities for two years would mean that you would be, “rusty” when you came back. That is not the case, and again, I believe it’s because we have been in emergency mode for the last two years for the public health emergency. So, “our saw is still sharpened”. I want to thank you again.”

Lake County will conduct the next FEMA evaluated exercise in the Fall of 2024.

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