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From left: The Plant System Operations hub doubles as the Incident Command Center during an actual emergency, in which the Incident Commander will manage the incident within the bounds of the Emergency Management Plan. Employees are relocated to a safe, pre-determined area for accountability during the hypothetical incident to test the site’s emergency response.

Contributed photos

WVDP participates in exercise to prepare for emergency incidents

The Department of Energy Office of Environmental Management and CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley, its cleanup contractor at the **West Valley Demonstration Project**, recently conducted a full-scale exercise that included Cattaraugus County Sheriff’s Department, Cattaraugus County Special Response Team, Cattaraugus- Chautauqua Bomb Squad, West Valley Volunteer Hose Fire and Rescue, and evaluation assistance from Cattaraugus County Emergency Services.

This exercise, which was based on a hypothetical incident, tested the skills and response of these local agencies as well as the site’s Radiological Controls Department, Environmental Department, Emergency Medical Response Team, Security Force and Operational Response Team.

It’s been stated that during an emergency, you always fall back on your training. Disasters can occur at any time, and a knowledgeable, well-trained emergency response team can significantly improve the outcome of any event – exercises provide this real- world training. Exercises also provide constructive feedback to improve in areas identified during the course of the incident.

This full-scale exercise, held at the **WVDP** site and New York State retained premises, was designed to validate the team’s response to an unannounced hypothetical incident and their ability to minimize the potential impact to the employees, the public and the environment.

“You can never over plan for emergencies,” CH2M HILL BWXT West Valley Event and Emergency Management Manager Kevin Murray said. “To be prepared in our field, you must



always be learning, training, and evaluating your performance. I know we can't predict the future, but we can certainly be well-prepared for whatever comes our way."

DOE-**WVDP** staff and **WVDP** personnel helped develop the scenario and supported the exercise as controllers and evaluators. This included coordinating the many tasks that had to occur to make it more realistic and truly test responders from beginning to end.

There were five DOE-HQ observers that assisted the DOE-**WVDP** with evaluations.

In all, there were more than 25 law enforcement and 10 fire and emergency medical service participants from offsite agencies, with assistance from Argonne National Lab's Mock Media Team who provided hypothetical social media and news coverage.



An onsite security officer along with Cattaraugus County Special Response Team combine forces to gain entry into a ground level office trailer that may contain an outside intruder.