Red Cross participates in terrorism exercise

On Oct. 15-19, 2007, Top Officials 4 (TOPOFF 4), the nation’s premier terrorism preparedness exercise, occurred in the Portland/Vancouver metropolitan area. It involved top officials from every level of government, as well as those from the international and private sectors. TOPOFF 4 was the fourth such exercise and builds on knowledge learned from past exercises and real world events. Guam and Phoenix, Ariz., were also engaged in the exercise. In the three areas involved, more than 15,000 participated in TOPOFF 4.

The Southwest Washington American Red Cross participation in this exercise included extensive planning and communications prior to the week of TOPOFF 4, as well as shelter operation. The Red Cross took part in order to test response capabilities, strengthen preparedness and deepen interagency coordination. TOPOFF 4 also helped the chapter to identify strengths and weaknesses, build stronger partnerships and gain knowledge.

Don’t let a house fire catch you unprepared

As temperatures start to dip across the country, the American Red Cross urges families to be cautious when using space heaters and other heating sources, and to plan ahead for the possibility of a home fire. Home heating fires increase during the late fall and winter months, and portable heating fires are more deadly than others.

Fires kill more Americans each year than all natural disasters combined, and the Red Cross urges families to develop a fire escape plan and to take steps toward fire prevention and safety. To prevent heating-related fires, the Red Cross recommends the following:

- Keep all potential fuel sources (newspapers, matches, bedding, clothing, carpets and rugs) at least three feet away from heat sources, such as space heaters, fireplaces and stoves.
- Provide constant adult supervision in rooms with lit candles or fires.
- Keep fire in the fireplace by using glass or metal fire screens.
- Never leave a fire in the fireplace unattended. Extinguish the fire before going to bed or leaving the house.
- Never use a cooking range or oven to heat your home.
- Turn off portable space heaters every time you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Have wood and coal stoves, fireplaces and chimneys inspected annually by a professional, and cleaned if necessary.
- If you must use space heaters, place them on a level, hard and nonflammable surface (such as ceramic tile floor), not on rugs or carpets or near bedding or drapes. Keep children and pets away from space heaters.

Preparing for a home fire doesn’t require a lot of expensive equipment or training. In addition to functioning smoke alarms, one of the easiest ways to prepare is to develop and practice a home fire escape plan so that every family member, including young children and the elderly, can escape quickly and safely.

Fire escape plans should include at least two exit routes for every room in the home, and a convenient meeting place at a safe distance from the fire. Escape ladders should be used and stored near windows in floors above ground level, and all family members should know how to locate and use the ladders safely. Families should practice their escape plan at least twice a year.

2008 Clark and Cowlitz County Heroes Nominations Due

Do you know a hero? Have you heard of a heroic deed? Then by all means, please submit a nomination form to recognize the heroes who lived, worked or performed their heroics in Clark or Cowlitz Counties.

Call for a nomination form (360-693-5821, Vancouver; 360-423-7880, Longview) or access them from our Web site (www.swwashington.redcross.org, then click on Events/Clark or Cowlitz County Heroes). Also, be sure and mark your calendars for the 2008 Heroes Breakfasts:

- Feb. 22 - Clark County Heroes, Hilton Hotel, 7 a.m.
- Mar. 27 - Cowlitz County Heroes, Kelso Red Lion Hotel, 7 a.m.
Do you like to teach?

If you do, then there are oodles of chances for you to volunteer with the Red Cross as a volunteer instructor. Volunteer instructors average six to seven hours of class time a month. They teach courses such as first aid, CPR, automated external defibrillator (AED), emergency preparedness and more.

Volunteer instructors find that their service with the Red Cross brings them satisfaction because they know that they are providing students with the ability to save a life. And, fees for the classes go back into the community in the form of emergency relief services or additional lifesaving training.

There is training required before you can become a Red Cross instructor. Training dates for the next session for the instructor training class is Nov. 2, 5, 7 and 9 and is held in the Vancouver chapter office. You must register in advance for this course. For information about the training or becoming a volunteer instructor, contact one of the following:

- Diane Lins, 360-693-5821 x 127, Vancouver, dlins@swwashington.redcross.org
- Kathy Perrine, 360-423-7880, Longview, kperrine@swwashington.redcross.org

It’s scary out there — keep your children safe on Halloween

As ghosts, pirates and princesses prepare to descend on neighborhoods across America on Halloween night, the American Red Cross offers parents some safety tips to help prepare their children for a safe and enjoyable trick-or-treat holiday.

“By following a few simple safety tips, parents can make this Halloween a safe and fun time for their little trick-or-treaters,” said Kathy Perrine, Red Cross health and safety expert. “Most Halloween injuries are preventable, if parents and children take some simple precautions,” added Harvey.

The following “lucky 13” safety tips are for parents to share with their trick-or-treaters to prevent injuries at Halloween.

Red Cross Halloween Safety Tips:

- Plan your route and share it with your family. If possible, have an adult go with you.
- Wear light-colored or reflective-type clothing so you are more visible. (And remember to put reflective tape on bikes, skateboards and brooms, too!)
- Use face paint rather than masks or things that will cover your eyes.
- Cross the street only at corners. (Never go into a stranger's home.
- Have a grown-up inspect your treats before eating. And don’t eat candy if the package is already opened. Small, hard pieces of candy are a choking hazard for young children.)

Special Training Offer

Would your neighborhood association, business, faith-based group, soccer club, or any other group like to take Red Cross training?

Then check out this special!

Sign up 10 or more people, and choose either 11 students for the price of 10 or get a free first aid kit.

Contact Theresa Sparks, 693-5821 x 115, tsparks@swwashington.redcross.org, for more information.

This offer good only for training held Dec. 1-31, 2007.
Finally! You can now purchase Red Cross products from our Web site. Yes, online shopping is now available at www.swwashington.redcross.org. Simply click on the shopping cart icon on our home page.

With more than 20 items offered and more to come, it is easier than ever to buy Red Cross first aid kits for home, office or car; Red Cross breathing barriers for CPR; babysitting kits with first aid and other supplies included; and even a Red Cross teddy bear.

We invite you to visit and opening, we are offering a free (not including shipping/handling charges) for a limited time. You — an emergency flashlight that has a AM/FM radio and a siren. This flashlight is a smart idea for keeping in your car or disaster preparedness kit. Details online about this special offer.

Are you already planning your gift list?

What’s the perfect solution for gift giving? Why the Red Cross of course. Buying and giving Red Cross products and classes are gifts that give twice - they show you care about your friends and family and by buying from the Red Cross you help fund Red Cross services in your community.

These are gifts that can give for a lifetime or save a life. When a disaster strikes, gifts from the Red Cross can mean that CPR will be performed, lifesaving skills are there when needed, or a disaster preparedness kit will provide supplies in an emergency.

For a gift that fits all sizes and needs, we ask that you consider purchasing Red Cross items or gift certificates. It’s an easy way to shop - no sizing necessary, no worry about getting the right color (red - how can you go wrong?) and certainly no worry about whether or not it’s needed.

If it is first aid, CPR, youth classes or any other Red Cross training, just pick a class from the pullout listings of classes offered included in your newsletter. We hope that you will use this section to read through the offerings and make your choice of which class to give to someone special.

You can purchase Red Cross products at the chapter offices in Longview and Vancouver or via our Web site, www.swwashington.redcross.org. You can buy gift certificates for classes or Red Cross products at the chapter offices. Happy shopping.

Call Center goes live - Feedback excellent

The feedback for the Sept. 26 live Longview call center session was outstanding. During the three hour exercise volunteers took 53 calls and created 47 contacts.

Evaluation team feedback about those contacts included:

• The narratives that volunteers created were excellent. Most were extremely thorough and descriptive and outlined the problem very well.

• For assigning the proper information to cases, comments were “good job” and “nice work” in the two of the categories reviewed.

• In all of the cases, the clients’ names were correctly inputted. (Reviewer stated, “Your group had no problem with this. Very nice! ”)

The evaluators were very impressed with the call center volunteers’ work. Overall, the group did a great job. This was especially impressive since the September session was the first time that they had ramped up. Good job call center volunteers.

Donor $s at Work

Many of you read in the newspaper of the all too frequent reports of home fires that occur within our community. The stories describe a lot about the event. But what they don’t fully explain is the numbing state of shock those residents experience when they are rushed out of their homes and witness the smoke and flames billowing from their building. For many, their life’s possessions have just been lost. Too few have any insurance and the reality of overwhelming desperation can set in quickly. Where do they go? What will they have to wear, to eat? How can they return to everyday life?

A recent large apartment complex fire in Vancouver shown a light on the cruel realities of people’s loss. This fire affected over 40 lives in a most destructive way. Dark smoke circulated throughout the apartment complex as more than a dozen fire trucks, medical response units, police vehicles, television crews and the Red Cross responded to this early morning disaster. The sound of crying children, the sight of confused and stunned residents, the urgency of the fire crews to control the fire and the commotion near the fire was something out of a movie but all too real.

Red Cross volunteers responded to the scene. With calmness, compassion, and sincere concern, these volunteers set up a safe area for the affected residents. They addressed the immediate needs of temporary shelter for families, replacement of clothing, food requirements and referral to other partner agencies. They even provided new teddy bears to youngsters to help.

Southwest Washington residents have financially supported Red Cross activities for over 90 years. Disaster services are provided free of charge – an outright gift from the community – to those affected by such disaster as home fires. Over $10,000 of your donations went to this one response and helped over 20 families start the slow process of reclaiming their lives. They are most grateful.

Thank you can never be said enough to the residents of this community for the generosity that allows your Red Cross to continue to respond to disasters and help people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies.
American Red Cross
Southwest Washington Chapter
3114 E. Fourth Plain Blvd.
Vancouver, WA 98661

Serving our communities for 90 years.

Prevent Home Fires - And, have a escape plan, just in case.

Visit our updated Web site:
www.swwashington.redcross.org

American Red Cross Southwest Washington Chapter
Office Hours
Monday - Friday
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Vancouver: 3114 E. Fourth Plain Blvd.
Vancouver, WA 98661
Ph: 360-693-5821
Fax: 360-693-1953

Ilwaco: P.O. Box 186
Ilwaco, WA 98624
Ph: 360-642-5766
Fax: 360-642-5622

Longview: 1265 14th Avenue
Longview, WA 98632
Ph: 360-423-7880
Fax: 360-423-7882

Raymond: P.O. Box 133
Raymond, WA 98577
Ph: 360-875-6012
Fax: 360-875-6013

Wishing and hoping - Red Cross has wish list
Can you help? This is a partial list of items or services the Red Cross has need of. If you can help out by donating new (or nearly new and in good condition) items, providing services, or making a cash donation for any of these needs, give the Red Cross a call and make arrangements for your donation. It will be appreciated – really.

Vancouver: 360-693-5821 • Longview: 360-423-7880 • Ilwaco: 360-642-5766
Raymond: 360-875-6012

- Digital camera – 6 Mg pixels+
- Landscaping service and/or tools
- Vacuum and vacuum bags
- Disaster supplies (call for list)
- Print cartridges (call for list)
- Cleaning supplies (call for list)
- Office supplies (gift certificate for supplies is best)
- Tires for Red Cross vehicles (call for sizes)
- American flags (2) for flying outside chapter offices
- Retail price gun and tickets (printing 2 rows minimum)
- New desktop computers/laptop/printers

Volunteers Needed!
- Blood drive volunteer coordinator (Longview)
- Blood drive volunteers (for registration and serving refreshments)
- Instructors (instructor course Nov. 2, 5, 7, & 9)
- Office help
- Public affairs/communications help

Have you used GoodSearch yet?
GoodSearch is the search engine that donates 1 cent to the Southwest Washington chapter for every search you make on their Web site. Use GoodSearch (www.goodsearch.com) every time you need to search the Internet and raise money for the Red Cross at the same time.

At the GoodSearch first screen locate “Who do you GoodSearch for?” and type in “American Red Cross.” Then scroll down and click on “American Red Cross - SW Washington Chapter (Vancouver, WA).” It’s that easy.

American Red Cross Mission
The American Red Cross, a humanitarian organization led by volunteers and guided by its Congressional charter and the fundamental principles of the International Red Cross Movement, will improve the quality of human life, enhance self-reliance and concern for others and help people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies.