



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**

GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

**SEISMIC HAZARDS
SAFETY COMMISSION**

Department of Natural Resources
3354 College Road
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709-3707
Main: 907.451.5010
Fax: 907.451.5050

5 January 2015

Sent via email

Patricia L. Sutch, Executive Director
Western States Seismic Policy Council
801 K Street, Suite 1236
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Patti:

The Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission wishes to nominate the Alaska Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management's 'Alaska Shield 2014' response exercise for a WSSPC 2015 Award in Excellence. We have tried, but likely fallen short of capturing the shear magnitude and significance of the project in the attached form. In any case please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Happy New Year,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Scher".

Robert L. Scher, P.E.

Chair, Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission
907.522.1707; bscher@rmconsult.com

Attachment:

WSSPC Awards in Excellence, 2015 Nomination Form.

Cc: April Woolery, DNR-DGGS

WSSPC Awards in Excellence

2015 Nomination Form

Nominated Program, Project or Product:

Program, Project or Product Name: Alaska Shield 2014 Exercise		
Nominated Administering Organization: Alaska Department of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (DHS&EM)		
Contact Name/Title: Mike O'Hare, Deputy Director; Kathy Cavyell, Lead Exercise Planner		
Street: Alaska DHS&EM, P.O. Box 5750		
City: Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson	State: Alaska	Zip: 99505-5750
Telephone: 907-428-7000	Fax:	
Email: mike.ohara@alaska.gov ; kathy.cavyell@alaska.gov		

Nominating Individual or Group (must be nominated by someone outside the nominated organization)

Nominating Individual or Group: Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission		
Agency Affiliation: <i>administered by</i> Alaska Department of Natural Resources		
Street: 3354 College Road		
City: Fairbanks	State: Alaska	Zip: 99509-3707
Telephone: 907-451-5010	Fax:	
Email: <i>c/o April Woolery</i> april.woolery@alaska.gov		

Award Category (check all that apply):

	Educational Outreach (choose all that apply from the following 3 sub-categories)	X	Multi-jurisdictional Planning
//	Outreach to Business/Government		Mitigation Efforts
//	Outreach to General Public		Non-Profit Agency Efforts
//	Outreach to Schools		Research Projects
	Innovations	X	Response Plans/Materials
	Legislation		Use of New Technology

Evaluation of Program, Project or Product (use as much space below each question as needed)

- How long has the nominated program, project or product been operational?
 (Note: to be considered for an award, it must have been operational at least one year prior to nomination.): The 'Project Exercise Plan' was completed in April 2013; the 'exercise' was conducted between 27 March and 2 April 2014; and the 'recovery tabletop exercise' was conducted on 17 April 2014

2. What is the major purpose of the program, project, or product? What problem or issue was it designed to address?

The Alaska Shield 2014 exercise was the capstone event for the *White House*-directed 2014 cycle of national planning and preparedness exercises. The Alaska Shield exercise was a full-scale, live test of the ability of numerous State and Federal agencies (including the military), along with local government and non-government entities to respond to a devastating earthquake affecting a significant area (modeled after the M9.2 1964 Great Alaska Earthquake). This exercise was designed and conducted by the Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management (DHS&EM), with the support of FEMA Region X.

Alaska Shield 2014 was a linked exercise intended to improve Alaska's emergency response capacity (individual/organization/interagency), validate the State's, FEMA, Department of Defense, and local community response plans, test interagency coordination; and too explore recovery plans in the face of a catastrophic earthquake.

3. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program, project, or product.

The exercise was planned and conducted to evaluate four preparedness capabilities following a catastrophic earthquake:

- The capability of Alaska's *State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC)* to provide multi-agency coordination for incident management;
- Alaska's capability to provide multi-agency coordination for incident management while also serving in the Federal *Unified Command Group* at the *Joint Field Office (JFO)*;
- The SEOC's capability to coordinate *Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)*, federal, and private-sector resources; and,
- The recovery procedures outlined in Alaska's *Emergency Operations Plan*.

The Alaska Shield 2014 exercise took place in 13 Alaskan communities. Over 3,000 people participated in the exercise, including over 135 state, federal, private-sector, and non-governmental personnel working together in the SEOC and JFO, about 300 people working to test patient movement and coordination of medical treatment, and about 120 people participating in the recovery roundtable exercise.

See also response to items 11, 12 and 13.

4. What new and creative approach or method does the program, project, or product use to address an issue or problem?

See response to items 3, 11 and 12.

5. What was the start-up budget and source(s) of funding?

The ASHSC was not privileged to any budget/funding information.

6. What are the annual operational costs and source(s) of funding?

The ASHSC was not privileged to any operational cost information.

7. How many employees (full-time equivalent) work(ed) with the program or project, or on the product?

Over 3,000 people worked on the project, from planning through the exercise and recovery roundtable.

8. Where did this program, project or product idea originate?

Originated within the nominated organization

Adapted from another source

- Original source: Part of the congressionally mandated cycle of planning and preparedness events.
- How was it modified? Alaska Shield 2014 exercise was structured as the capstone event of all the federal events in 2014.

9. Has the program been fully implemented? Yes No

10. If the program has not been fully implemented, what actions remain to be taken? NA

11. Is there evidence that the program has been effective in achieving its stated purpose? Briefly summarize evaluations (pro and con) of how well the program has addressed the defined problem or issue.

Based on the DHS&EM's *Final After-Action Report/Improvement Plan* (see item 13), the major 'strengths' of the exercise included:

- The SEOC staff completed all of the tasks in their respective initial response checklists within one hour of the exercise earthquake. The SEOC also completed both an automatic and live tsunami warning call-down procedure.
- The local representatives of the participating federal entities (e.g. FEMA, DHS Infrastructure Protection, U.S. Army COE, and U.S.C.G) were successful in using their knowledge of Alaska and their organizations capabilities to provide critical resources and information in the early hours of the response.
- Participants noted the strong coordination and cooperation between the state and federal counterparts, and within the state and federal agency staffs.
- Even though it was not identified in the tested response plans, the exercise participants realized the benefits of co-locating 'mass care' shelters and the designated points of [supply/support] distribution (POD). This was found to reduce the logistical challenges and simplify planning the POD operations.
- The state and local communities were able to convey to the federal participants how different their respective recovery priorities would be from one another.

12. What limitations or obstacles were encountered? How were they overcome?

While the exercise demonstrated the fundamental effectiveness of Alaska's current Emergency Operations Plan, the exercise also revealed a number of weaknesses requiring further attention. Based on the DHS&EM's *Final After-Action Report/Improvement Plan* (see item 13), the major 'areas for improvement' revealed during the exercise included:

- The space constraints in the SEOC limited information sharing and slowed the overall response activities.
- The roles and responsibilities of the key liaison officers and agency representatives were unclear.
- It was difficult to maintain a common status and picture of the response operations around the state.
- Problems were identified in the federal web-based information management system designated for the exercise.
- The State's SEOC 'resource request process' was not suited to a catastrophic event, or for effectively tracking resources.
- Use of a 'Dual Status Command' system did not streamline the process for requesting military resources.
- Coordination of resource movements to and within Alaska was more difficult than anticipated.

Note that the DHS&EM's *Final After-Action Report/Improvement Plan* (see item 13) included a specific plan to address these issues, including specific corrective actions, the primary responsible organization, and schedule.

13. Additional information for the WSSPC Board to consider in evaluating the program, project or product. Supporting documentation, samples, or other items may be attached.

Copies of the DHS&EM's Alaska Shield 2014 Exercise Plan and Final After-Action Report/Improvement Plan can be requested from Kathy Cavyell, Lead Exercise Planner, DHS&EM at kathy.cavyell@alaska.gov

Submit the nomination form and all supporting documents to Executive Director Patricia Sutch at psutch@wsspc.org . Documentation that cannot be sent electronically may be mailed to: WSSPC, 801 K Street, Suite 1236, Sacramento, CA 95814. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at 916-444-6816. **Deadline is Monday January 5, 2015.**