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URBANA, IL (09/26/2012)(readMedia)-- The Illinois National Guard and nearly a dozen other emergency response organizations participated in the Illinois Emergency Management Agency's (IEMA) emergency response drill Sept. 24 to 26 at Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System in Urbana.

The drill focused on the reception, staging, onward movement and integration (RSOI) process for deploying response assets to a notional tornado disaster in Muscatatuck, Ind.

In Illinois, the exercise tested the RSOI process of preparing, deploying, tracking and redeploying assets to and from another state to provide relief efforts during a major disaster.

Any resources deployed to support the operation will go through the RSOI process to be accounted for and credentialed, said Trent Thompson of Chatham, the chief of operations with IEMA. This is to ensure they are mission-capable and can properly support the response effort.

Thompson said IEMA has used other means of tracking assets in the past, but this is the first exercise that will test the RSOI's efficiency for joint civilian and military agency response efforts.

"We spent the last couple months developing the concept to a standard operating guide and this is our first effort to exercise it," said Thompson.

The exercise integrates several relief organizations to include the Illinois National Guard, and state and local law enforcement, fire rescue and other emergency response organizations and support assets said Thompson. He said with so many organizations supporting the incident, it is critical IEMA is able to process them all through one system at one centralized location versus one location for each agency.

For this operation, representatives from the major commands in the Illinois National Guard were assisting with the in-processing of personnel going through the RSOI site, said Sgt. 1st

Class Mark Ballard of Athens, with the Illinois National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters in Springfield.

"This is the Guard's proof of concept, that we can work with the civilian agencies to manage that process of accounting for and pushing assets forward," said Ballard.

During the three-day exercise the Illinois National Guard worked with its civilian counterparts providing JRSOI support. The Illinois National Guard uses the RSOI process and was able to share and receive ideas and lessons learned with IEMA and other agencies during the exercise.

The Illinois National Guard is capable of assisting the in-processing, briefing and preparation of personnel and equipment prior to its deployment to an incident site or area of operation, said Col. Thomas Purple Jr., of Springfield, with the Illinois National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters in Springfield.

Purple said the RSOI process is key to the mission readiness of civilian and military assets in the case of a major emergency and the need for relief efforts.

"We have to go through this process before we send state personnel, civilian personnel or Soldiers to the incident site so we have good accountability," said Purple. "If we don't have this task done, there's the potential for losing sight of personnel or not knowing their capabilities."

Purple said this exercise better prepared military and civilian relief agencies how to effectively deploy in a joint effort in the case of a real world emergency.

"This is a unity of effort to make sure we're ready when the next disaster comes," said Purple.