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News Release NEWS RELEASE

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Eastern Washington Trains for Major Disaster *Red Cross, National Guard Simulate Toxic Release in Ellensburg*

[ELLENSBURG] June 1, 2009 – On Friday, June 5th, a toxic explosion will be unleashed at the Ellensburg Fairgrounds during the annual rodeo. National Guardsmen and emergency responders will work to decontaminate 35,000 exposed individuals (simulated) and a neighborhood of over 300 people will have to be evacuated to a Red Cross shelter.

This situation is what 400-500 emergency service members will face as they begin a major **disaster training exercise** in Ellensburg this weekend. The exercise will provide an opportunity for emergency response groups in eastern Washington to prepare and train for a large-scale disaster that would require extensive cooperation and collaboration from throughout the region.

WHAT: Eastern Washington Region-Wide Disaster Exercise (toxic explosion in Ellensburg, WA).

WHO: 400 – 500 members of seven Red Cross Chapters (including 40 local Red Cross volunteers), the National Guard, and first-responders including hospital staff, police and fire.

WHEN: 5:00 PM Friday, June 5th – 8:00 AM Sunday, June 7th

VISUAL OPPORTUNITIES: Mass shelter in school gym with large-scale feeding operations (open Friday night through Sunday morning), Red Cross Emergency Response Vehicles supporting first-responders in the field, and decontamination of “victims” at the fairgrounds.

INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES: One exclusive opportunity available to shadow Red Cross drill coordinator – visit shelter, decontamination areas, etc. Other opportunities available with volunteers working shelters, driving emergency response vehicles, etc.

Contact Megan Snow at 509-270-0195 for more information or to schedule an interview.

About the American Red Cross

The American Red Cross helps people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. Last year, some 500,000 volunteers and 35,000 employees helped victims of over 70,000 disasters; taught lifesaving skills to ten million participants; and helped U.S. service members separated from their families stay connected. Almost four million people gave blood through the Red Cross, the largest supplier of blood and blood products in the United States. The American Red Cross is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. An average of 90 cents of every dollar the Red Cross spends is invested in humanitarian services and programs. The Red Cross is not a government agency; it relies on donations of time, money, and blood to do its work.

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