

# Drill involves area law enforcement, agencies

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Naval Air Station Meridian conducted a mass casualty drill on Jan. 27 in preparation for its “Golden Wings Over Meridian” air show. The drill was designed to test coordination, communication and response to a simulated aircraft mishap occurring during an air show.

Working together for several months prior to the drill, Installation Training Team members representing various NAS departments and commands worked in conjunction with Lauderdale County Sheriff’s Department, Lauderdale Emergency Management, Newton County Emergency Management and Metro Ambulance Service.

“It takes a couple of months to prepare for an exercise like this,” said NAS Meridian Installation Training Coordinator Chuck Martin. “You do timeline events and you discuss all your issues. All the agencies and different departments talk about their objectives and what they would like to accomplish with the training. The preparation allows you to see what kind of issues you have prior to a real event.”

Navy and Marine students from Naval Technical Training Center and Marine Aviation Training Support Squadron One acted as spectators and casualties who were in the crowd of people who received injuries ranging from minor scrapes to severe broken bones and burns. Medical responders attended to each casualty as if they were in a real world situation – assessing, treating and then transporting the injured to hospitals.

“The firefighters and EMT’s were really addressing the triage tag that the student had on them,” Martin said. “You could tell the firefighters were really looking at what could possibly be a real injury.”

Newton County’s Regional Response Team was an important player in the drill. The team brought its Mobile Emergency Communications/Operations trailer to test the effectiveness of their system.

“Our job is to set up communications where everybody can talk to each other. What we’ve done here today is work with different agencies, whether it is a civilian agency communicating to a military agency, or vice versa,” said Ron Davis, emergency management director for the City of Newton and Task Force 2

Communications Officer. “As far as our part, it went very well.”

The communications/operations trailer is equipped with the ACU1000 audio box hooked up to computers that accept different audio equipment from various frequencies.

“(The equipment) makes life a lot easier than when we had people coming and going from the operations trailer just to talk to each agency,” added Davis. “It allows (agencies) the opportunity to utilize and test the equipment they already have.”

Lauderdale County E911 Director Jared Stanley said coordinating communications over the airwaves is a job that deals with a lot of complexities.

“It is difficult in the sense that there is a lot of traffic happening on the airwave at once,” Stanley said. “It’s a lot of coordination that has to happen and attention to detail.”

Martin was very pleased and satisfied with how the exercise went.

“It went real well,” he said, “and there’s always room for improvement. With all exercises and even real world scenarios, you can always improve on communications. That’s what we worked on the hardest.”