

News Release

2010 Olympics Coordination Center
Bellingham, WA

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FIRST TEST OF 2010 OLYMPICS COORDINATION CENTER A SUCCESS -“Shakedown Cruise” proves concept, reveals few problems-

(Bellingham, WA)- The first operational test of the combined 2010 Olympics Coordination Center (OCC) in Bellingham, Washington has been pronounced a success by officials at the local, state and federal levels.

The center was staffed around the clock for the first two days of the recent World Police and Fire Games in Vancouver, BC, and remained operational twelve hours each day through the end of the Games. Operations were intended to closely simulate what is anticipated during the Winter Olympics in February, 2010.

During the Olympics the center’s purpose will be to provide coordination and support for agencies responsible for emergency responses on the US side of the border.

“I’ve never seen a facility work so well from its first moment of operation,” said Major General Timothy Lowenberg, Adjutant General of the Washington National Guard and co-chair of the 2010 Olympics Security Committee. “There were virtually none of the glitches that typically occur when you open an interagency center of this sort.”

The center, near Bellingham Airport, will house representatives from local, state and federal agencies to provide coordination in the event of an emergency. It will not assume command of any incident responses, but will actively support agencies that do.

“In emergencies police officers, firefighters, paramedics and public works crews all respond heroically,” said Security Committee co-chair Laura Laughlin, special agent in charge of the Seattle FBI office. “The way we beef up security for the Olympics is not to change how our first responders do business, but rather to support them with enhanced coordination and communications capabilities.”

During the Police and Fire Games, agency representatives practiced the procedures they will use during the Olympics. Daily briefings were held so that everyone had a full picture of what other agencies were doing. They practiced coordinating agency activities

and making sure pertinent intelligence and actionable information was distributed to all those who required it.

There is no credible intelligence suggesting a threat on the US side of the border during the Olympics.

“We expect winter weather or highway collisions to be our biggest problems,” said Capt. Greg Miller of the Washington State Patrol who serves as one of four OCC Managers. “But we’ll be in place and ready should something more serious develop.”

During the Olympics, the center will operate 24 hours a day. A basic team will always be in place, with capacity to expand if an incident makes more robust staffing necessary.

Washington’s Congressional delegation played a significant role in obtaining the \$4.5 million necessary to turn a former warehouse into a well-equipped and fully functional coordination center.

“We couldn’t have done it without the support of Senator Patty Murray and Congressman Rick Larson,” said Lowenberg. “Even though the Olympics are in another country, our congressional leaders quite properly recognized that a threat to one country is a threat to both.”

The center will be periodically activated for additional training between now and the opening of the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympics.

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