

TERROR DRILL

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Staff Reporter

Emails and phone messages went out all across St. Charles Parish to alert residents that increased police activity was part of an intense training exercise involving a Homeland Security terror drill - no one was really in danger.

The training exercises began Tuesday, Feb. 12 at 8 a.m. and by mid-afternoon in Luling, in a field next to fire station, deputies and various other officials were in full gear and ready for a briefing on the next part of the training exercise.



Haz Mat suits are eerie looking but can save a responder's life.

"The fire departments are an important part of the team when it comes to drills like these," Reginald Gaubert, fire chief for the Hahnville Fire Department, told the Herald-Guide.

"Hahnville was not selected to participate in the drill this time, Luling was. But I do know that this is the first time anything has been done like this in St. Charles Parish."

Gaubert says drills like these are usually conducted in big cities, not rural areas.

A person who drove by the training activities in Luling said she was startled when she saw deputies in full gear.

"For a moment I forgot what was going on but then I remembered the voice message I got from the parish other night - I just thank God it wasn't the real thing," she told the Herald-Guide.

"I was scared at first, but at least I know we will be protected in case anything really bad happens," she said.

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Participants in the training exercise included members of the St. Charles Parish's Emergency Office of Preparedness, St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office, Fire Department-Luling, and the Louisiana State University-National Center for Bio Medical Research and Training and various other governmental agencies. The bio medical center's pur-

pose is to "to help America prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from acts of domestic and international terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, and high-consequence events through teaching, training, technical assistance, and research."

Officials weren't available to comment as the drill continued past the Herald-Guide's press time,

But a sheriff's department source privately said, "Things are going real smooth. I'd say the drill has been a good one and is moving forward without a hitch."

Questions about this article? Comments on a certain topic? Contact staff reporter Shonna Riggs at 985-758-2795 or send an email to her at editor@heraldguide.com.