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LASER dishes out crisis Agencies train for worst-case scenarios

By Stacy Temple
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The sound of shots echoed off classroom walls at West Monroe High School Wednesday afternoon as local law enforcement officers investigated a mock school shooting.

The "shooting" was one of several scenarios acted out as officers participated in Law Enforcement Active Shooter Emergency Response Training, also called LASER Training.

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Representatives with the Louisiana State University National Center for Biomedical Research and Training instructed the class, which teaches officers response tactics and how to work and communicate together in the event of a real crisis.

The Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office sponsored the event. Future school resource officers and members of the Special Weapons and Tactics Team and Special Crime Apprehension Team attended.

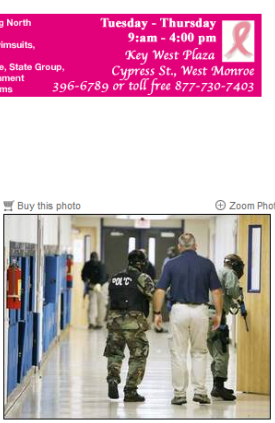
Officers from Monroe and West Monroe police also took part in the training, along with officers from Morehouse, Franklin, Lincoln

Madison, Jackson, Union, Tensas and Richland parishes and the University of Louisiana at Monroe Police Department and Louisiana Tech police.

Each participant wore protective gear and used a Simunition blue-colored weapon that shoots rubber bullets, to make the scenarios more realistic.

At one point, officers bounded down the hall across from the library, checking classrooms and searching for alleged shooters. When officers found the "suspect," they exchanged gunfire.

Officials said the purpose of the training is for officers to return to their respective agencies to train officers who could not make it because they were on duty.



Terrance Armstard/The News-Star

Law enforcement officials from northeast Louisiana participate in hands-on tactical training at West Monroe High School. The course, titled "Law Enforcement Active Shooter Emergency Response," is sponsored by the National Center for Biomedical Research and Training Academy of Counter-Terrorist Education at Louisiana State University and involves classroom training and scenario-based exercises, on Wednesday, July 11, 2007.

INFORMATION

For information about the Louisiana State University National Center for Biomedical Research and Training, visit www.ncbrt.lsu.edu.

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"The theory is for us to know the same basic training when we deploy it," said Maj. Dewaine Lenard of the Ouachita Parish Sheriff's Office personnel training division.

Lenard said patrol officers are usually the first to arrive at the scene of a crime, and if a shooter was actually at West Monroe High School, the closest agency would respond, whether it was West Monroe police or the sheriff's office.

"Theoretically, it could be a state trooper passing by," Lenard said. "We all don't wear the same uniform, but we could deploy the same tactical training."

The training started Tuesday and will conclude today. It consists of classroom training at North Delta Training Academy in West Monroe and tactical training at the school.

Sgt. Chris Tolbird, a member of the OPSO SCAT team, said the training is necessary following the Virginia Tech tragedy.

"This is training for an active shooting situation," Tolbird said. "In case someone comes into a school, business or the mall and starts shooting, we will all be on the same page. Everybody can go back to their agencies to train, and we will all be trained in the same way."

In the fall, five uniformed Ouachita Parish Sheriff's deputies will walk the halls of five schools in an effort to promote school safety and avoid the situations that played out in the halls of West Monroe High on Wednesday.

Ouachita Sheriff Richard Fewell has placed the five deputies at West Monroe, Ouachita Parish, Sterlington and West Ouachita high schools and Ouachita Parish Alternative Center.

The school-resource officers completed basic training last month and participated in the LASER training.

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