



STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS
DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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**Testing Wisconsin's Emergency Communications
"SIMCOM-Vital Connection 2015" in Winnebago County**

(Oshkosh) – Communications are critical during a disaster. Getting information and data to the right people at the right time can save lives. That's why the Wisconsin National Guard along with Wisconsin Emergency Management, Winnebago County Emergency Management and Sheriff's Office hosted a multi-agency communications exercise.

State Interoperable Mobile Communications Exercise or "SIMCOM-Vital Connection 2015" was held May 5-7 at the Sunnyview Expo Center in Oshkosh. The exercise tested Mobile Emergency Communications from more than 30 federal, state, tribal, local governments and volunteer agencies. The goal is to develop relationships and understand the capabilities of other agencies and their equipment before they are needed in a real emergency. Specific operations being tested this year include data sharing, radio frequency bridging and patching, and network failures.

"Testing communication interoperability capabilities with outside resources before an actual disaster event occurs is critical to ensure the highest level of response," said Linda Kollmann, Winnebago County Emergency Management Director.

United States Northern Command participated in SIMCOM with communication assets from the 914th Communications Squadron as part of their "Vital Connection" exercise, which was incorporated into this year's event. The Wisconsin National Guard's Situational Awareness Team, or WINGSAT, also joined in. "It is always challenging to do inter-agency communications", said Staff Sergeant Johnny Ferreira with the Wisconsin Army National Guard. "This is a good opportunity to test our platform."

This is the second year that SIMCOM is hosted by Winnebago County. It is the first time the event has been held over a three day period which included training from some of the nation's top radio experts.

SIMCOM 2016 will be held in Neillsville which is located in Clark County.

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