

Disaster preparedness training tested at PGA event

Security already was heightened in preparation for the 68th Senior Professional Golf Association (PGA) Championship, May 24 through 27. Suddenly, you hear an explosion. Is it terrorism or a tragic accident? How does one react?

The security and first responder personnel on Kiawah Island, who had completed disaster preparedness and emergency response training, surveyed the scene, stabilized and evacuated the injured, and continued to prepare for the thousands of visitors who arrived for the tournament. That was the scene May 18 when an explosion in the kitchen area of the new Kiawah Ocean Course Clubhouse injured four construction workers.

Between April 30 and May 3, disaster preparedness experts sponsored by the South Carolina Area Health Education Consortium (South Carolina AHEC) conducted two training exercises with eight personnel from the Kiawah Island Safety and Security department, St. John's Fire and Rescue, Roper Life Link, Charleston County Sheriffs Office and security personnel from Kiawah Island Homeowners Association. The training exercises dealt with preparing for mass casualty incidents, and coincidentally, used the scenario of a propane gas explosion at a concession booth as an example of an incident that could occur during the tournament.

Michael Shirey, a trainer for the South Carolina AHEC Disaster Preparedness and Response Training Network (DPRT) and Charleston County EMS manager, conducted the training sessions.

"The creepy part is we just did the mass casualty incident training at Kiawah," Shirey said. "Kiawah Island Security reported being thrilled to have had the training they needed to respond to the incident."

"The recent training certainly aided our response as we assisted those in need," said Yvonne Johnstone, director of security at Kiawah Island Golf Resort. "It is important that our staff is fully prepared to deal with any incident."

The injured workers were quickly evaluated by those who used the skills they had recently acquired during the training program, and were transported to MUSC and the Joseph M. Sill Burn Center at Doctor's Hospital of Augusta. Of the eight personnel who participated in the training, six were called to respond to the incident.

The South Carolina AHEC and its Lowcountry Center DPRT coordinator, Barbara Burden, helped provide training to the Kiawah personnel prior to this unfortunate event, according to David Garr, M.D., SC AHEC executive director. "It appears the staff responded in a most effective and efficient manner, and it is my understanding that the training they received was very helpful in this emergency situation," he said.

The DPRT Network is a collaboration of many partners in South Carolina that addresses the training needs of health care and first responder professionals so they can recognize and respond to bioterrorism and public health emergency events. The DPRT Network was refunded in 2005 through a three-year grant from the

Health Resources and Services Administration to provide exactly the type of training utilized on Kiawah Island.

For information, visit <http://www.scahec.net/prepares>.

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