

Medical Services have a Mock-Accident

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The alarm sounded.

It was the morning of September 11, 2008 when students, faculty, and administrative personnel were forced to evacuate the Jesus T. Piñero building, which is home to the Department of Agricultural Sciences, at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez (UPRM).

The cause of the evacuation was a mock-accident that was carried out by UPRM's Department of Medical Services. The purpose of the simulation was to fulfill a state Health Department requirement, in order to be able to renovate the UPRM's Department of Medical Service's certificate, which allows them to be accredited as a center of treatment and diagnosis.

As explained by the director of Medical Services, Rosie Calderon, the Department of Medical Services must have no less than two mock-accidents of external disasters a year, to conform with state Health Department's requirements. She indicated that on this particular occasion the simulation involved a chemical explosion-chloroform and sulfuric acid- that resulted in burns as well as contamination of the Agricultural Sciences Lab and the students involved.

“Approximately six wounded patients impacted by chemical contamination were attended, twelve patients had to be transferred to Perea Hospital, the others were attended here,” Calderon said referring to the mock-accident.

Calderon stated that even though the event was planned, it also contained the element of surprise, a real health emergency in the Civil Engineering building. They managed to cover both situations successfully.

UPRM's Committee for Emergencies, presided by José A. Frontera, acting Dean of Administration, organized the mock-accident, which lasted a little more than 20 minutes in duration. He explained that they counted on the collaboration of other UPRM departments such as the Health and Security Office, and UPRM Security. Other collaborators included Perea Hospital and Mayagüez City Fireman.

Frontera added that UPRM fulfilled all of the requirements in the simulation, which demonstrates that the University is prepared to handle emergency situations.

“The evaluation of UPRM personnel, as well as those who collaborated in the event, reflected a 98.5% success rate, which is a very high percentage,” said Frontera.

He added that in future mock-accidents they hope to stages simulations of fires, earthquakes, gas leaks, and car and heavy machinery accidents.