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# Press Release

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Contact: DHS S&T Press Office at (202) 254-2385

**DHS VIRTUAL USA PLAYS KEY ROLE IN SUPPORTING  
CUSEC STATES, PARTNERS IN 2011 NATIONAL LEVEL EXERCISE**  
*Virtual USA Participants Test Information-Sharing Capabilities During Mock Earthquake*

WASHINGTON— The U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Science and Technology (S&T) Directorate today announced that Virtual USA played a key role in supporting the Central U.S. Earthquake Consortium (CUSEC) states and partners participating in this week’s 2011 National Level Exercise. During the exercise, participating CUSEC member states and partners leveraged Virtual USA to discover and share information throughout the region during a mock earthquake event in the New Madrid Seismic Zone.

Since January, Virtual USA has assisted the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee, as well as FEMA Regions IV and VI, in developing technology, processes, and governance structures to enable secure information sharing across jurisdictional and disciplinary boundaries. These capabilities, demonstrated during the NLE, enabled state agencies to share and view real-time, trusted data in their own existing systems while continuing to build trusted relationships among the first response community at all levels.

“Participation in the NLE provided a unique opportunity for states to test and become more familiar with Virtual USA and its capabilities during an earthquake scenario,” said Dr. Bob Griffin, Director of S&T’s First Responders Group. “The success of Virtual USA and other data-sharing initiatives rests not only on technical capabilities but also on the value placed on relationships within the first response community at all levels.”

During the NLE, the CUSEC states and partners identified seven common data layers they agreed would be most critical when responding to an earthquake, and shared this information via Virtual USA. These included real-time status updates from emergency operations centers, hospitals, shelters, communications and power facilities, major highways and roads, as well as casualty reports.

A collaborative effort among DHS S&T, other DHS entities, and local and state emergency management agencies, Virtual USA improves information sharing between emergency management agencies and other partners— allowing better decisions to be made based on more complete and real-time information.

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