



Physical Anthropology Section – 2008

H35 Realism in Simulation Training: Examples of Mass Grave Excavation and Mass Fatality Incident Mortuary Simulation Exercises

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have an increased understanding of the role that realism plays in simulation training and exercises and how different levels of realism can be achieved.

This presentation will impact the forensic community by increasing their understanding about the importance of realism at certain stages in training and exercise programs and how different levels can be achieved to serve different purposes.

Following on from Professor Margaret Cox's presentation entitled "*Experiential Education: the use of Simulations in Forensic Anthropology and Archaeology*," this presentation will focus on the important role that realism plays in simulation training and exercises. Different levels of realism can often be achieved relatively easily and with a minimum of extra effort and often without negative impact on budget. In most cases, the correct and most appropriate level of realism can be achieved by combining the expertise of experienced educators and experienced field practitioners.

This presentation will first outline the role that different levels of realism can and should play at different stages in training and exercise programs. It will continue to explore the relevance such appropriate levels of realism and how they can benefit the trainee.

Using two main examples, the methodology of applying realistic scenarios to simulation training will be demonstrated and how they can be achieved. It is not just a question of making scenarios as realistic as possible. At some stages in the training process, very high levels of realism can have a negative impact such as information overloading or taking emphasis away from basic procedural concepts.

When realistic scenarios need to be developed, a number of criteria needs to be observed: the scenarios must be relevant to the trainees; the environment in which the training takes place must match the scenario; the prior level of professional knowledge of the trainees must be incorporated into the training; and the 'realistic scenario' has to be truly based on actual and real experience from field operation. It cannot be stressed enough that whatever realistic element is introduced to a training and exercise program, it needs to be relevant to the trainees. This means that the team that plans and carries out the program is either knowledgeable with respect to the trainees' background or that they seek such advice prior to planning the training. Training people in scenarios that is not relevant to their environment is rarely justifiable and most often a waste of precious resources.

The presentation will finally look at the possibility of incorporating research into such training programs. Since they are designed to simulate reality, a number of questions that confronts forensic practitioners can be addressed during simulation exercises. Not to do so is again a waste of resources and opportunity.

Realism is a powerful tool that can be used in simulation training, but only if it is used at the right time, in a relevant context and by experienced educators and practitioners.

Training in Mass Fatality Response, Simulated Mass Graves, Simulated Temporary Mortuaries