

SAVE THE DATES!

Key upcoming statewide preparedness events

- **March 21, 2016** **Health Care Coalition Meeting**
- **April 11-15, 2016** **Statewide Full-Scale Mass Dispensing Exercise**
- **September 8, 2016** **HHS Region 1 Medical Countermeasures Summit**
- **October 13-19, 2016** **Governor's Statewide Emergency Preparedness Planning Exercise (EPPI)**
- **October 24-28, 2016** **Mass Fatality Regional Exercise**

More information and specific details will be shared when confirmed.



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Raul Pino, M.D., M.P.H.
Acting Commissioner

Readiness

Response

Report

Office of Public Health
Preparedness and Response
(OPHPR)

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK: JONATHAN BEST

Last year was an exciting time from the standpoint of positioning our organization to address the challenges of healthcare coalitions. In the middle of a new contracting process and reimbursement strategy we were faced with Ebola. The response of all of our partners in the state represented a demonstration of the hard work we had done. Over 200 individuals were activity monitored. Local Health received prompt compensation for these monitoring activities. Hospitals exercised and developed plans for reception of individuals whom might require medical treatment. We continue both regionally and on a state level to increase our emerging infections response. In discussions with our surrounding Region 1 states it was apparent that the way we reacted we were better prepared and organized than many others. That is something everyone gets credit for. Thank you.

With the coming of the New Year, like the seasons, some changes are upon us. We have plans for a very active year. On the agenda are a Statewide Medical Countermeasures Exercise, and a Region 1 Medical Countermeasures meeting with Federal agencies, all New England states and New York. In October we will be hosting a Regional Mass Fatality Exercise that also will involve Federal agencies, New York, New Jersey and surrounding states. We have participated in these exercises for the last 6 years. This is the first time Connecticut will host. We invite you to attend participate in this exercise or the accompanying training sessions. As more information becomes available, we will distribute it.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK: JONATHAN BEST

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Developments of additional programs are in progress. To identify a few, they include, Medical Surge, Scarce Medical Resources, Baseline infection training for first responders, and Mass Casualty management system development.

We continue to work with our partners in developing strategies to meet their deliverables. We are committed to our mutual success. With all this work the need to increase the capacity of the Office of Public Health Preparedness and response becomes obvious. To accomplish that task we are in the process of moving personnel around to give them greater experience in areas with which they are not as familiar. Change can make us uncomfortable; however in order to continue with a high level of service and response, it is essential. We will keep you advised as changes occur.

It is my hope that all of us will continue to work together as strategic partners in advancing public health preparedness in our states. Thank you for all your hard work last year. We look forward to continuing our progress going forward.

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EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Wendy Furniss and Renee Holota

EMS Plans: The Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS) has just published its second “*Local EMS Planning Toolkit*” based upon its first years’ experience under the newly expanded Local Emergency Medical Services Plan (LEMSP) legislation (P.A. 14-217). In this updated document, the OEMS provides, among other things, a more robust checklist of EMS system components and more detailed guidance for performance measures, and is accompanied by a sample local EMS plan based upon a suburban model. The document is accessible on the DPH website, www.ct.gov/dph: keyword “Local EMS Planning”

Safety in Hazardous Conditions: On November 19, 2015, DPH approved the agency’s “Policy Guidance - Operations during Hazardous Conditions”. These guidelines seek to ensure the safety of patients and responders during severe weather events. It is also available on the DPH OEMS webpage.

Connecticut Emergency Medical Advisory Board (CEMSAB): Greg Allard from American Ambulance is the new Chair of CEMSAB, succeeding John Quinlavin from St. Francis Hospital.

COMMUNICATIONS & RESOURCES

Elizabeth Conklin

Crisis Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) training: DPH is offering a free one-day Crisis Emergency & Risk Communication (CERC) training. This training, developed at the CDC, features components of drafting messages, using social media during a crisis, and spokesperson development. It is a strong foundation for new staff, community partners, or those who simply want a refresher. Training dates start in March with several dates and locations around the state, and more being added.

For information and to register go to CT Train: www.ct.train.org. Course #1061289

Resources: As part of our Ebola Supplemental grant ,DPH is creating an educational video series designed to 1) educate the public about Ebola and other emerging infectious diseases and, 2) assist health professionals who conduct monitoring of these diseases. Videos will be in English, Spanish, and French with complimentary written material. Project completion is anticipated in late spring. At that time we will inform you how to access this resource on the DPH website.

DPH’s social media reached over 10,000 followers on Twitter, further expanding our social media presence. Follow us at CTDPH on Facebook or Twitter to stay informed and to help disseminate key preparedness and other public health information to the public and to community partners.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES & EMERGING PATHOGENS

Alan Siniscalchi

Seasonal Influenza: Although seasonal influenza activity has been increasing in January, it remains relatively low in Connecticut and throughout the nation. An increasing percentage of influenza A (2009 H1N1) isolates have been identified in Connecticut. This year's influenza vaccine appears to be a good match to circulating flu viruses and we encourage everyone six months or older to be vaccinated.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI): The DPH has been actively involved in a state-wide task force to help prepare Connecticut for possible HPAI outbreaks in poultry that had impacted central and western US states in early 2015. Extensive testing of wild birds for HPAI isolates is ongoing. Fortunately, no new US poultry outbreaks have occurred, to date.

Ebola: During 2015 the DPH staff and local health department partners had conducted active monitoring of numerous asymptomatic travelers returning from East African countries having ongoing Ebola outbreaks, while efforts continued to improve hospital preparedness. The WHO announced in early January that no new Ebola cases have been detected for 42 days in Guinea. In response to this finding the CDC has notified state health departments that they no longer need to conduct active monitoring of travelers from this region.

MEDICAL COUNTERMEASURES OPERATIONAL READINESS REVIEW (MCM ORR)

Anna Sigler

MCM ORR is the new assessment tool from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that examines various capabilities related to planning and operational components of medical countermeasures response at both the State and local levels. The State completed its ORR in October and has since produced and distributed documents covering FAQs, citation formatting, and documentation organization (best practice).

DPH began conducting local MCM ORR assessments of the 41 mass dispensing areas (MDAs) in the State on November 3rd, 2015. As of January 11th, 2016, 10 of these local reviews have been conducted. Though the initial implementation has been challenging, each of the 10 MDAs has successfully completed the review process, providing new insight regarding the many strengths of our local MDAs and also highlighting areas where the state can provide better guidance. The review process will continue through the end of May 2016 with a total of 39 reviews to be conducted by the State and 2 to be conducted by the CDC. Ultimately the CDC will be aggregating the data provided to them to produce an overall picture of the operational readiness of the State of CT. The summary report is expected to be released during the next budget period (July 1, 2016 - June 30, 2017).

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

David Kallander

Response to unusual chemical and radiological incidents: The recent months have brought some unusual chemical and radiological incidents highlighting the need for planning and diligence. The CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) responded to a radiological incident after a box of radium needles from the early 1900's was discovered on a back porch at a house in Middlebury, left over from a former doctor's office. The box was emitting significant amounts of radiation and theoretically could have exposed residents walking near it. DPH worked with DEEP radiological staff to assess the occupational health and regulatory issues associated with the incident.

DPH also followed-up on an unusual chemical exposure case in which a liquor store in Mansfield had a release of chloropicrin (tear gas) from an old safe that was being used on the property. A glass tube containing chloropicrin placed near the locking mechanism was used as an antitheft device in some antique safes. DPH provided technical advice to DEEP on safe air levels and gave recommendations for cleaning the surfaces of liquor bottles that were in the store. DPH also contacted the Locksmith Association of Connecticut to discuss tear gas booby-traps on old safes and how often they are encountered.

GRANTS & CONTRACTS

Sandra Ferreira and Diana Lopez Villegas

As we close the first half of the Fiscal Year, DPH OPHPR is pleased to report contractors are submitting timely program reports that indicate benchmarks are being met specific to deliverables. We thank our HPP and PHEP contract partners for working together to submit all required information to fully execute their contracts.

Our local health partners are reminded that program and fiscal reports are due February 15, 2016. Our contractors are encouraged to contact our staff with any program questions. For questions specific to the UCOA Workbook, Anthony Nwankwo is the contact person in our Contracts Unit. His contact information is as follows:

- Telephone number: (860) 509-7428 Email: anthony.nwankwo@ct.gov

In March and April 2016 the focus will be on the following: 1) to confirm contractors are on track with spending plans to avoid refunds at the end of the fiscal year; and, 2) to confirm all reporting requirements are being met to avoid any delays in disbursement of funds.

TRAININGS & EXERCISES

Alan Boudreau and Mike Mozzer

Trainings:

The Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response will conduct an Inventory Management and Tracking System (IMATS) Workshop intended for mass dispensing area (MDAs). The workshop will be held on two dates, the first is Wednesday, February 24, 2016 at the CT Department of Developmental Services computer Lab in the basement of 61 Woodland Street, Hartford. In case of inclement weather, sessions will take place on Thursday, February 25. The second workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, March 23, 2016 at Middlesex Community College, Room 308, Wheaton Hall, 100 Training Hill Road, Middletown, CT. In case of inclement weather, the sessions will take place on Thursday, March 24, 2016. Each date will have two workshop sessions: the morning session will be from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM and the afternoon session from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. These workshop sessions are posted on CT Train, Course Number: 1061546.

All attendees must bring their IMATS log-in credentials. If you have not as yet signed up for IMATS credentials, please contact your MDA's Lead. IMATS users are reminded to bring their Log-in ID, Password, Local Distribution Site (LDS) information (LDS Name, Address, POC name and contact information). If you have any questions please contact Alan Boudreau (860) 509-7608.

Exercises:

On January 4, 2016, DPH formally kicked off planning for the 2016 Statewide Medical Countermeasures Full-Scale Exercise, scheduled to take place April 11-15, 2016. The January 4th meeting of the Exercise Planning Team at the Board of Regents in Hartford brought together stakeholders and subject matter experts from numerous federal, state, municipal and private-sector organizations and agencies that will play an active role in the five day exercise. During this initial planning meeting, OPHPR staff provided participants with an overview of the exercise, with planning considerations, content development, proposed exercise timelines and a proposed planning schedule.

The scope of this exercise will focus on three primary components: DPH's ability to receive, stage, store, apportion and distribute medical countermeasures received from the federal government in response to a public health emergency; the ability of regional mass dispensing areas (MDAs) to receive assets from the state and distribute them to municipalities; and the ability of cities and towns to activate and operate points-of-dispensing (PODs) in their communities to dispense medical countermeasures to the general public. The next planning meeting will be in February.