Public Health Emergency Preparedness Into Action

What’s the story?
Purpose of project

- NPHIC/ASTHO project on behalf of CDC to explore “Preparedness into Action”
- Demonstrate how Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) preparedness activities translate into a more effective emergency response
- Collect information about “real life” events (stories)
- Showcase PHEP web links and online products/materials
Methods

• NPHIC conducted environmental scan for state and local public health emergency preparedness websites using search terms:
  • [Name of ] state/local Department of Health Public Health Emergency Preparedness;
  • [Name of ] state/local Department of Health emergency preparedness;
  • [Name of ] state/city emergency preparedness

• Scrutinized pages for helpful products/materials and identified categories
  • General preparedness; preparedness resources for young people; resources for special needs individuals; and other preparedness resources
Key informant interviews

- Conference calls with NPHIC members from all 10 HHS regions
- Voting members (state health department communications directors or designee), risk communicators, individual government members (other state local health department communications staff)
  - About 75 participants in all
- Semi-structured interviews based on discussion guide reviewed and approved by ASTHO and CDC
Questions

- What is the extent of emergency communications training for communications staff?
- What health emergencies are most likely to occur?
- What emergency communications preparedness activities pay biggest dividends in responding to events?
- What are examples of preparedness activities that worked (or did not)?
- What are some risk communication promising practices?
- Are individual and family preparedness materials really useful?
Extent of CERC training

- Very senior members from some state and local health departments received emergency communications training many years ago—usually in a Face to Face session
- A few junior or new staff have taken CDC’s CERC online course
  - Travel restrictions impede F2F CERC training
  - In-state training might alleviate that
- Webinars preferred over online course (more interactivity)
What type of emergency will most commonly produce public health consequences in ALL regions of the United States?
Most likely emergencies

- Flooding most likely severe weather event/natural disaster to occur across all regions
- Also snow/ice storms, windstorms, wildfires
- Environmental threats
  - Chemical spills (e.g. derailments)
  - Water contamination from manufacturing or naturally occurring threats
  - Radiation scares
- Biological threats
  - Local outbreaks just as challenging as exotic threats because of their frequency
POLL

• What preparedness efforts pay the biggest dividends when an emergency occurs?
What preparedness efforts pay off?

- JIC, CERC, and ICS training—not just for DOH staff but for non-emergency communications staff in your department and people in other agencies the health department will be working with

- Strong social media policy in place
  - Purchase internet domains in advance (requires surveillance of the environment)

- Template social media messages, press releases, infographics prepared ahead of time
  - Cleared in advance!

- Establishing prior relations with partners and stakeholders, especially opinion leaders
Almost every state health department and many local health agencies have developed information for individual and family preparedness. It is difficult to measure whether products are effective. One can measure website hits, other analytics, but it is hard to know to what extent people use them during an emergency response. It is helpful if preparedness partners assist in distribution. Clinical application—providers find them useful. More interest in materials “Just in Time.”
Stories

- NPHIC members shared experiences in responding to real world events
- Biological, chemical, radiological events, and natural disasters
  - Example: Baton Rouge flooding and establishing medical special needs shelters
- Risk communication: played an important part in the response. A press release announced the opening of the MSMS on the LSU campus and the state health department followed up with targeted information
  - Information was provided on vaccine recommendations for flood response, including Health Care Providers/Workers in Medical Special Needs Shelters
- The agency developed a special “Emergency” landing page on its website as a one-stop-resource for information. This included guidance for anyone seeking to get a refill of their prescription medications, for people returning home and dealing with mold, and for those wishing to be a medical or shelter volunteer
- A separate communications strategy was developed to reach individuals who had been displaced and were living in general shelters
- Working with the American Red Cross – who printed and distributed a daily news sheet to those in the shelters – LDH provided content that was specific to this audience
Stories

- Biological “threat
  - Example: Seoul virus in DuPage County, IL. A Hanta virus-like disease carried by rats
- At-risk population was primarily rat breeders/pet rat owners/fanciers
- Not a risk to the general population

- DuPage County DOH worked with CDC and state DOH and decided on a targeted approach
  - Wanted to avoid stigma
- NO general press outreach but worked directly with breeders/sellers to get out information on the disease/risk/prevention
- Using empathy, won over owners whose pets were infected and had to be euthanized
  - Turned them into “third party verifiers”
• Chemical event  
  • Example: Train derailment in Gloucester Co. NJ

• Sent thousands of pounds of toxic vinyl chloride into Mantua Creek

• Triggered a multiple agency response: federal, state, local and CORPORATE communications
  • Challenge: Many voices, one message???

• Easier said than done: Corporate spokespeople had no risk communication training

• NIMS protocols were followed, Army Corp of Engineers took lead

• Gloucester County DOH
  • Assisted in the development of talking points
  • Assisted in Unified Command
  • Supported a response website by helping to write questions and answers based on inquiries received through an internet portal

• Everybody stayed in their lane!
• Radiation event
  • Example: impact of Fukushima nuclear power plant accident on West coast U.S.

• A tidal wave of public panic, while actual risk for the United States was very small

• Never a real threat—a COMMUNICATIONS emergency
  • Communications office arranged for film crews to see rooftop air sampling equipment and interview radiation protection professionals

• Emergency messaging was posted on the website, and updated daily

• DOH used ICS structure to respond to requests media requests, coordinated with other state and federal agencies, and sent staff to coastal communities to address city and county officials and the public

• News releases and media advisories were issued and social media employed to drive traffic to the website for more information

• Concern remains on anniversary date
Stories

- Individual and Family Preparedness
  - **Example: Massachusetts Know. Plan. Prepare Campaign**

- Challenge: How do we engage people in an abstract concept (emergency preparedness) about which most of them don’t spend a lot of time thinking?

- What can we do to motivate people to take action and get themselves and their families more prepared?

- Developed tote bags as a delivery mechanism for preparedness materials, especially during National Preparedness Month

- Bags were a huge success with community partners—used as incentives, teaching tools

- Direct distribution was key—not many orders from general public but had to limit distribution to 50 bags each for partners
Preparedness materials

• Available online—developed by state and local health departments
  • https://www.nphic.org/phep-commresources

• “Curated” in 4 categories: general preparedness, resources for young people, resources for special needs individuals, “other” (resources for the business community, severe weather shelf kit, smart phone App, CERC toolkit adapted for use by local health departments

• Able to be adapted
General preparedness materials

- **READY IN 3 (MISSOURI)**
  [http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/readyin3/](http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/readyin3/)
  - Endorsed by the ARC, the MO State Emergency Management Agency and MO Office of Homeland Security, Ready in 3 focuses on three steps you can take to prepare for many kinds of emergencies

- **GET 10 (ALABAMA)**
  - Get 10 is a public education program that breaks down information on preparedness into simple, eye-catching graphics with appealing characters that engage people with easy-to-remember messages

- **PUBLIC HEALTH WILDFIRE COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT (MONTANA)**
  - Developed to provide local health departments with a strategy to engage the public with smoke information to protect health and safety during wildfires

- **EMERGENCY KIT VIDEOS (ALBANY COUNTY, NY)**
  - Professionally produced set of :30 second videos urges families to make an emergency kit and make sure it includes the medications they need if they are forced to evacuate their homes
Preparedness materials for young people

- **I’M NOT SCARED, I’M PREPARED (COLORADO)**  
  https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/i%E2%80%99m-not-scared-when-i%E2%80%99m-prepared  
  - A resource offering preparedness activities for kindergarten and first grade students, this program teaches children to not be scared by helping them start being prepared

- **WE’RE NOT SCARED. WE’RE PREPARED (HAWAII)**  
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tkONiY5eDSI  
  - A 3:00 minute music video is performed by the Honolulu Theatre for Youth who take a Hip-Hop approach to inform young people about preparedness steps they should take to protect themselves and their families in an emergency

- **FRED THE PREPAREDNESS DOG (KANSAS)**  
  - Fred is a real dog and the mascot for the Kansas Department of Health’s severe weather preparedness efforts. Fred and his owner help demonstrate what goes into a severe weather preparedness kit and talk to students about how to be ready and prepare for severe weather events. This link is for a “Fred the Dog” coloring book
Preparedness materials for special needs individuals

- **FREE and LOW COST IDEAS (NEW YORK STATE)**
  - This low literacy brochure suggests no-cost or low-cost ways to help families to make a plan and have what they need on hand for emergencies

- **JUST B.R.E.A.T.H.E (ILLINOIS)**
  [http://breatheasyil.info/](http://breatheasyil.info/)
  - This website is designed to help people be better prepared for power outage emergencies, particularly, populations that are medically dependent on electrical power and the utilities that provide service to them

- **5 TIPS FOR PRESCRIPTION PREPARENESS (NEW YORK CITY)**
  - Explains how disaster can affect your ability to access prescription medications and offers common sense advice to help you be prepared
Other preparedness materials

- **SEVERE WEATHER SHELF KIT (ONEIDA COUNTY NEW YORK)**
  [http://www.ocgov.net/oneida/sites/default/files/health/HealthAlerts/storm.pdf](http://www.ocgov.net/oneida/sites/default/files/health/HealthAlerts/storm.pdf)
  Templates, fact sheets and talking points for severe weather events including flooding, snowstorms/ice storms, extreme cold, extreme heat, thunderstorms, tornadoes and hurricanes are included.

- **CRISIS AND EMERGENCY RISK COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT FOR LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS (CALIFORNIA)**
  This kit provides detailed resource materials to assist in effectively managing and communicating during an emergency or crisis. The Toolkit is specifically designed to support writing and implementing a crisis communication plan.
Where to find these...

- NPHIC has added these links to our Incident Communication Resource Library [https://www.nphic.org/nphicicsearch](https://www.nphic.org/nphicicsearch)
- It’s filled with tools your colleagues in public health communication have used during real public health crises or emergency situations. The library includes materials on general preparedness, hurricanes, extreme weather, radiation, West Nile Virus, etc. You will find news releases, brochures, fact sheets, radio and TV PSAs and websites - the same types of tools you create for your agency
NPHIC members are invited to attend the Advance Knowledge Track on August 14, 2017 in Atlanta, GA (one day prior to the National Conference on Health Communications, Marketing and Media)

- **Attendance is FREE for NPHIC members**

- Featured speaker is Dr. Vincent Covello, global expert on health risk communication who will present *Science-based Risk, Crisis, and High Stakes Communication. For Real. For Now.*

- Dr. Covello will help you apply the principles of risk communication to today’s realities, opportunities and challenges

- Other presenters include veteran strategic communications and marketing strategist Richard Sheehe who will show how to develop messages and maintain consistently strong brand integrity in both good times and bad, and live streaming expert Kerry Shearer

- **Openings are limited. Sign up soon!**
  [https://www.nphic.org/conferences/2017/nphic17-akt](https://www.nphic.org/conferences/2017/nphic17-akt)
Thank you!

- Thank you to ASTHO for your assistance throughout this project
- Also to NPHIC members who acted as key informants
- And especially to NPHIC members and their colleagues who shared real stories about putting preparedness into action!
What else would you like to know?

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