

THE PREPAREDNESS POST

UTAH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
YEAR 2, ISSUE 2

State-of-the- Art Tool for Utah Public Health *by Mike Stever*

It's 2:50 p.m. on a frigid December day and Utah is at the threshold of a winter of '93 snow storm. There's a foot of snow on the ground. It's 10°F and the wind is roaring out of the canyons, with gusts up to 60 mph. With luck, there's about an hour of daylight. Mother Nature decides to create mass chaos. Those fault lines we've been warned about for years start moving and the long predicted earthquake takes its toll. Fire breaks out in a number of areas and hazardous materials spills are everywhere. There are widespread reports of collapsed and partially collapsed buildings. Water, gas, electricity, and phone service is disrupted. Families are separated – kids at school, parents at work. Now what?!

The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) has completed a new facility that will aid in the coordinated management of a public health disaster response. When an earthquake or other disaster occurs in Utah, emergency response systems will be immediately overwhelmed. The competition for limited resources will be intense. Resources will have to be

allocated based on doing the most good, for the most people, with the fewest resources, in the shortest amount of time. How will the response be coordinated and tracked to make sure those things are happening?

The brand new Department Operations Center (DOC) at the UDOH will be the heart of Utah's state public health response. Our state-of-the-art DOC features seating for all key members of the Incident Command System. Those team members will have all the tools needed for a coordinated response including teleconferencing and real time video display right at their fingertips.

The 14 integrated workstations have the capability to operate alone or project activities on any one of seven video displays. Video displays can also be used to monitor up-to-the-minute news reports from cable and satellite systems. Other projection systems provide a platform for projecting situation reports, resource status, and teleconferencing.

We are pleased that no State General Funds were used for this project. The Utah Department of Health Operations Center was funded through the CDC and ASPR cooperative agreements enabling UDOH to add a valuable resource to its preparedness assets.

An official Open House for the new DOC will be held on Tuesday, November 17th from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. Dr. Sundwall will deliver welcome remarks at 2 p.m. The DOC is located on the north end of the 1st floor of the Cannon Health Building, 288 North 1460 West, Salt Lake City.



Upcoming Events

- **Nov. 6-7, 2009**
Utah Refugee Conference
Salt Palace Convention Center
<http://refugee.utah.gov/index.html>

To find Preparedness Training information:



<https://www.utah.train.org>

For information on where you can get a flu shot, please visit:

<http://health.utah.gov/immu/apps/flu/index.php>

The flu vaccine locator is provided by the Utah Department of Health.

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Practice Makes Perfect – That's the Goal

by Audrey Glasby PR Specialist at HCA MountainStar

You and your family are well-prepared for an emergency such as a major fire, earthquake or pandemic – right? Many Utah families can make this statement, but most would find that they are not quite as prepared as they think.

Emergency preparedness can be life saving at home. When a major disaster strikes, it is also important for entire communities to be prepared, especially hospitals. There is an old saying, “practice makes perfect.” It holds true when people act out a disaster situation; they discover what works, what doesn't work, and what needs to be changed. With practice, they are better prepared.

That is why Mountain View Hospital held a very realistic pandemic drill on Wednesday, August 26, 2009. During the early morning hours, “Disaster Drill in Progress” signs appeared all over the hospital. A vacant area in the hospital transformed into a triage area and quickly filled with gurneys, hospital supplies and gloved medical personnel in infection control masks.

And then, the “patients” began to arrive in droves. Young actors, students from Payson and Salem Hills high schools, straggled in on foot. Hospital volunteers of various ages and a high school teacher also had roles in this exercise. Each one dramatically acted out varying degrees of flu symptoms, many were coughing and some were barely walking.

As mock patients arrived in growing numbers at Mountain View Hospital, physicians and support staff began a triage process. This method emerged during World War I when French physicians sorted wounded soldiers into three groups according to how severely they were injured. Today, emergency rooms across the country triage patients to rapidly determine their immediate need for treatment.

The Utah Department of Health recently announced new Pandemic Influenza Hospital and ICU Triage Guidelines. Local healthcare experts created them after recognizing that hospitals could be flooded with patients during an event such as a statewide influenza pandemic. At the same time, there would also be an increasing, statewide demand for resources such as nursing staff, hospital beds and medical supplies.

Therefore, state health department officials developed comprehensive triage guidelines. Representatives from local health departments and hospitals around the state



also provided input with assistance from the Utah Hospitals and Health Systems Association. In the case of a real pandemic, the state's governor would declare a public health emergency and the triage guidelines would apply to all healthcare professionals and facilities in Utah.

During the drill at Mountain View, physicians asked every patient for vital information and evaluated their flu symptoms. They used the new guidelines to identify which patients had the greatest need and would most likely benefit from immediate medical treatment.

Support staff, emergency medical technicians and social workers also provided aid and comfort to patients and worried family members. Local police officers helped those who needed assistance while maintaining calm in a purposefully chaotic situation where many patients clamored for care.

“We regularly conduct drills to improve our ability to respond efficiently and help as many people as possible in any demanding emergency situation,” said Kimball Anderson, chief operating officer for MountainStar in Utah County. “While we do not expect a full-blown pandemic anytime soon, we are better prepared to handle such an event after today's drill and those we'll hold in the future.”

Four other MountainStar hospitals held similar exercises, including Timpanogos Regional Hospital in Orem, St. Mark's Hospital in Salt Lake City, Lakeview Hospital in Bountiful, Ogden Regional Medical Center, and Brigham City Community Hospital.

The Utah Department of Health invites the public to review the new state triage guidelines and welcomes comments. They are posted on the department's Web site at www.pandemicflu.utah.

What is Public Health (PH) Access? *by Susan Mottice*

PH Access is a secured Web site that contains documents, applications, Wiki's, and a secured e-mail server.

Go to www.health.utah.gov/phaccess.

- If you're a State of Utah employee or you use UT-NEDSS:
Use your e-mail address and Novell (UT-NEDSS) password to login.
- If you're not a State of Utah employee, or don't use UT-NEDSS:
Click the "**Register Here**" link found on the PH Access login page, and provide information.
You now have access.
- If you forget your password:
Click on "**Recover Account**" at www.health.utah.gov/phaccess.

What can you do on PH Access?

- You can send a secured e-mail to anyone else on the system.
Click on Messaging;
Click on New Message;
Click on the Address Book to see who is in the system (remember you cannot send an e-mail to someone who is not registered in the system);
If you enter someone by mistake, you can click on the small X next to the person's name in the "to list" to remove them;
Click on "Secured" or "Unsecured";
If you are sending protected health information, you **MUST** use secured;
Type in a subject, add an attachment, write a message; and
Click on send.
- Wiki Workspace
Click on Wiki Workspace;
Click on "Create new Wiki";
Click on members; and
Click on add users to add people to your Wiki.
You will now have a secured Wiki where you can:
Create a calendar of events;
Hold a discussion forum;
Attach documents to the file library; and
Manage projects with people outside of your building, etc.

You can access secured UDOH applications. UT-NEDSS and IBIS are currently available (if you have access rights). Let the PH Access development team know if there are other UDOH applications that you would like to see available. Give names and contact to PH Access development team.

PH Access development team:

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**Promote business, community and workplace preparedness:
www.BeReadyUtah.com**

PHEPAC Update *by Elizabeth Tubbs*

The Public Health Emergency Preparedness Advisory Committee (PHEPAC) has met several times since March 2009. In April, co-chairs Dr. Sundwall and Commissioner Davenport produced an outline for a report to the Governor on the committee's activities during the first year of operation. The "strawman" was distributed to PHEPAC membership for comments and additional information. The report includes all recommendations made by the subcommittees addressing various parts of the pandemic influenza plans. The report also outlines future issues for consideration and identifies potential barriers and challenges. The report was finalized and presented to

the Governor in June.

In May, the co-chairs called a special meeting of the PHEPAC to bring the membership up to date on all relevant H1N1 information. The UDOH provided updates on preparedness efforts relating to epidemiology, at-risk populations, use of antiviral medications, and policies regarding H1N1 testing.

The committee met again in September. The majority of the meeting was devoted to relevant issues regarding the progression of the H1N1 virus and various efforts underway to reduce the spread of the illness. Even though the vaccine wasn't yet available, extensive discussion focused on vaccine delivery, distribution and administration.

The UDOH Preparedness Program briefly updated the progress in implementing several PHEPAC recommendations made over the past year, including a clarification of the chain of command and plans to educate the public concerning the H1N1 public health risk.

The Preparedness Program also requested input from the PHEPAC on developing policies regarding the use of Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) anti-viral medications for the uninsured population.

PHEPAC meetings will likely continue on a quarterly basis with special meetings convened as public health issues dictate.

"To be prepared is to anticipate risk and to prudently act toward prevention."

Wes Fessler

A Fond Farewell

In July, the Utah Department of Health said "so long" to a long-time leader. Dr. A. Richard Melton retired after 22 years of service to the department. During his tenure, Dick directed activities of every aspect within the UDOH, even serving as Director for two years while the Executive Director was temporarily assigned to head the Utah Department of Human Services. Beginning in 2002, Dr. Melton directed the

preparedness activities within the department. He was particularly active in supporting electronic approaches to meeting public health problems and the standardized exchange of health data within the department, serving on the board of the Utah Health Information Network (UHIN) for 17 years. Even though he's retired, he's been staying busy, working on some home improvement projects.



Oh . . . the pressure—Dr. Richard Melton

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THIS JUST IN!

UDOH Preparedness Web site:

health.utah.gov/preparedness

Unique Drive-through Medication Distribution Strategy Practiced in Utah *by Charla Haley*

Two counties in Utah that are funded through the Cities Readiness Initiative recently tested an innovative approach to dispensing medications to a large number of people in a short amount of time. For two hours, on two separate Saturdays, vehicles filled with parents and kids lined up at Zions First National Bank branches in Kamas and Coalville, and Heritage West Credit Union in Tooele and Grantsville. Residents sent filled out forms through the cash-handling tubes and in turn, every child in the car received a free one dollar presidential coin.

The exercise was designed to test the approach of using drive-through windows to distribute anti-viral, antibiotics, or other medications to the public in the event of an influenza pandemic, bioterrorism attack or other public health disaster. The

Summit County Public Health Department and Tooele County Health Department led the exercise efforts in the two counties, with the support of the Utah Department of Health. Due to the success of using the bank drive-through model, and the commitment of Zions Bank to use its banking facilities throughout the State, other health districts in Utah may repeat this model in upcoming exercises. It is hoped that this model will prove to be an effective and safe dispensing method that could be replicated in other parts of the nation. While Utah's public health system was the first public health organization to test the concept, credit goes to preparedness colleagues in North Dakota who first mentioned the idea.

Health officials from around Utah and Washington D.C. attended the exercises to learn from the experiment. Dr. Paul Jarris, the Executive Director of the Association of State and Territorial Health, flew to Utah to observe. Jarris commented, "We're here from Washington to see how it's done here in Utah. We want to see what we can learn from this innovation and spread to the rest of the country." The Executive Director of the Utah Department of Health, Dr. David Sundwall, called the exercises in Summit County and Tooele County successes, although some issues were uncovered that need to be resolved before performing another exercise. Dr. Sundwall said, "This is a good example of public and private partnership and in the event of an emergency, it's going to take a combined effort."

Utah Department of Health Unveils New Logo

On September 8, 2009 the Utah Department of Health officially began using a new logo. The new, updated logo was designed by Love Communications.

