



Partners in Preparedness

In This Issue

- State EMS Communications Center
- BioSense 2.0
- Ragin' Staging Full-Scale Exercise

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Welcome to the First Edition of Partners in Preparedness!

In the field of emergency preparedness and response, nothing is more important than the partnerships we develop at the local, state, and federal levels before disaster strikes. The next important component is communication, which becomes the cornerstone of all disaster response when an emergency occurs. The Partners in Preparedness newsletter will be distributed quarterly to inform our colleagues about the work being done by Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's (IDHW) Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program and Healthcare Preparedness Program team. We will include articles from local public health districts and our IDHW colleagues from the Idaho State EMS Communications Center, Idaho Bureau of Laboratories, and the Bureau of Communicable Disease Prevention. We encourage you to send us an email at ReadyIdaho@dhw.idaho.gov if you would like to submit a topic for consideration to be published in the next newsletter or if you want to add someone's contact information to our distribution list.

Idaho Summer Preparedness Summit Well Attended

The Idaho Public Health Preparedness Program (PHPP) hosted the Idaho Summer Preparedness Summit July 29 - August 1st in Boise. The first day was spent on strategic planning for 2014-2024 and the remaining days focused on disaster behavioral healthcare in response and recovery, disaster declaration processes at the local and state level, and partnerships for medical sheltering.

IDHW Operations Center Schedules Ebola Tabletop Exercise

IDHW is closely monitoring the Ebola epidemic in West Africa and will conduct a tabletop exercise next month with the IDHW Operations Center team. The goal of the tabletop is to test Idaho's operational readiness for preparing and responding to a public health crisis, and impacts on the broad community of emergency responders, stakeholders, partners, and residents.

Coming Up

IDHW and the public health districts are becoming familiarized with the Medical Countermeasure Operational Readiness Review tool developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In late November, the CDC project officer will meet with IDHW as well as Southwest District Health and Central District Health Department (Cities Readiness Initiative jurisdictions) in order to measure a jurisdiction's ability to plan and successfully execute any large-scale response requiring distribution and dispensing of medical countermeasures.

The Idaho Public Information Emergency Response (PIER) Team met on Monday, September 8th, and have started planning a tabletop exercise and drill that has been scheduled for April 16, 2015. The PIER Team is made up of public information officers who can deploy throughout the state during an emergency. The drill will evaluate established procedures for requesting PIER Team support and determining how to integrate PIER Team support into a public health response.



From the Idaho EMS State Communications Center

What do IDHW and ITD have in common?

The Idaho State EMS Communications Center (StateComm)!

StateComm, a component of the EMS and Preparedness Bureau, is a 24/7/365 statewide dispatch and emergency resource coordination center. In the fall of 1997 StateComm became the after-hour/weekend/holiday dispatching service for the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD). The role of StateComm was to dispatch snow plows and sanding trucks along with emergency maintenance crews on the state highway system and to gather and disseminate the road condition information to the public through the 888-IDA-ROAD road report phone system. After the first year ITD realized the value of having StateComm provide these services and soon renegotiated the contract to include 24/7/365 dispatching services.

Over the past 15 years the services provided to ITD have grown to include operations of intelligent transportation systems such as the 511 Traveler Information Systems (dial 5-1-1 or visit www.511.idaho.gov), 57 Dynamic Message Signs, Closed Circuit Television cameras and coming soon, Highway Advisory Radio. StateComm also provides dispatch/coordination/information relay regarding downed traffic signs, traffic signal issues on the state highway system and highway construction emergencies. In 2012 alone, StateComm logged more than 5,000 highway-related emergencies and activated 7,000 messages on message signs around the state. With the relationship formed with ITD, IDHW has been able to put in place an agreement to use the dynamic message signs during a public health emergency, the first agreement of its kind in the country.

With having first hand communications with ITD snowplows and construction sites, StateComm can coordinate moving an EMS unit through an area more easily when every second counts. On many occasions it is the snowplow driver who comes upon a motor vehicle crash first. StateComm is able to dispatch the appropriate EMS unit simultaneously when the radio call comes in from ITD.

Autumn Charge V: Volunteer Idaho 2014 Functional Exercise

The Idaho PHPP supports the Volunteer Idaho electronic volunteer management system of Idaho Medical Reserve Corps Volunteers (MRC) and is conducting a three-day functional statewide exercise with the seven public health districts (PHDs) to test/validate its operability. This multi-day functional exercise is scheduled to take place on 10/15-16/2014.

This exercise will involve IDHW and PHD staff responsible for the registering, credentialing, and activating volunteer health professionals in response to a simulated public health emergency. The main focus of this functional exercise is to test multiple components of the Volunteer Idaho electronic volunteer management system such as generating a manual back-up list of Idaho MRC volunteers, requesting Idaho MRC volunteers for deployment, assigning/re-assigning Idaho MRC volunteers to work locations with an assigned job, and demobilizing volunteers. This exercise will also test written plans on the management of spontaneous volunteers and the demobilization of volunteers in a simulated environment. The Idaho MRC volunteers who will be requested for this exercise will be clinical social workers, marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, psychologists, and registered nurses.



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It's National Preparedness Month and we want to extend a thank you to our partners in your effort to keep Idaho safe.

Job well done!

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

From the Bureau of Communicable Disease Prevention

Current Status of Syndromic Surveillance in Idaho using BioSense 2.0

Syndromic surveillance, in contrast to other public health surveillance systems, uses near real-time pre-diagnostic health data to enable timely assessment of illnesses for further public health investigation. Syndromic surveillance can help public health agencies monitor the health status of communities; identify health effects of events such as poor air quality, heat waves, and disasters; maintain situational awareness during outbreaks and other events of public health significance; more closely monitor seasonal increases or decreases of known illnesses; detect health events early; and monitor healthcare utilization for chronic conditions.



The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act includes provisions through rules promulgated and administered by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to provide eligible hospitals and providers higher financial reimbursements for the adoption and use of certified electronic health record (EHR) systems in a meaningful way to achieve significant improvements in care. To receive the higher reimbursements for meeting the requirements of Stage 2 of Meaningful Use, eligible hospitals with an emergency department must submit data electronically to public health agencies for syndromic surveillance. A recent modification to the CMS rules extended the deadline for eligible hospitals to meet Stage 2 from October 1, 2015 to October 1, 2016.

The IDHW Division of Public Health receives funding from the CDC to build syndromic surveillance capacity through use of BioSense 2.0 (an application designed by CDC) to capture emergency department visit data from eligible hospitals. Limited and standardized data from hospital EHRs will be sent using secure data transmission methods to BioSense 2.0 (<http://www.cdc.gov/biosense/biosense20.html>). Algorithms categorize the chief complaint and diagnosis data into syndrome classes (*e.g.*, influenza-like illness, gastrointestinal illness, asthma, ischemic heart disease, carbon monoxide poisoning) that can be analyzed by public health practitioners to monitor what is happening in emergency departments before, during, and after a public health emergency or planned event (*e.g.*, Paralympic Games).

To date, 25 Idaho hospitals have registered intent to submit data for syndromic surveillance in accordance with CMS Meaningful Use rules. The Division has signed an agreement with the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (the organization hosting the BioSense 2.0 application) that allows BioSense 2.0 to receive data from Idaho hospitals. A packet of materials for Idaho hospitals, including a template for a data use agreement with the Division, a data use and management policy document, onboarding instructions, and a syndromic surveillance implementation guide will be posted on the IDHW website after final review at <http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/providers/publichealthmeaningfulusereporting>.

Epidemiologists in three PHDs are participating in pilot projects to engage with hospitals in their jurisdictions on BioSense 2.0 activities and analyze data submitted to BioSense 2.0 from those hospitals. To learn more about how syndromic surveillance may be used for preparedness and response activities in these PHDs, please contact the BioSense 2.0 epidemiology points of contact in each agency (*i.e.*, Jeff Lee, Panhandle Health District; Jennifer Tripp, Southwest District Health; Mike Taylor, Eastern Idaho Public Health District). If you have general questions about how syndromic surveillance can be used for chronic disease surveillance, contact Dr. Robert Graff of the Division of Public Health Bureau of Community and Environmental Health at graffr@dhw.idaho.gov. For general questions about syndromic surveillance implementation or public health meaningful use activities in Idaho, please e-mail PublicHealthMU@dhw.idaho.gov.

From the Field

Eastern Idaho Public Health Conducts Full-Scale Exercise in June

In June 2014, “The Ragin’ Staging” full-scale exercise was held with community partners in eastern Idaho. It was a full-scale, multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional exercise that tested the ability of regional responding organizations to establish and staff a disaster response staging area.

Exercise Objectives

- Test the ability of Eastern Idaho Public Health District to setup a medical shelter.
- Determine the adequacy of Eastern Idaho Public Health District’s medical shelter supplies.
- Determine the adequacy of Eastern Idaho Public Health District’s Medical Shelter staffing model utilizing Eastern Idaho Medical Reserve Corps members.



Aerial View of Disaster Response Staging Area

The medical shelter was operated over the course of two days, with four operational periods. This exercise was jointly planned and executed with multiple healthcare sectors, emergency management and community partners.

The exercise was a great success, coordinating first responder agencies and discussion on response capabilities requiring enhanced planning and preparation.



Emergency & Medical Services Trailer

Ragin’ Staging Full-Scale Exercise Participants

- Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security
- Bonneville County Emergency Management, EMS and Sheriff
- Clark County Emergency Management
- Custer County Emergency Management
- Fremont County Emergency Management
- Jefferson County Emergency Management, EMS and Sheriff
- Lemhi County Emergency Management and EMS
- Madison County Emergency Management, EMS and Sheriff
- Teton County Emergency Management and EMS
- Idaho National Laboratory
- Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center
- Madison Memorial Hospital
- Air Idaho Rescue
- Portneuf Regional Medical Center Air Rescue
- RACES
- CERT
- Southern Baptists Food Unit
- Regional 7 Hazmat
- Idaho Falls Bomb Squad
- Mud Lake EMS
- 101st Civil Support Team
- Eastern Idaho Public Health District
- Eastern Idaho Medical Reserve Corps
- National Weather Service
- Rocky Mountain Power