



UPDATE

Report on Public Health Emergency Preparedness in Oregon

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Eric Stewart, photo

Agency Operations Center Activation

The Public Health Division recently activated its Agency Operations Center (AOC) in support of a measles investigation in Lane County and on-going tuberculosis investigation in Washington County (see story, pg. 10). The division was able to provide both counties with immunization nurses and epidemiologists to assist with disease investigation and response efforts. In addition to assisting the counties with needed resources, this was an excellent opportunity to exercise a limited activation of the AOC. There were many lessons learned that will help improve future responses. Media releases and other information resources related to these two events were posted on the Virtual Joint Information Center on the secure Health Alert Network Web site for access by other county health departments around the state.



Eric Stewart, photo

Public Health Laws and Authorities in Public Health Emergencies

- The Oregon Legislature recently passed HB 2185, which strengthens state and local public health officials' ability to take appropriate actions to protect the health of the public in a wide range of emergencies and threats to the public's health.
- The bill was the result of an extensive assessment of current Oregon laws, the laws in other states, and to a model public health law. The workgroup included about 20 members of a wide range of organizations, including Conference of Local Health Officials, Association of Oregon Counties, ACLU, Oregon Medical Association, Oregon Nurses Association, Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems, law enforcement, Public Health Advisory Boards, and others
- The bill, which will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2008, covers a wide range of public health authorities and processes. To read the bill, visit: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/07reg/measpdf/hb2100.dir/hb2185.a.pdf>

TOPOFF 4 Exercise Update

- Public Health Emergency Preparedness program planning continues for the fourth national Top Officials emergency exercise (TOPOFF 4), which will take place in Oregon, Arizona and Guam Oct. 10-24, 2007. TOPOFF exercises are designed to test federal, state and local systems for an effective, coordinated response to terrorist threats and major disasters.
- In Oregon, TOPOFF 4 will be a full-scale exercise—with active simulation of the events and the response. The scenario will involve the explosion of a radiological dispersion device (RDD), called a “dirty bomb,” somewhere in the city of Portland. The Portland metro area will be testing medical surge capacity (the ability to manage large numbers of injured or ill people).



Eric Stewart, photo

Public Health Day

The Public Health Division celebrated National Public Health Week by sponsoring exhibits at the State Capitol in Salem on Public Health Day, April 2. Legislators, lobbyists and school children tested their emergency preparedness knowledge by playing interactive computer-based games that were set up as part of the Public Health Emergency Preparedness exhibit.



Eric Stewart, photo

- The Oregon Public Health Division (OPHD) is the lead state agency for radiological events. OPHD Radiological Protective Services and Public Health Emergency Preparedness program staff have been particularly involved with the planning for this exercise, and are working closely with the many federal, state and local agencies that would have important roles in responding to a radiological emergency. Many federal agencies, as well as Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, will be participating in this exercise.

TOPOFF 4 Oregon Venue Seminar on Public Information

- Approximately 150 public information officers from multiple local, state and national organizations participated in a national public information planning seminar for TOPOFF in Portland on May 17 and 18. The program included overviews of the FBI, City of Portland, State of Oregon and Oregon Public Health Division response and communication plans for a radiological dispersion device event.
- Included in the seminar was an overview of the "Virtual News Network," which will be used to simulate real-world news media during the exercise.
- The seminar also provided public information highlights from TOPOFF 3, real-life case studies and lessons learned from the October 2004 steam eruption of Mt. St. Helens, the recent attempted rescue of three stranded climbers on Mt. Hood, and the 1998 Thurston High School shootings.

Oregon Radiation Plan Orientation and Tabletop Exercise Partner Meetings

- Five meetings were held around the state in April and May to provide an orientation to the State Radiation Plan, and to allow participants to exercise a radiological scenario with their local partners.
- The meetings were held in Portland, Baker City, Coos Bay, Independence and Bend. Participants included representatives from public health, emergency management, law enforcement, fire/HAZMAT, hospitals, EMS, and other preparedness partners.
- The goals of these meetings included familiarizing participants with roles and responsibilities for response in a radiological event, encouraging participants to review and revise their local radiological plans, identifying local

partners and resources needed when responding to a radiological event, and developing relationships with local partners before an event takes place. Approximately 230 people attended these statewide meetings.

ASTHO TOPOFF Summit

- On April 23, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers (ASTHO) convened participants from TOPOFF 2 (T2) and 3 (T3) in Portland to share their experiences with Oregon, Arizona, and Guam in planning for and participating in a TOPOFF level exercise. Over the course of the discussion several prominent themes emerged as crucial in successfully planning for TOPOFF:
 - o Engage all stakeholders early in the planning process.
 - o Plan a scaled response.
 - o Include exercises within the exercise.
 - o TOPOFF participants should try to keep all aspects of the exercise as real as possible.
 - o Link data collection to exercise objectives.
 - o Plan ahead for exercise observers and volunteers.
- The T2 and T3 states that participated in this meeting were in agreement that participation in TOPOFF is a very challenging commitment that pays off by making jurisdictions better prepared to respond to future emergencies.

Pandemic Influenza Planning

- Oregon has made significant progress in planning for pandemic influenza and other significant communicable disease outbreaks. The Public Health Division recently hired two new public health planners, Michael Kubler, M.S., and Julie Plagenhoef, M.P.H., to work with local health departments, hospitals and other stakeholders and assist them in

developing plans and skills that would be useful in a wide range of public health emergencies, including pandemic influenza.

- Plans and exercises focus on potential mass vaccination or distribution of antiviral medications, and on community containment measures.
- Recently released guidance from the CDC provides practical recommendations for measures that communities can take to significantly reduce the spread of influenza. The recommendations are based on modeling disease spread in pandemics and on historical studies of the experience of different communities and cities during the 1918 pandemic. These studies show that community measures could significantly slow the rate of spread and reduce the number of people infected during a pandemic.
- Effective community actions include voluntary isolation (generally at home) of people who are ill, encouraging people who live with someone who is sick to voluntarily stay home for a few days until they have passed the incubation period for influenza, increased “social distancing” in the workplace, and canceling classes in schools, which was shown to be unexpectedly effective. In general, these measures are more effective if instituted early and if several are used at the same time.
- Additional measures and more detail are provided in the CDC’s “Interim Pre-Pandemic Planning Guidance: Community Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Mitigation in the United States,” which is available on-line at: <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/mitigation.html>.

- Kubler, Plagenhoef and Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program Manager Mike Harryman recently met with the CDC’s Seattle Quarantine Station staff to get acquainted and share information.

“Cancellation of Classes” Tabletop Exercise with Department of Education

- Oregon State Public Health Director Susan Allan, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Susan Castillo recently joined with other representatives of the Public Health Division, Department of Education, Governor’s office, Oregon School Boards Association, Oregon Parent-Teacher Association, Oregon Education Association, Oregon School Employees Association, Confederation of Oregon School Administrators, Oregon Emergency Management, and the Multnomah, Marion, and Benton county health departments for a “Cancellation of Classes” tabletop exercise.
- The exercise, held May 2 at the Department of Education in Salem, was a first step toward creating a statewide coordinated response for canceling classes in the event of an influenza pandemic.
- Using a realistic scenario detailing the impact of an influenza pandemic in Oregon, the exercise walked participants through a series of questions designed to identify roles and responsibilities, key trigger points for canceling and resuming classes, key public information messages, and the process for communicating with the school community.
- Follow-up activities will include regional exercises over the next 12 months to ensure integration of state and local plans.

Medical Advisory Group

- An important component of the state planning for pandemic influenza and other public health threats is the state's Medical Advisory Group (MAG). The purpose of the MAG is to assist the Public Health Division in developing frameworks and processes for some of the difficult decisions that might need to be made in a large or prolonged public health emergency.
- The MAG includes 24 representatives of major health care and health professional groups and organizations, tribes, academia, and local government that would have to take action in a public health emergency.
- The MAG has developed guidelines for ethical decision-making during emergencies, and has discussed scenarios and principles concerning allocation of scarce resources and altered standards of care.
- The group has also provided review and recommendations for effective communications with health care providers and other responders about public health and medical matters during an emergency.
- For more information on the Medical Advisory Group, visit: http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/preparedness/mag/resources_and_newsletters_list.shtml.

ASTHO & HHS Regional Pandemic Influenza Roundtable

- State Public Health Director Susan Allan, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., and PHEP Program Manager Mike Harryman attended an Association of State and Territorial Health Officers (ASTHO) and U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Regional

Pandemic Influenza Roundtable in San Francisco on April 13.

- The conference brought together state, federal and tribal public health officials from Oregon, Washington, Alaska, Idaho, California, Hawaii, Wyoming, Georgia, North Dakota, South Dakota, Illinois, Montana, Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, Washington D.C., Guam and the Marshall Islands. The summit highlighted best practices and provided new federal guidance on dealing with pandemic influenza planning.



Eric Stewart, photo

Maj. Edwin Tuhy and Lt. Col. Benjamin Long discuss Oregon Air and Army National Guard capabilities to assist with public health emergencies with PHEP Manager Mike Harryman and other preparedness staff.

Oregon Air and Army National Guard Medical Unit Briefing

- Maj. Edwin Tuhy and Lt. Col. Benjamin Long from Kingsley Airfield 173rd Medical Group in Klamath Falls met with PHEP staff in Portland on April 27 to provide an overview of Oregon's Air and Army National Guard medical units within the state.
- The briefing provided staff with an understanding of how National Guard units are activated during state-declared emergencies and how best to coordinate missions and resources related to medical services that will be tasked to the State Public Health Division, which is the lead agency for health and medical services in an emergency.

PortSTEP Exercise

- On April 25, PHEP Program Manager Mike Harryman and Radiation Protection Services Manager Terry Lindsey participated in a U.S. Coast Guard-sponsored advanced tabletop exercise called PortSTEP. The multimedia, facilitated exercise focused on a radiation incident at the Port of Portland, and included an orientation, and information about awareness, prevention, response and recovery.
- This exercise is part of the Port Security Training Exercise Program within the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Through the Area Maritime Security committees, PortSTEP engages all modes of the transportation community to continuously improve readiness. PortSTEP's ultimate goal is to promote stakeholder and industry involvement, and maintain an inter-modal focus throughout the program.

U.S./Canada Cross-Border Conference

- Key staff from the Oregon Public Health Division and Department of Justice attended the 4th Annual Public Health Cross Border Conference in Victoria, B.C., May 14-16.
- This conference brought together public health officials that represent the Pacific Northwest Emergency Management Arrangement (PNEMA) signatories of Alaska, British Columbia, Idaho, Oregon, Washington and the Yukon. Staff met with their counterparts from other states and provinces with the Pacific Northwest.
- The conference included breakout sessions on communications, public health laws, tribal issues, medical surge, and requesting resources.
- Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski signed Annex B of the arrangement on March 23, 2007, giving Oregon the opportunity to use the tools of PNEMA in the event of an all-hazard incident that crosses both state and international borders.

ESF #8 Policy Group

- The first meeting of the new Emergency Support Function 8 (ESF #8) Policy Group took place on May 30. ESF #8 is one of 15 state and national emergency support functions under the National Response Plan and the Oregon Emergency Response Plan. It is the responsibility of the State Public Health Division, and covers preparedness and response for all public health and medical areas. Co-Chairing the committee are State Public Health Director Susan Allan, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., and Larry Mullins, D.H.A., president and CEO of Samaritan Health Services.
- The group includes key health, medical and emergency response leaders from across the state. The group will advise the State Public Health Director and the state's PHEP program to help ensure there is an overall policy and plan and that specific organizational emergency preparedness plans and activities are coordinated. Meetings are held every other month and rotated as needed around the state if resources are available.

Cesium Brachytherapy Disposal

- Radiation Protection Services (RPS) staff member Bonnie Wright has been working on a project to help licensed facilities dispose of unused and unwanted cesium brachytherapy sources. In the past, these sources were used for treatment of certain forms of cancer, but newer technology has replaced the need for the brachytherapy sources.
- Wright has made an inventory of all the cesium brachytherapy treatment sources in Oregon. This is a significant step in the effort to dispose of these unwanted sources. The goal is to assist hospitals and other facilities in disposing of unwanted radioactive sources that could become lost or fall into the wrong hands.
- RPS has a mission to help remove these

unwanted sources from the environment that pose a potential risk to health, safety, and national security.

- Wright is working with the Los Alamos National Laboratory Off-site Source Recovery Program as part of the National Nuclear Security Administration's Office of Global Threat Reduction.
- RPS may receive funding through the Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors, Inc., to dispose of these unwanted cesium brachytherapy sources before the end of this calendar year.



Eric Stewart, photo

Public Health Emergency Preparedness was one of several tracks offered during the Annual Oregon Epidemiologists' Meeting in Bend in May.

Annual Oregon Epidemiologists' Meeting

- Approximately 185 people attended the 24th Annual Oregon Epidemiologists' Meeting, May 23-25, in Sunriver. State Public Health Director Susan Allan, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., presented the opening session on public health authority in emergencies.
- The Public Health Emergency Preparedness program participated in a preparedness track, which included presentations on TOPOFF 4 by PHEP Program Manager Mike Harryman, vulnerable populations by DHS Vulnerable Populations Coordinator Bill Riley, the public health information network by Paul Aneja, Stephen Ladd-Wilson, Kevin Craddock and Steve

Modesitt; and public health vulnerability assessment by Public Health Toxicologist Michael Holcomb, Ph.D.

E-Learning Projects

- Additional electronic learning or "E-Learning" courses continue to be added to the DHS Learning Center. These courses can be taken on-demand from any computer with Internet access, consequently reducing costs and staff time by eliminating the need for travel.
- "Working with Interpreters in a Public Health Setting" and "Introduction to Communicable Disease and Epidemiology" are in the final review process and will be released in early July. Also in production is "Introduction to Outbreak Investigation." These courses are compliant with accepted e-learning standards and are developed with closed captioning to assist learners with hearing impairments. HTML versions will be used to assist sight-impaired learners.
- For more information, visit the DHS Learning Center: <https://dhslearn.hr.state.or.us> or e-mail: joy.weyer@state.or.us.

Joint Commission Taps Three Rivers Community Hospital for "Best Practice"

- Following a recent surprise inspection, Asante Health System's Three Rivers Community Hospital earned a "Best Practice" designation from the Joint Commission (formerly called Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations) for its decontamination program.
- Terri Renwick, Asante Health System's full-time nurse emergency preparedness coordinator, credited Oregon's Region 5 Hospital Preparedness Project (HPP), Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program, and Oregon OSHA for their assistance in developing the hospital's decontamination plan.
- PHEP Program Liaison Bryan Hopkins,

M.B.A., who is also the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness manager, provided Technical Decontamination Training, including chemicals, personal protective equipment and use of the decontamination tent. The HPP provided some of the personal protective equipment and training for the program. OSHA and the Public Health Emergency Preparedness program provided consultation on overall development of the plan.

- “In my view, the leadership of Asante and Terri Renwick, along with this type of partnership and collaboration, is what makes our work most effective,” says Beth DePew, B.S., EMT- I, the Region 5 HPP Coordinator.

Promising Practice: Washington County Pandemic Preparedness Web Site

- The Washington County Health and Human Services Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Web site has been selected as a “Promising Practice” by the Project on Strengthening State & Local Public Health Preparedness at the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) at the University of Minnesota. To view the site, visit the following URL: http://www.co.washington.or.us/deptmts/hhs/comm_hlh/panflu/panflu_wcdhhs.htm
- In collaboration with the Pew Center on the States and the Pew Charitable Trusts, the CIDRAP project is identifying and collecting options in pandemic preparedness to share with state and local public health officials and other stakeholders nationwide. For more information on this project, visit: www.cidrap.umn.edu

Cities Readiness Initiative Workshop

- Oregon’s Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) Coordinator Kathy Scott and Cities Readiness Initiative (CRI) Coordinator Adrienne Donner attended the CRI Workshop for Regions VIII, IX and X,

May 7-9, in Salt Lake City, Utah. The CRI is a federally funded effort to prepare major U.S. cities and metropolitan areas to respond to a large-scale bioterrorist event by dispensing antibiotics and other medical supplies to the entire population within 48 hours of the decision to do so.

- At the workshop, participants gave updates on current planning and exercise activities. The Oregon coordinators met with their counterparts from Hawaii, Alaska, Washington, California, Idaho, Nevada and Colorado, along with representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO).

Northwest Immunization Conference

- During the Northwest Immunization Conference, which was held in Portland on May 15 and 16, Immunization Program and Preparedness staff from Oregon and Washington presented information about using immunization information systems during public health emergencies.
- Oregon’s presentation was entitled “*Using the ALERT Immunization Registry to Track and Manage Assets During a Public Health Emergency: A Needs Assessment.*” Washington’s presentation was entitled “*Patient and First Responder Tracking for Emergency-Related Events: Are We Ready?*”

Laboratory “Dirty Bomb” Response Drill

- The Oregon State Public Health Laboratory recently participated with the CDC and the Idaho Bureau of Laboratories in a nine-day, multi-state, full-scale public health preparedness exercise to evaluate the region’s laboratory response in the event of a radiological terrorism incident.
- Four eastern Oregon counties—Baker, Malheur, Union and Wallowa—were also involved in the drill along with Holy Rosary Medical Center in Ontario.

- Using a computer-generated scenario, several “dirty bombs,” also known as radiological dispersal devices, were simulated to be detonated in eastern Oregon. In the aftermath of this mock disaster, chemically tainted blood and urine samples were collected, turned over to Oregon State Public Health Laboratory officials, and transported to the Idaho Bureau of Laboratories in Boise for processing. The specimens were then forwarded to the CDC in Atlanta, and other state labs in Washington, Alaska, Florida, Arizona, Hawaii, California, Mississippi and Montana, to perform tests to determine the status of each fictitiously exposed individual.

Oregon Laboratory Response Network Regional Conferences

- The OSPHL Laboratory Response Network (LRN) recently presented six regional Oregon Laboratory Response to Pandemic Influenza conferences around the state. The 128 participants from 34 laboratories and 16 county facilities included laboratorians, hospital infection control coordinators, pathologists/physicians, the Idaho state bioterrorism coordinator; county preparedness coordinators, county/state epidemiologists, law enforcement, physician office staff, nurses, and health-care students. One conference was held on tribal grounds, which included nine tribal clinic staff.
- The half-day program included a presentation by Paul Lewis, M.D., Oregon Public Health Division clinical epidemiologist, on the history, epidemiology and Oregon public health response to pandemic influenza. It also featured a presentation on influenza testing capabilities of the OSPHL given by Chris Biggs M.S., OSPHL virology manager.
- The presentations provided participants

with critical information about seasonal and pandemic influenza surveillance, rapid influenza testing, and protocols for collection and referral of influenza samples to the OSPHL.

- The program also included a tabletop exercise on transport of specimens based on a scenario involving the progression of the first cases of human avian influenza in Oregon.
- To access all OSPHL-LRN conference materials, please go to: <https://lrn.hr.state.or.us/login/login.cfm>. User name: flu Password Irn (all lower case).

New PHEP Staff

- Matt Groves is the new program support manager in the Office of the State Public Health Director. A significant portion of his time will be dedicated to Public Health Emergency Preparedness funding and necessary operations. Groves recently completed five years in the Coast Guard, most recently stationed in Juneau, Alaska. His positions within the Coast Guard included: division officer, responsible for the safe navigation and training a crew of 80; executive officer, responsible for planning, implementation, and evaluation of the ship's law enforcement, staff training, navigation budget, personnel budget, and property and administrative programs; and search and rescue controller, responsible for initial response to emergencies and urgent situations ranging from maritime terror threats to coordinating volunteer organizations.
- Jere High, N.D., B.S., has been hired as the new PHEP Healthcare Systems Manager. He comes to public health from the Oregon Primary Care Association, where he was director of Technical Assistance/Infrastructure. High's background includes emergency preparedness management, clinical management and consulting, and continuous quality improvement. His first day with the program will be July 12.



Joyce Westby, R.N., prepares a syringe for tuberculosis testing at a Beaverton business where hundreds of employees were exposed.

Tuberculosis (TB) Testing in Washington County

- Over the last three months, Washington County Department of Health and Human Services (WCDHHS) staff have responded to a workplace exposure to an active tuberculosis case by standing up eight Points of Dispensing (PODs) at a private company.
- Washington County's Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Sue Landre said that the county's previous POD exercises proved invaluable in this real-world response.
- Baseline tuberculin skin tests were administered to approximately 330 employees in three hours at each POD and, for the average employee, the experience required just 14 minutes. "It was well organized," noted one employee.
- POD Manager Rochelle Villenave supervised the 20-member response team of five nurses (including two Medical Reserve Corps volunteers), screeners, runners and support staff.

- The POD site was not optimal as it contained cubicles and computers but the WCDHHS staff made it work with the creative use of screens and a streamlined flow.
- To date, approximately 800 employees and ex-employees have been tested, with 8.2 percent of those testing positive for TB infection. Of these, there are three suspected or confirmed cases of early TB disease. People with TB infection are not ill and cannot spread TB to others.
- This continues to require significant resources and time for the county.

PHEP Partner and Stakeholder Presentations

- PHEP Liaisons Elizabeth Miglioretto and Jeff Kaliner presented sessions on "Creating Plans of Protection" for the Oregon School Boards Association at regional meetings on April 19 and 27.
- Kaliner also presented an overview of the state PHEP at the 25th Annual Silver Falls Drinking Water Conference on May 30.



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