



Center for
REGIONAL DISASTER RESILIENCE



Developing a Holistic Strategy To Achieve Community Health Resilience

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**Pacific Northwest Border Health Alliance
Seventh Annual Bi-National Cross-Border Workshop
Public Health Collaboration: Global Challenges, Regional Solutions**

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Comprehensive Community Bio-Event Resilience (CCBER) Pilot Project

- **Goal to help develop holistic health resilience roadmap (guidelines) to integrate the private sector, non-profits, and public institutions into preparedness planning for pandemics, bio-attacks and other major public health hazards**
 - **For the Puget Sound region**
 - **To serve as a model for communities nation-wide**
- **Encompasses all aspects of health security and resilience—preparedness and disaster management—prevention, protection, response, recovery/longer term restoration and mitigation**



Pilot Project, cont.

- **Focuses on grass-roots to national level, including US-Canadian cross-border challenges**
- **Scope—regional and extending out to accommodate interdependencies**
- **Stakeholder involvement led by the Center for Regional Disaster Resilience of the Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER), a cross-border consortium comprised of Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Montana, Idaho, Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, The Yukon, and the Northwest Territories**



Project Kick-Off Workshop in June 2009

- **Stakeholders developed the scope of the roadmap—dozen categories covering all aspect of health and safety resilience**
- **Also Identified four top priority concerns:**
 - **Communications**
 - **Public information, education and awareness**
 - **Business continuity and workplace issues, including liability concerns**
 - **Planning challenges and public healthcare issues**



Roadmap Development Workshop Oct. 8

- **Information and mechanisms needed for bio-event preparedness, response/restoration**
- **How to improve organizational understanding of interdependencies and what can be done to mitigate the impacts of disruptions caused by bio-events**
- **How to address limitations on preparedness, response and recovery posed by information sharing issues**
- **How to address priority public health supply chain disruptions to keep essential supplies flowing**
- **Specific capabilities and assets the private sector can provide to assist in bio-event/pandemic preparedness, response, and longer term restoration**



Stakeholder Survey

- **Distributed to public, private, and non-profit organizations throughout the Puget Sound Region**
- **Significant results:**
 - **Need for information on vaccine distribution and better procedures**
 - **Large portion of population lacks a relationship with a health care provider**
 - **There is insufficient planning to determine if IT infrastructure can handle the load of mass telecommuting**
 - **There is a gap in many healthcare institutions between IT recovery and business continuity**
 - **Most planning is for limited disasters**



Survey Results, cont.

- **Need for education and training for regional healthcare in bio-event recognition and response**
- **Elected officials need to fully understand both the direct and possible cascading impacts that an outbreak can trigger**
- **Communication, public information and training are critical to building disaster resistant communities—regional exercises, information sharing and joint preparedness activities**
- **Need to understand available capabilities and resources in the community for bio-event preparedness and resilience**
- **Small businesses have limited continuity planning capabilities**
- **There are significant legal and liability issues surrounding bio-events, e.g., human resource issues and OSHA compliance**
- **Psychological impacts of severe disasters are underplayed**



Regional Gap Analysis Key Findings

- **Bio-event impacts, duration, preparedness needs not well understood**
- **Evacuations, sheltering, long-term housing, cleanup and certification of healthcare workers need to be addressed**
- **Order of service restoration and priorities are critical and will strain relationships between government and private sector**
- **Vaccine availability and distribution mechanisms need to be improved**
- **Information sharing among stakeholders needs to be enhanced; also public information coordination, content, and delivery mechanisms**
- **Fusion Center cross-sector capability development needs acceleration**
- **Sectors need to form strong coalitions and undertake exercises**
- **Legal issues, liability re. staff and customers should be addressed**



Regional Tabletop Exercise Held in March

- **Participants were representing public health, healthcare, emergency management, private sector, non-profits and other organizations**
- **Stakeholder Planning Team developed scenario**
 - **Focus on improving pandemic preparedness and resilience and gaining a better understanding of public health and safety challenges from major flooding associated with the Howard Hanson Dam**
- **After-Action Workshop to validate and prioritize exercise after action report this afternoon**



Preliminary Selected Findings

- **Public health officials have made major steps in addressing both H1N1 challenges and preparedness needs associated with potential Green River Valley flooding**
- **Likewise, infrastructures and businesses with assets in the Green River Valley have made significant investments in continuity improvements**
- **Evacuations alert and warning processes and procedures, including evacuation trigger points, are major concerns**
- **Other issues include sheltering for a prolonged period, relocation of nursing home residents, and ensuring that non-English speakers or impoverished individuals have evacuation information**



Preliminary Selected Findings, cont.

- **Flooding would cause significant and widespread impacts to critical infrastructure and key resources in the Green River Valley with cascading effects that would have costly and long-term consequences at the local, state, national and in some cases global level**
- **Identification and verification of emergency, service restoration, response, and other types of workers and permitting requirements and processes will be a significant constraint on response and initial recovery**



Preliminary Selected Findings, cont.

- **There are cultural and operational challenges in incorporating the private sector into the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS) model for emergency response**
- **Recovery and long-term restoration remained largely unexplored in the exercise with participants having difficulty grasping the magnitude of the flood disaster and long-term health and safety-related impacts**
- **While participants recognized that after a major flood, there would be a “new normal”, how this “new normal” would be developed, what mechanism would be set up to make the decisions, which organizations would be involved and how long restoration could take have yet to be fully developed**



Preliminary Selected Findings, cont.

- **Procedures to address pandemic preparedness and response in the work place are still evolving after the recent H1N1 pandemic**
- **Small businesses needs include becoming more informed about jurisdiction/County evacuation and broader continuity planning and lack of flood insurance**
- **Limited bandwidth for telecommuting and potential “telegridlock” is a major concern**



Preliminary Selected Findings, cont.

- **Greater private sector information sharing and coordination with local and state public health officials are necessary to facilitate resource access and management and assure health supply chains**
- **Businesses need continuous pandemic information to address continuity requirements and a single focal point for communications and for information to validate planning assumptions, get updates on critical emergency-related information and decisions, and find out what other organizations need**
- **Financial support for pre-event mitigation is a major constraint to increased preparedness, especially for small businesses**



Preliminary Selected Recommendations

- **H1N1 lessons learned and other findings already catalogued or in the process of documentation should be shared, integrated and used to upgrade local and state plans to improve community health resilience**
- **Potential flood impacts on individuals with special needs and cultural groups, including non-English speakers, need to be reviewed and further assessed to incorporate appropriate improvements into emergency strategies that include enhanced outreach to leaders of cultural and non-English speaking groups**
- **Local and state officials with regional key stakeholders should develop and exercise a clearly-expressed evacuation and sheltering plan with outreach and public education strategy for a Green River Valley Flood that covers people, livestock, and pets**



Selected Recommendations, cont.

- **Best practices to address all-hazard, including health work place-related policy issues should be identified and incorporated into a single information resource that can be shared among regional stakeholders and incorporated in emergency and continuity plans and procedures**
- **Local government should continue to conduct outreach to area businesses and other organizations, provide forums to share continuity planning best practices and approaches and assist organizations that lack resources and expertise**
- **A workshop should be held that brings together private sector organizations with other interested organizations and local, state, and FEMA officials to discuss development of an emergency “business support team” modeled on ICS that a broad range of private sector organizations could adopt**



Selected Recommendations, cont.

- **Local and state officials with regional key stakeholders should develop a Green River Valley flood recovery management structure that includes procedures and mechanisms for information sharing and decision making**
- **A strategy needs to be developed for improved alert and warning, communications and two-way information sharing on health resilience that identifies what information needs to be conveyed and to what organizations, and how it will be coordinated and disseminated, ideally from a central focal point**
- **Studies should be done to understand the impacts of increased bandwidth and possibly compromised IT infrastructure on communications during an event, and solutions should be researched and tested**



Selected Recommendations, cont.

- **Local, State representatives with key regional stakeholders should undertake a Public Information and Training Gap Analysis that creates an inventory of current outreach and exercise activities and identifies how well these activities are addressing health resilience challenges and what is not being done**
- **An assessment should be undertaken of the health, safety and economic consequences of impacts to critical infrastructures and key resources in the Green River Valley that takes interdependencies into account, to enable identification of risk mitigation priorities that could be addressed through joint government/private sector investments and tax dollars**
- **Ways to expand FEMA and other government assistance programs should be explored**



U.S.-Canadian CCBER Activities

- **Initial stakeholder planning meeting held in Dec. 2009**
- **Lunch and Workshop to be held this afternoon to explore cross-border health resilience priority issues**
 - **Purpose is to recommend actions that can build upon current capabilities to improve preparedness and resilience at the community level**
 - **Workshop is just the start of an integral element of a longer-term initiative to expand evolving U.S.-Canadian collaboration to develop and implement a cross-border holistic prevention and risk mitigation strategy to improve preparedness for all-hazards bio-events**



CBBER Pilot Project Utility

- **Provides major tool to better protect and improve resilience at the grass-roots and regional levels**
- **Complements, supports, and enhances local and state bio-event planning and management**
- **Leverages private sector capabilities for response/recovery**
- **Strengthens level and effectiveness of cross-border collaboration to address potential public health threats**
- **Builds upon existing security and resilience efforts of government, private sector and regional organizations**
- **Demonstrates how federal agencies, states, localities and the broad stakeholder community can partner to improve community health resilience**



For Further Information

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