

June 16, 2015

City of Nashua, New Hampshire Division of Public Health and Community Services

Overview

In the City of Nashua, New Hampshire, the Division of Public Health and Community Services (DPHCS) employs a full-time epidemiologist that assists with public health emergency preparedness and responds to outbreaks and emerging threats. As part of the planning process, a protocol has been developed and integrated into the emergency response plans for conducting health surveillance in shelters during disasters and the Division is in the beginning stages of incorporating tools from the NIOSH Emergency Responder Health Monitoring and Surveillance toolkit.



Partnerships

Health Surveillance in Emergency Shelters

To implement a process for conducting health surveillance in shelters DPHCS partnered with the American Red Cross and the City of Nashua Emergency Management Director. Our Environmental Health Department agreed to conduct a shelter assessment that looks at 14 general areas of environmental health by utilizing the CDC's Shelter Assessment Tool. The public health nurses will assist the City or the American Red Cross with the completion of individual and aggregate morbidity surveillance forms and the epidemiologist will track and trend the data. We also partnered with the NH Department of Health and Human Services and the State of NH Emergency Operations Center to share information relating to situational awareness.

Emergency Responder Health Monitoring and Surveillance (ERHMS)

The Incident Response Team at the DPHCS reviewed the pre-processing guidance in the ERHMS Toolkit and developed a pre-deployment survey for staff that asks about physical abilities, trainings and certifications. Prior to sending out the survey, it was sent to the City's Human Resources and Risk Management Departments for their review and approval. The survey had a 79% response rate. After reviewing the results, the Incident Response Team is going to set-up additional training opportunities for staff such as how to work in an emergency shelter and amateur radio.

Successes

- Strong partnerships and willingness to work together to conduct shelter surveillance.
- Ensuring we have staffing capacity to conduct health surveillance during a large-scale disaster.

Challenges

- Setting up a communication system inside the high school that is designated as an emergency shelter.
- Developing questions for the ERHMS questionnaire that staff would feel comfortable completing.

Contact information

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Resources

Public Health Assessment and Surveillance After a Disaster
<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/surveillance/>
Emergency Responder Health Monitoring System
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/erhms/>