Mahoning County District Board of Health

EMERGENCY RISK COMMUNICATIONS ANNEX

3/22/2012
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I. Purpose
When an emergency occurs in a community, there is a need for professional and articulate public information from a credible medical or public health source. This document describes how the Mahoning County District Board of Health (MCDBOH) will respond to public information requests and communicate important information to key partners and agencies.

II. Scope
This Emergency Risk Communication Annex (ERCA) provides policies and procedures for the coordination of internal and external communications for the MCDBOH in the event of a crisis. The scope of this annex is to provide a description of the role Public Health plays in ensuring effective risk communications during the mitigation, preparation, response, and recovery phases to disasters or emergencies that affects the lives and well-being of individuals of Mahoning County.

III. Policies
A. Mahoning County Emergency Operations Plan (MCEOP)
Should an incident occur the MCDBOH would coordinate efforts with The Mahoning County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) and the State of Ohio Emergency Management Agency through the Mahoning County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and the Mahoning County Emergency Operations Plan (MCEOP)

B. Ohio Revised Codes (ORC) sections including but not limited to:
- 5502.21: .22, .26, .27, .28
- 3701.15: .17, .232, .24, .243, .248, .39, .54, .63, .64
- 3709

IV. Situations
A. Natural, human caused, and/or technical hazards have the potential to occur in the MCDBOH jurisdictions.

B. Certain hazards necessitate the alerting, warning, and /or notification of the general public, response partners, and public health staff to inform them of necessary actions to minimize the loss of life, health, and property.

V. Assumptions
A. Incidents requiring county and/or regional coordination will be managed through the utilization of the Incident Command System (ICS) structure and when possible utilize Joint Information Systems (JIS) with local jurisdictions and response partners to effectively respond to and address an incident.

  *See Appendix B ICS structure*

B. MCDBOH officials will provide accurate and complete information to internal staff, response partners, and the citizens of Mahoning County throughout a public health incident or where public health is responsible for issuing public information, notifications, alerts, or warnings.

C. Communications
Primary means of communication used by MCDBOH include:

1. External/Public
   - Mass Media – See Appendix E, *Local Media Contact List*
   - Facebook
   - I-Contacts
2. Internal
   - Phone-landline
   - Mobile phone
   - Radios-
     - Emergency Management Agency (EMA)
     - Multi Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) - See Appendix M, Mahoning County MARCS radio protocols
   - Ohio Public Health Communication System (OPHCS) - See Appendix L, Mahoning County OPHCS protocols
   - E-mail
   - Amateur Radio
   - Emergency Alert System (EAS)
   - Notify Now - See Appendix O, Notify Now Procedure for Emergency Notification

VI. Direction and Control
   A. As applicable, the Mahoning County Health Commissioner (or designee) will serve as the Incident Commander and shall direct initial operations through the Mahoning County District Board of Health Department Operations Center (DOC).

   B. The Mahoning County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) is responsible for activating the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to focus on serving as the communications and coordination center for the county. Upon activation of the EOC, the overall responsibility for public information rests with the Incident Commander acting through the Public Information Officer (PIO). The PIO serves as the source for dissemination of official public health emergency related materials to the public. MCDBOH has appointed a lead PIO and supported secondary and third PIOs as line of succession.
      
      See Appendix A PIO (Communication Team) Individual Assignment Sheets
      See Appendix C Department Emergency Response List
      See Appendix D Emergency Notification Roster
      See Appendix E Local Media Contact List
      See Appendix G News Release Template
      See Appendix N, Emergency Response Templates

   C. In the event of a local/imminent public health emergency, the Health Commissioner or designee who is acting as the Incident Commander is responsible for assessing and determining the need for additional resources. Upon determination of need, the Incident Commander or designee shall request resources through the EOC.

   D. To ensure continuity of Public Health and medical activities during a public health emergency, the following line of succession is established:
      1. Mahoning County Health Commissioner or designee
      2. Mahoning County District Board of Health Medical Director
      3. Director of Nursing, Director of Environmental, and/or Director of Community Health
      4. Field Staff (Public Health Nurse or Registered Sanitarian)
VII. Concept of Operations

A. Incident Command System

1. Public Health will manage the initial crisis using the Incident Command System (ICS), including the appointment of an Incident Commander and the Epidemiology Coordinator under the ICS Operations Section.
   - If the event is small enough, response can be handled by a Communicable Disease Team, composed of nurse, sanitarian, and epidemiologist
   - If larger event, the responsibility for Incident Command, mitigation, investigation, and recovery will progress through appropriate agencies

B. The Incident Command System, depending on the size, scope, and complexity of the incident, may be activated under following levels.

   See Appendix H Graduated Response to Dispense Public Health Information

1. The ERCA will be activated at any time that the MCDBOH Department of Operations Center (DOC) is activated or at other times as determined by the Incident Commander or designee.

C. The Health Commissioner (or designee) is responsible for the activation of the Incident Command System agency wide. Activation of the ICS separates operational responsibilities and authorities as follows:
   - Emergency Operations: The Incident Commander has full responsibility and authority for the incident management activities of the MCDBOH.
   - Normal Operations: Administration has full responsibility and authority for normal (day-to-day) management activities and continuity of the MCDBOH.

D. Joint Information Center

1. After an emergency has been declared, state, N.E.C.O. region and local Joint Information Center (JIC) will assume primary responsibility for all public information efforts and media relations activities.
2. In the event that a JIC is established, the JIC will be housed near the EOC.

   See Appendix J Equipment and Supplies Checklist

VIII. Training and Annex Maintenance Revision

A. The lead PIO is responsible for the Emergency Risk Communications Annex (ERCA) development, distribution, periodic review, and updating. The ERCA will be reviewed as necessary based on lessons learned during emergencies, exercise, county or state public health organizational changes, and state planning guidance or as other events warrant. The lead PIO is responsible for assuring routine quarterly review of contacts and annual review, as well as organizing exercises designed to test the ERCA.

B. The PIO roles need to complete NIMS/ICS training as required including:
   - Core ICS Courses-100, 200, 700, 20.11
   - Optional: ICS-300, 400, 800

C. Lead PIOs will receive training on Crisis and Risk Communications and when possible, attend regional or state trainings on communication and Public Information.
D. The PIOs needs to complete at least 8 hours of public information professional development per year (conferences, workshops, distance learning, or another related activity).

E. PIOs will also be responsible for assuring that an evaluation is conducted and an After Action Report is completed on all exercises or real events related to the function of the Emergency Risk Communications Annex.

IX. Abbreviations and Glossary

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DOC</td>
<td>Department Operations Center</td>
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<td>EMA</td>
<td>Emergency Management Agency</td>
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<td>EMS</td>
<td>Emergency Medical Services</td>
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<td>EOC</td>
<td>Emergency Operations Center</td>
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<td>EOP</td>
<td>Emergency Operations Plan</td>
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<td>ERCA</td>
<td>Emergency Risk Communications Annex</td>
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<tr>
<td>HAN</td>
<td>Health Alert Network</td>
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<td>ICS</td>
<td>Incident Command System</td>
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<td>JIC</td>
<td>Joint Information Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>JIS</td>
<td>Joint Information System</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCDBOH</td>
<td>Mahoning County District Board of Health</td>
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<td>NIMS</td>
<td>National Incident Management System</td>
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<td>PIO</td>
<td>Public Information Officer</td>
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**Finance/Administration Section** - The section, under ICS, that is responsible for incident management activities that require on-scene or incident-specific finance and other administrative support services.

**General Staff** - A group of incident management personnel organized according to function and reporting to the Incident Commander. The General Staff normally consists of the Operations Section Chief, Planning Section Chief, Logistics Section Chief, and Finance/Administration Section Chief.

**Health Alert Network (HAN)** - An internet program used to communicate health and emergency messages.

**Incident Command System (ICS)** - A standardized on-scene emergency management system that enables multiple agencies and jurisdictions to respond to single or multiple incidents using an integrated organizational structure.

**Incident Commander** - The individual responsible for all incident activities, including the development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and release of resources. The Incident Commander has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for managing all incident operations at the incident site.

**Joint Information Center (JIC)** - A facility established to coordinate all incident-related public information activities. It is the central point of contact for all news media.

**Joint Information System (JIS)** - Integrates incident information and public affairs into a cohesive structure to provide consistent, coordinated, timely information during an incident.
**Logistics Section** - The section, under ICS, that is responsible for all service support requirements needed to facilitate effective and efficient incident management.

**National Incident Management System (NIMS)** - A system that provides a consistent nationwide approach for governments (federal, state, local, and tribal), private-sector businesses, and nongovernmental organizations to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for and respond to incidents.

**Operations Section** - The section, under ICS, that is responsible for all tactical operations.

**OPHCS** - The secure, web-based electronic emergency notification system operated by Ohio Department of Health and used to alert all public health emergency response staff of an event requiring a public health response.

**Planning Section** - The section, under ICS, that is responsible for collecting, evaluation, and disseminating operational information related to the incident.