



THE SENTINEL

Reporting on Preparedness



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In This Issue

EMAG Summit	1
PHEP Summit	2
EMS Tabletop	3
Therapy Dogs Int'l.	3
Region B Exercise	2

EMAG 2015 held April 8 - 10 in Savannah

The annual Emergency Management Summit and Training Session was held in Savannah April 8-10. The summit is hosted by the Emergency Management Association of Georgia in partnership with the Georgia Department of Public Health. Highlights from this year's summit included opening remarks by Georgia Emergency Management Association (GEMA) Director Jim Butterworth on Wednesday. On Thursday, key-

note speaker Bob Patterson, Executive Director for Mercy Health System EMS Program discussed the response to tornadoes in Joplin, Missouri on May 24, 2011. He specifically addressed how Mercy Health System's facility and patients were affected and how the organization recovered from the disaster. On Friday, awards were given to the year's top Regional Coordinating Hospital (RCH) and the state's

top Emergency Management Agency Director. The RCH of the Year award went to Memorial Health University Medical Center in Savannah. Jimmy Gordon, Safety and Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for the hospital accepted the award along with Maggie Gill, President and CEO, and Ramon Meguiar, MD, SVP and Chief Medical Officer.

Glen Goens from Butts County was named the Emergency Management Agency Director of the year. He also wears many other hats for the county. In addition to Director of Butts County Office of Homeland Security, he is the county's Fire Marshall, and the Safety Coordinator.

Each day participants could choose from a wide variety of workshops and seminars that focused on responder roles during a disaster. The learning sessions include a mix of public safety, healthcare and public health led presentations and workshops. More than 40 vendors of emergency equipment and supplies were also on site to provide demonstrations and presentations during breaks. This year's conference was well attended and provided a platform for responders to learn and also to network with other Georgia professionals.

Public Health Emergency Preparedness Summit held April 13 - 17 in Atlanta



PLANNING TODAY
for Rebuilding Tomorrow:

FOCUSING ON RESILIENCY
AND RECOVERY
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Public health preparedness professionals from around the country gathered in Atlanta, April 13-17, for the 2015 Public Health Emergency Preparedness Summit. Organized by National Association for County and City Health Organizations (NACCHO), the summit brings together leaders in public health preparedness to share best practices, research, and experiences.

This year's summit was well attended with over 1,800 participants. Attendees could choose among a variety of workshops and presentations. Topics included preparing for and responding to diseases like Ebola, that

are rare for United States health care, and new developments in addressing common illnesses like influenza.

The preparedness summit is the first and longest running national conference on public health preparedness. Since its beginning in 2006, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) has taken a leadership role in convening a wide array of partners to participate in the summit.

The 2016 Summit will be held in Dallas, TX from April 19 - 22. For more information visit <http://preparednesssummit.org/2015-preparedness-summit/>



Region B Coalition Full Scale Exercise held on June 2

The Region B Healthcare Coalition exercise was held on June 2 with a large number of organizations, agencies, and individuals from ten counties in District 2 participating. For Northeast Georgia Health System's Braselton Campus, this was their first full scale exercise. For Pruitt Healthcare of Toccoa, this was the first time they participated in an exercise with many of their local and regional partners.

The exercise focused on a severe weather event occurring during an influenza outbreak. Hospitals were challenged to find resources to treat an overwhelming number of influenza patients while the emergency departments were busy taking care of victims from severe weather incidents and everyday situations.

"For many of our healthcare coalition partners, this was their first opportunity to exercise plans for information sharing, coordination, and resource allocation on a coalition-wide basis."

Mark Palen, District 2 Emergency Preparedness Director

"Victims" at various locations were mulaged to make the incident as realistic as possible. Mock injuries ranged from a person with a dislocated knee to another being impaled with a pitch fork. Responders at the scene assessed



Example of mulage that responders saw when they arrived on scene. This patient has a mock bone sticking out of his skin.

the situation and triaged patients for transport to the hospital. Incident command centers were opened as needed by different organizations while Hall County Emergency Management coordinated resources requests through

the Emergency Operations Center utilizing WebEOC. This exercise tested both public health's version of WebEOC and Georgia Hospital Association's GHA911 WebEOC.

Statewide assets were also deployed during the exercise. One of the state's seven mass fatality trailers was sent to Northeast Georgia Medical Center to demonstrate how the trailer would be used in an actual event. Another request was made for deployment of the public health trauma trailer. Utilization of these assets and coordination for deployment could be critical during a real incident.

Exercise controllers and evaluators were positioned at participating facilities to assess the response of the various organizations. Comments from the evaluators were positive overall, giving high praise to the participants for triage, implementing incident command, and knowledge of job roles. Also impressive to the evaluators were the number of participants and especially participation by command level staff. Utilization of resources such as amateur radio operators, volunteers, plans and job action sheets were also praised by the evaluators.

As with any exercise or response to an incident, there is room for improvement. Some areas pointed out during the hot wash were that information sharing between the scene and command center could have been better, and that each ESF agency should have had a representative in the Emergency Operations Center. Also, evaluators noted that some EOC's have a lot of windows, which could become a problem during a severe weather event. One hospital noted that there was some confusion with their emergency codes. Overall the exercise showed what is being done well and where improvements can be made, which is the reason for holding exercises.

Continued on page 4

"Over the past several years, the Region B Healthcare coalition has developed regional response plans for disasters and emergencies. This full scale exercise gave us an opportunity to test those plans. The number and variety of healthcare partners that participated shows the commitment of our region to respond together to disasters or incidents that may overwhelm one facility. The Region B Coalition continues to grow and all healthcare partners are encouraged to participate."

Donna Sue Campbell - District 2 Healthcare Liaison



Therapy dogs benefit both victims and responders



Comforting someone after a disaster is difficult. Sometimes it's not what you say but how you say it. Other times it is not saying anything at all and a warm nuzzle from a furry friend may calm your anxiety. Therapy dogs have proven to be effective in many different situations from dealing with the stress of a disaster, to coping with an illness, or managing the natural process of aging.

Therapy Dogs International (TDI) recently presented information about their organization to members of the Area 1 Emergency Management Association of Georgia in Washington, GA. Handlers and their dogs from New Jersey, Texas and South Carolina were on hand to demonstrate the capabilities of their dogs and explain why it is helpful to have them respond to disasters.

Therapy Dogs International is a non-profit volunteer organization established in 1976. It is dedicated to regulating, testing, and registering therapy dogs and their volunteer handlers for the purpose of visiting nursing homes, hospitals, and other institutions, wherever therapy dogs are needed. TDI's Disaster Stress Relief Dog Program was first used in 1995 and was

formalized as a responding organization in 2001.

When the first dogs were deployed in 1995 to Oklahoma City after the bombing of the Murrah Building, the teams realized that not only victims but also others that were affected by the incident benefited from the dog/human interaction. This included families of the victims, responders to the incident, and healthcare workers treating the victims. One person was quoted as saying, "Dogs were hugged and petted by the families of the victims, displaced persons, members of the Red Cross and Salvation Army, clergy, police officers, firefighters, U.S. Army Reservists and others."

Members of Therapy Dog International Disaster Stress Relief Dog Program are required to complete National Incident Management Courses within 4 weeks of passing the DSRD test. These include IS-100, IS-200, IS-700 and Psychological First Aid.

Therapy Dogs International responds to official requests from Federal Agencies, State Agencies, Municipal Agencies, School Boards, Disaster Relief Agencies, or other agencies in need of services. There is no charge for services, but assistance with accommodations and meals are appreciated. For more information, visit www.tdi-dog.org



EMS table top exercise held at Unicoi on April 2

On April 2, 2015 an Emergency Medical Services Tabletop was held at Unicoi State Park Lodge in White County. Previous table top exercises had been held in Athens, Augusta, Jekyll Island, and Peachtree City. These exercises are part of the Georgia EMS Strategic Resource Plan and have been led by the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI) in consultation with the Georgia Association of Emergency Medical Services (GAEMS) and the Georgia Department of Public Health, Office of EMS and Trauma.

This planning effort has sought to lead the project partners in preparing an update of the five-year strategic plan, and in providing support for training and exercises involving EMS. The goals of the project have been to assess current levels of EMS performance in the state, identify significant capability gaps in the Georgia EMS community,

and formulate recommendations for addressing these shortcomings.

From 2007 to 2015 the group has responded to surveys for data collection, participated in tabletop exercises, and held two functional exercises. In addition, based on information gathered, recommendations for resources and capabilities have been identified. Several of these recommendations have been partially or fully implemented. Two important capabilities implemented have been Automated Vehicle Locators (AVL) for EMS and standardized triage and tracking.

Other benefits of this program include enhancing the profile of GEMA/HS within the EMS community and increasing connections and collaborations between DPH and GEMA/HS.



Region B Coalition Full Scale Exercise held on June 2



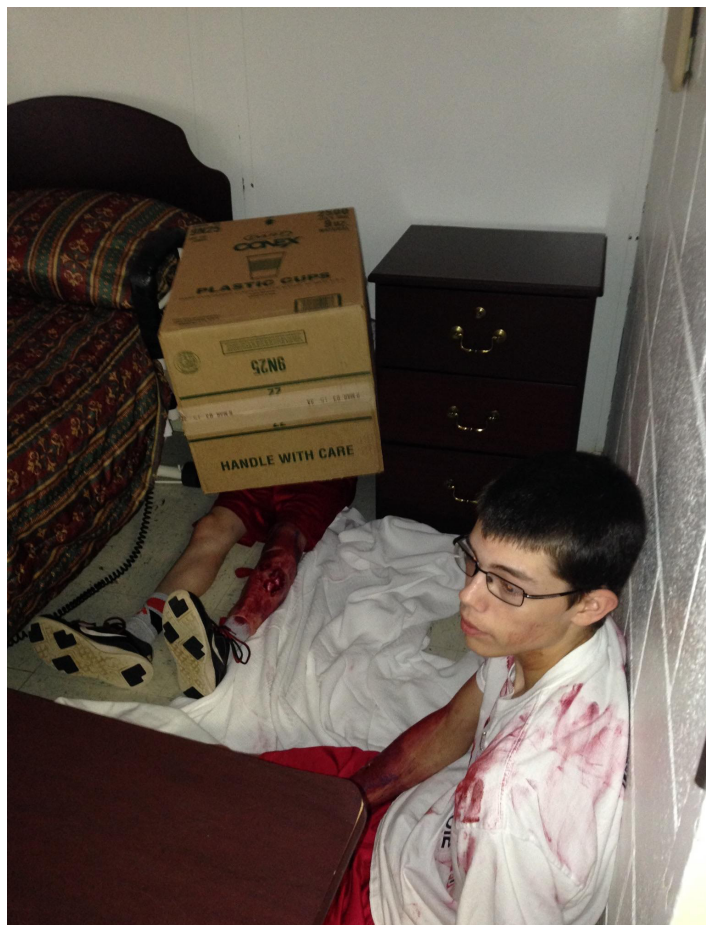
At Stephens County Hospital, victims await the start of the exercise (above) and are positioned to receive help from first responders (right).

"I found the exercise to be very useful for our community agencies. It was a great learning experience and provided us several opportunities to identify areas for improvement."

Faye Taylor, RN, BSN, MBA
Director of Nursing, Stephens County Hospital

Continued from page 2

An After Action Report will now be completed for the exercise from information gathered by evaluators, observers and participants. This report will identify the areas needing improvement and will allow organizations to task individuals and groups with responsibilities to make the necessary steps forward. The Region B Coalition members will continue to work toward increasing regional coordination and cooperation for real life events. Any health care entity or community partner in our 13-county area is encouraged to participate in the coalition.



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