



Spring 2018
Volume 16 Issue 2

In This Issue

ARC shelter training	1
Flu still a medical concern	1
Local fire draws response	2
Overtaken truck creates suspenseful situation	2
Annual PIO meeting	3
EMAG Summit and Training Session in Savannah	4

Red Cross holds shelter training in Stephens

The Northeast Georgia Chapter of the American Red Cross held shelter training at the Stephens County Senior Center on Saturday, January 27. Participants were instructed on shelter set-up, operations and management, and security. The training allowed for robust discussion on best practices for setting up a shelter, registration, providing for needs within the shelter, and dealing with difficult situations that might arise.

Jennifer Fulbright, District 2 Environmental Health Director and Shad Slocum, Stephens County Environmental Health Manager were on hand to observe the training and answer questions about food service and shelter inspections.



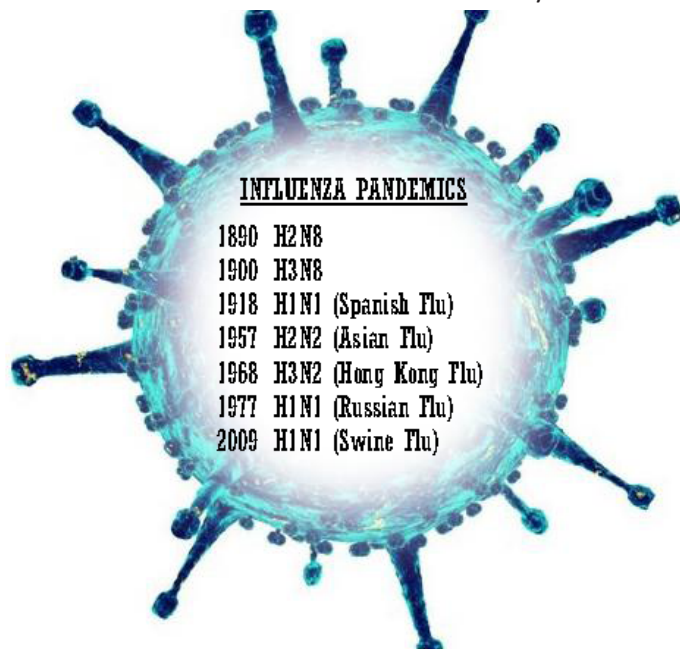
Centennial season of worst flu pandemic in history proves flu still a concern

The 2017-18 flu season is being labeled as one of the worst in over a decade. But it does not compare to the devastation of the great pandemic of 1918. And, while this year's flu season is categorized as an epidemic in the Northern Hemisphere, with increasing hospitalizations and deaths, it doesn't compare to the historic illness a century ago. The influenza pandemic of 1918 caused an estimated 500 million infections that resulted in as many as 50 mil-

lion deaths. Historians believe that about one-third of the planet's population was affected. Troop movements added to the spread of the illness, as soldiers, malnourished and exposed to chemicals during battle, would fall ill with the flu. The combination of a weakened immune system and infection with the flu virus made them more susceptible to other illnesses and compounded their recovery.

The novel H1N1 influenza virus of 1918 mutated to a form that easily spread from person to person making close quarters in ships, trains, barracks and hospitals breeding grounds for germs. Young adults died at an alarming rate. Researchers believe the flu virus weakened the victim's bronchial tubes and lungs, allowing bacterial pneumonia infection to occur. Newspaper reports described how individuals would fall ill in the morning and be dead by evening.

This year, CDC has said that the flu shot does not match well to the H3N2 virus. The virus experienced a drift in its makeup making it a variant virus. According to the CDC, the H3N2v has the matrix (M) gene from the 2009 H1N1 virus. This type of flu was first seen in 2011. The H3N2 virus descended from the 1957 virus known as H2N2. This change occurred in 1968 and was recognized as the Hong Kong Flu. From 2003 to 2013 there have been three flu seasons where the H3N2 virus has caused increased hospitalizations and deaths.





Fire results in chemical incident; draws response from EPA, EPD and PH



On March 4, a fire at the AFCO plant in Hall County drew a large response from local, state and federal authorities. The facility, which makes industrial cleaners and soaps, had many different chemicals and additives on hand. This created a challenging situation for firefighters.

When firemen arrived on scene, they immediately attempted to extinguish the blaze, but soon realized that the fire was being fueled by the chemicals inside the plant. Upon this discovery, firemen sought to contain the fire and requested assistance to determine what chemicals were in the building. In this short time, the water sprayed on the fire had washed chemicals into adjacent Allen Creek.

Environmental Protection Agency, Georgia Environmental Protection Division and Georgia Department of Natural Resources arrived on scene on Monday morning along with officials from the parent company for AFCO. Unified command was established at the scene with Hall

County Fire and EMA coordinating Incident Command. Sampling of water from the creek was initiated to determine if there were adverse affects to the creek's water. Early samples indicated that the PH levels of the water were very high. Later, DNR discovered that a fish kill had occurred a short distance downstream.

Unified command requested public health to issue a health advisory for residents not to use the water from the creek. County and district environmental health staff began to identify properties along the creek that may have direct pulls of water from the creek or wells that could be affected. EPA and EPD assisted in establishing parameters for identifying wells that could possibly be impacted. Local environmental health staff discussed the situation with property owners. On March 12, the PH levels in the water had returned to normal and the health advisory was lifted. Water sampling of the creek will continue for a period of time to ensure PH levels remain in the normal range.



Overtaken tanker in Dahlonega causes evacuation of facilities

Late in the evening on Saturday, March 17 a tanker hauling oxygen overturned in Dahlonega at Crown Mountain Drive and Mountain Drive. Because recovery of oxygen from a leaking tanker can be a dangerous process, a one-third mile evacuation was requested by public safety officials. As a precaution, the patients and staff at Chestatee Regional Hospital were moved to a safe location. Many residents in the area evacuated their homes at the request of public safety officials. Assisting with the evacuation were Northeast Georgia Medical Center, (the



Photo credit: Jacobs Media - accessnorthgeorgia.com

area's Regional Coordinating Hospital), Northeast Georgia Healthcare Coalition - Region B, Lumpkin County EMA, Georgia Emergency Management Agency, District 2 Public Health, and the Georgia Department of Public Health. The event was managed utilizing GHA 911 WebEOC.

Crews cleaned up debris from the incident and patients and staff were allowed to return to the hospital late Sunday morning. Roads around the incident, which had been closed from Saturday when the tanker overturned, were reopened late Sunday afternoon.



Severe weather making early impact in north Georgia

Recent weather events have certainly left their mark on Georgia, as well as the entire nation. As spring approached, northeasters dumped large amounts of snow in the upper Atlantic states. The midwest experienced flooding from heavy rains, while the South saw tornadoes and damage from high winds. Storms tore through Alabama and Georgia in early March leaving destruction in its path.

The Top of Georgia RV park north of Helen experienced damaging winds that created quite a mess for folks. In the photo at right, high winds blew a chair into a camper and the legs impaled the metal side. Many of the campgrounds maintenance and utility buildings were damaged. Luckily the recreational vehicles suffered minor damage and the park staff is working to make repairs to open in the spring. Now is a good time to prepare for severe weather events. Make a Plan, Get a Kit, Be Informed.



Photo credit: Jacobs Media - accessnorthgeorgia.com

DPH Risk Communicator meeting and social media workshop held at Unicoi

Kevin Sur, Emergency Management Instructor, Ohio EMA, gets some laughs as he photobombs Kristian Weatherspoon, DPH Social Media Specialist, while she tries out his camera glasses. Kevin's presentation was full of new ideas for using available technology and social media during a disaster.

A PIO and social media expert, he served in the Joint Information Center and the Emergency Operations Center for Hurricane Sandy, the 2016 World Series, the 2017 NBS Championship, and the 2016 Republican National Convention. In September and October 2017, Kevin led FEMA's External Affairs for Branch 5 Division A for the Florida Keys during Hurricane Irma.

Kevin challenged the group to understand that almost all preparedness tips can effectively be delivered to targeted audiences on social media. He then gave examples of how his teams have worked to provide information early in the crisis and frequently throughout the disaster cycle to keep people informed. One video showed residents how to clean up water damaged homes to mitigate the effects of mold.



During the training, communicators also heard from Kym Wiggins, Corporate Consultant and Trainer with expertise in moving people and organizations toward success. She has served as the Director of Communications for Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration, as well as several other departments in Mississippi state government.

In these roles, Kym developed systems for utilizing social media to capture the interests of the targeted audiences for the various agencies. These projects ranged from explaining administrative processes for information technology and inventory management to addressing members of the media, legislature and general public.

Also during the workshop, PIOs learned from each other as several districts presented special projects they have been involved with during the past year. To close out the two-day event, participants were divided into teams and given nine topics to choose from to develop a social media campaign. This included identifying the threats, developing talking points, crafting messages, and deciding which platforms to use to get the messages out.



EMAG Summit and Training Sessions held in Savannah

The annual EMAG Summit was held in Savannah, April 18-20, 2018. During the conference, attendees were treated to a wide range of topics and excellent presentations about recent incidents, policy changes and new plans that are being developed. Vendors and exhibitors showcased new technology, products and services that are available for first responders and preparedness professionals.

For the opening session, keynote speaker Carlito Rayos, Emergency Manager/Homeland Security Liaison for the City of North Las Vegas presented real-time video of the October 1, 2017 tragic shooting at the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival. Starting with video before the first shot was fired, he took the audience through the timeline of the event. The video showed how chaotic the event became as people realized that the sounds were gunfire and not fireworks. Amazingly, the gunman fired approximately 1,100 rounds in about 10 minutes and then took his own life.

The incident lasted about an hour. In the end, there were 58 fatalities and 422 injured by gunfire. Additionally, 429 people sustained other injuries trying to flee the scene.

Wednesday's lunch keynote speaker was Brock Long, Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency. Mr. Long addressed the challenges, innovation and

the way forward for FEMA in the wake of the record disaster response in 2017. He also discussed the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan and asked Summit attendees to take action to better prepare residents and communities for disasters.

Thursday's lunch keynote speaker was Dr. Marshall Shepherd, Director of the University of Georgia Atmospheric Sciences Department. Mr. Marshall explained how meteorologists predict the weather and why it is important to follow the forecasts each day as changing conditions can affect the weather that we actually get. He also talked about the various models that meteorologists use and why they are important.

During the closing session, Michael Walker, Senior Consultant at the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Security, highlighted the threats for 2018 and beyond. Mr. Walker served 32 years in the federal government and was confirmed four times by the US Senate to serve in senior executive branch positions.

There were also a variety of breakout sessions during the day to learn from peers from Georgia, Florida and Tennessee. Presentations from local responders covered topics such as evacuation shelters, coalition exercises and partnering with organizations like the Salvation Army, American Red Cross and Georgia Baptist Disaster Relief.



Above: Michael Walker addresses the conference attendees about threats that Homeland Security has identified for 2018 and beyond.

Right: Retired MSgt. Mike Reynolds presents a unique perspective on "which side of the door are you on" after responding to a disaster.



THE SENTINEL

is a quarterly publication of District 2 Public Health Emergency Preparedness 1280 Athens Street, Gainesville, Georgia 30577 770-535-5743

Pamela Logan, M.D., MPH, MA
District Health Director

Mark Palen
Emergency Preparedness Director

Dave Palmer, Public Information Officer
Editor of The Sentinel

Donna Sue Campbell
Healthcare Coalition Facilitator

Brandin Gillman
Training and Exercise Coordinator

Items for submission may be sent to:
dave.palmer@dph.ga.gov