



MDH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & RESPONSE NEWS

JULY 2016



From the Director

Welcome to Budget Period 5, the final year of the five-year project period for the Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) and Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) Grants. As you are aware, we experienced a cut in funding due to the Zika response at the federal level. Accordingly, we have adjusted budgets and activities. Regardless of the funding cuts, we look forward to a productive final year of this budget period. MHD received minimal funding for Zika related activities across the agency. We will continue to update Zika materials on the MDH Zika Virus page (see <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/zika/index.html>) as they become available.

As for other news, planning has begun for the Super Bowl which will be held in Minneapolis in 2017. Pam Blixt, the Emergency Preparedness Manager for the City of Minneapolis, is serving as the lead for the health components of planning. Many at MDH are also working towards preparing for this event. As an agency we will meet quarterly to share and coordinate our efforts.

Finally, watch for a “save the date” announcement regarding a strategic planning session for the new 5 year PHEP project period that MDH will be hosting later this fall. Enjoy the rest of your summer!

Cheryl

BioWatch Detects Anthrax in Minnesota

Anthrax, plague, tularemia, or other agents can be used by bioterrorists to sicken or kill people. Early recognition that an attack has occurred is key to quickly identifying and prophylaxing or treating exposed people. In addition to their potential as weapons, these pathogens may occur naturally in the environment. On May 25, 2016 Mother Nature allowed Minnesota the opportunity to exercise its early warning mechanisms and protocols when a naturally occurring anthrax bacteria triggered a BioWatch sensor in Ramsey County.

BioWatch is a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) program developed to provide early detection and reduce casualties resulting from bioterrorism attacks. A presidential initiative implemented following 2001 Anthrax attacks, today’s network of BioWatch sensors operates in 30+ U.S. population centers and conducts bioaerosol monitoring for a variety of potential bioweapons. The program provides planning support, resources, and subject matter expertise for state/territorial preparedness and response efforts.

Following the positive BioWatch result in May, a sample from the sensor was collected and brought to the MDH laboratory for confirmation. DHS and other federal stakeholders activated emergency response procedures, and St. Paul-Ramsey County Public Health was notified. MDH developed a news release in response to media interest (see <http://www.health.state.mn.us/news/pressrel/2016/anthrax052716.html>). The story was featured in several local news outlets. Though this event was *not* a bioterrorism attack, it allowed exercise of response plans, reinforced responder relationships, and generated valuable lessons learned.

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An Overview of Minnesota's REP Program

Nuclear power plants are required to have off-site emergency response plans to ensure public health and safety. With two nuclear power plants in the state (Monticello and Prairie Island), Minnesota's Radiological Emergency Preparedness (REP) Program includes participation from several state and county entities.

MDH plays a key role in planning and response for the REP program. One role is supplying technical experts from the Environmental Health Division to staff the Department of Public Safety's Planning and Assessment Center. These experts, along with Department of Public Safety staff, evaluate data received from field teams on the scene of a nuclear power plant radiological release. Data is used to assist decision makers for, among other things, areas and populations to evacuate, when to recommend potassium iodide, and issues surrounding food safety.

Implementation of the decisions requires action within MDH in numerous areas. During the annual federally evaluated REP exercise for one of Minnesota's nuclear power plants, MDH opens its Department Operations Center (DOC) to coordinate these actions. Requests into the DOC reach throughout the agency and its partners. So the next time a REP exercise is conducted, don't be surprised if you receive an inquiry about how these decisions may affect your area of expertise.



Preparedness Apps for Mobile Devices

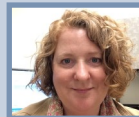
OSHA Heat Safety Tool

OSHA's Heat Safety Tool provides vital information to help prevent heat illness when working outdoors, including calculated heat index values, associated risk levels to outdoor workers, and precautions to take to avoid heat-related illness.

This free app is available for download on iOS and Android:

https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/heat_index/heat_app.html

Meet the Staff



Sandra Hanson—Public Health Preparedness Supervisor

Sandra is the new Supervisor for the Public Health Preparedness Consultants (PHPCs). She comes to MDH with over 12 years of experience in local public health. Most recently, Sandra was the Public Health Preparedness Coordinator for Dakota County. Prior to that, she worked as a Public Health Nurse for Dakota and Scott Counties and the City of Bloomington. While with local public health Sandra had the opportunity to work in a variety of areas, including emergency preparedness and disease prevention and control.



Greg Wocken—Medical Surge Planner and MNTrac Coordinator

Greg is the new Medical Surge Planner and MNTrac Coordinator. He comes to us with a background in Fire and EMS and software systems technical support. Originally from Central Minnesota, Greg is passionate about serving others and enjoying the outdoors. Random Fact: During summers in College at St. Cloud State University, Greg guided teenagers on month-long canoe trips, in remote Canadian wilderness areas that are only accessible by boat or float plane.

Announcing the Redesign of the CDC Learning Connection

Visit the newly designed CDC Learning Connection site ([see http://www.cdc.gov/learning/](http://www.cdc.gov/learning/)) to access information on public health training opportunities developed by CDC, CDC partners, and other federal agencies.

Kudos to Partners

On April 21, 2016, Hennepin County Human Services Public Health Department was recognized by NACCHO's Project Public Health Ready (PPHR) for their ability to plan for, respond to and recover from public health emergencies. Pictured are Courtney Wettensch and Jackie Weber receiving the NACCHO certification on behalf of Hennepin County.



Important Dates

September 2016 ----- 2016 National Preparedness Month ----- <https://www.ready.gov/september>

September 28-30, 2016 ----- 2016 Community Health Conference ----- <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/opi/pm/conf/>

September 7, 21 and October 5, 19 & 20, 2016----- MDH Webinar Series: *Creating, Conducting, and Evaluating Exercises*
Watch for more information or contact Chad.Ostlund@state.mn.us