
NORTH CAROLINA'S
PHRST LINE REPORT

Vol. 3 – Number 1

March 29, 2005



State Office Reports

Heartbreaker Breaks New Ground

The Heartbreaker exercise coordinated by the Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response (PHP&R) was so named because of its occurrence on Valentine's Day and the fact that participants would not be home to celebrate, but the four-day exercise that began on February 14 and conducted at Gaston College was anything but a heartbreaker.

In a first for North Carolina, Heartbreaker tested the public health response system's ability to deploy all seven Public Health Regional Surveillance Teams (PHRSTs) at the same time and provided participants with four credible health threat scenarios notionally caused by terrorists. The deployment itself was the first part of the exercise challenging PHRSTs to accomplish several tasks before leaving their host counties and while on route to the exercise site at Gaston College.

As members of the seven PHRSTs arrived at Gaston College on the first day they were reorganized into four "task forces" that would rotate through each of the four modules over the next two-days. The threats were presented in three-hour modules – one in the morning and one in the afternoon – that included biological, chemical, radiological and mass casualty scenarios. In addition to testing PHRST members' abilities and training, the four modules were designed to help identify communication shortfalls, resource shortages, and anything in general that might need improvement. The PHRST members completed more than 25 exercise objectives and the exercise helped PHP&R staff identify 11 tasks that need to be addressed to improve overall response performance. The areas to be addressed include:

- Additional incident command system training for all PHRST members.
- Refinement of SOPs to provide guidelines for the deployment of the PHRSTs.
- Development of a standard equipment inventory checklist for the PHRSTs.
- On-going radio training.
- On-going IPAC training.
- Improved communications with the HAN.
- Clarification of the public health role in responding to a mass casualty event.
- Clarification of the public health role in responding to a radiological event.
- Clarification of the public health role in responding to a chemical event.
- Clarification of PHRST authority in responding to a terrorism event.
- On-going time spent with public safety officials to further understand roles at terrorist events.

Exercise participants included representatives from the Regional Emergency Training Service Center at Gaston College, the Office of Emergency Medical Services, the Occupational and Environmental

Epidemiology Branch, NC Radiation Protection, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, NC Emergency Services, and the Division of Public Health's Injury and Violence Prevention Branch. There were 54 participants, 44 staff and facilitators, and 75 victims/role players. The exercise concluded on the fourth day with a review and evaluation of the previous three days' events.

Don't Forget IS-100 Prerequisite for April Quarterly

PHP&R and PHRST staff members attending the quarterly meeting scheduled for April 26-28 at the Renaissance Hotel, Asheville, will take a one and half day ICS-200 Incident Command System course on April 26 and 27. As a prerequisite to this course, participants must have successfully completed the IS-100, Introduction to the Incident Command System for Federal Disaster Workers, independent study program found at <http://www.training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is100.asp>. Certificates for successfully completing the IS-100 course should be submitted to Barbara Callahan (Barbara.Callahan@ncmail.net) by April 18.

All staff members are expected to take the ICS-200 course unless they have been previously certified and have provided Barbara with a certificate of completion for a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) approved ICS-200 course completed in a classroom setting (this may have been through EMI, NCEM, or the NFA). Those who may have completed the online IS-200 independent study course are still expected to attend the classroom ICS-200 course in Asheville.

Those who have provided Barbara Callahan with a certificate for an approved ICS-200 course completed in a classroom setting will not need to attend the first day of the quarterly meeting on April 26 but should be at the hotel by noon on April 27 for the afternoon agenda.

Strategic planning is being done for the NC Public Health Workforce time to support NIMS implementation and compliance as stipulated in the Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-5, Management of Domestic Incidents. PHP&R and PHRST staff members are required to successfully complete a classroom setting ICS-200 DHS approved course.

Save the Dates: Epidemiology Teams Conference 2005

The Epidemiology Teams Conference 2005 will be held June 8-9 at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel, RTP. The target audience for the conference includes LHD Epidemiology Teams, LHD Epidemiologists, Communicable Disease Nurses, Environmental Health Specialists, and other interested public health practitioners.

The conference is sponsored by the PHP&R and there is no registration fee.
To register:

Telephone: 919-966-4032

FAX : 919-966-5692

E-mail: oce@unc.edu

Website: www.sph.unc.edu/oce

First International Symposium on Agroterrorism

The First International Symposium on Agroterrorism, presented by the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, will be held May 2-6, 2005, at the Westin Crown Center, Kansas City, Mo.

The goals for this event are to help prevent an act of agroterrorism in the United States through a well-coordinated intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination process; to develop a technical and tactical response capability sufficient to neutralize and eliminate a potential attack; and to educate the agriculture community on the role of law enforcement in responding to threats directed at the nation's food supply. Conference attendees will include representatives from the law enforcement, agriculture, food-processing, scientific, academic, health, and medical communities, as well as government officials. For more information, go to www.fbi-isa.org.

SLU Changes Newsletter Publishing Cycle:

The newsletter board at the Institute for Bio-Security at the Saint Louis University School of Public Health has decided to alter the publishing schedule for its newsletter. Previously a monthly publication, the newsletter will now be published on a quarterly basis. The Institute provides many useful BT-related materials. Its website is <http://bioterrorism.slu.edu>.

Staff Changes

Vince Stevens, RPh, joined PHP&R on December 20, 2004, as the state SNS Coordinator. Prior to joining PHP&R Vince worked with the North Carolina Office of Rural Health in the N.C. Senior Care Program and Prescription Assistance Programs for low income families. Prior to that Vince worked in the pharmacy benefits management industry as a clinical account manager serving government, managed care and Blue Cross/Blue Shield clients. Vince's pharmacy career also includes several years in retail as a district manager for Revco Drug Stores in Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Michigan and North Carolina.

Regional Surveillance Teams



Alamance, Chatham, Orange, Person, Franklin, Wake, Warren, Durham, Vance, Granville

Incident Command System Training: A PHRST Partnership

Global disasters such as the tsunami earthquake, as well as local incidents in North Carolina involving ice storms, hurricanes and infectious disease outbreaks, underscore the need to be prepared to manage these events efficiently and quickly. PHRST 4, working in collaboration with PHRST 6, recently offered introductory Incident Command System (ICS) Training for public health and partners to Region 4.

PHRST 6 organized this training based on materials developed by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group but with an emphasis on application to public health events. The training focused on introduction to ICS (level 100) followed by instruction on developing an incident action plan and common responsibilities. Representatives from emergency management presented the unified command concept and then scenarios involving public health and first responders were introduced to facilitate practice with newly learned ICS skills. At the end of the day and after completing a test participants were certified at ICS level 100.

The course received enthusiastic reviews and requests were made for more advanced ICS level training. Additional regional ICS trainings are planned this spring by the PHP&R and PHRST 6. This training demonstrates the power of sharing experience and expertise among PHRSTs to accomplish a common goal in a true team spirit.



Alleghany, Ashe, Caswell, Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Guilford, Montgomery, Randolph, Rockingham, Stokes, Surry, Watauga, Wilkes, Yadkin

PHRST 5 Unveils Project 516

In an effort to further enhance public health response initiatives across North Carolina, PHRST-5 has initiated "Rapid Response Project 516." Led by PHRST 5 Principal Investigator Mark Smith the project will bring technology and related training to the state's six other PHRSTs. Project 516 takes the lessons learned from a two-year regional pilot project and turns it into a cutting-edge statewide effort that integrates GIS (Geographic Information Systems), GPS (Global Positioning Systems), and electronic field data collection into public health preparation and response at the regional and state levels. The deliverables in the project include the following:

1. Establish a project advisory committee that including:
 - Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response
 - NC Public Health Regional Surveillance Teams (7)
 - UNC-Greensboro Department of Geography
 - NC State University Center for Earth Observation
 - WNC Public Health Incubator Project
 - Guilford County Health Department
 - NC Department of Agriculture
2. Extend electronic field data collection capability to all seven PHRSTs and the Raleigh office of PHP&R.
3. Equip each PHRST and PHP&R with multiple handheld computers, GPS units, and GIS software for desktop and handhelds, along with training in the multiple technologies involved.
4. Establish two Homeland Security GIS Research Assistantships: one at UNC-Greensboro and the other at the Center for Earth Observation at NCSU to provide staffing and technical support to the project.

5. Develop and provide targeted and specialized GIS training for project participants.
6. Develop and disseminate a set of customized data collection forms for Rapid Needs Assessment, outbreak investigation, mass immunization clinics, and other public health field data collection needs.
7. Collaborate closely with the WNC Public Health Incubator Project. The Incubator Project is developing similar capacity to use handheld computers equipped with GIS and GPS for field data collection for public health preparation and response.
8. Institute system tests and exercises at the regional and state levels on the use of electronic field data collection for Rapid Needs Assessment, outbreak investigation, and Strategic National Stockpile/mass prophylaxis.
9. Collaborate with NCDHHS Emergency Programs Office to develop dynamic online form builder application and improve access to the MultiHazard Threat Database for PHRSTs.

Much of the groundwork for the project has begun and tangible results should be seen in the coming weeks with the acquisition of needed hardware and software. The technology being distributed enables data collection to be digitized at the point of capture via interview, web, or kiosk. This allows data to be analyzed almost instantaneously giving investigators more lead time to begin control measures that will reduce morbidity and mortality in dynamic outbreak situations. The GIS component of the project affords the opportunity to characterize the data in terms of place. This can be helpful in understanding the geographic distribution of data, areas of isolation and quarantine, strategic placement of vaccination/prophylaxis clinics, placement of other resources, areas of exposure, hazard modeling, and more.

Anyone interested in learning more about Rapid Response Project 516, please contact Dr. Mark Smith or Steve Ramsey via www.co.guilford.nc.us/government/publichealth/phrst/.



Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Yancey

PHRST 6 Team Leader Martha Salyers presented “Who’s On PHRST?” and “Making the Diagnosis” to Environmental Health staff in Wilmington as part of the Environmental Health Standards of Practice Disease Outbreak Investigation training. She also presented at the Asheville and Greenville trainings.

Martha has been granted Provisional Affiliate Staff status at Mission Hospitals in Asheville, Region 6’s only tertiary care hospital. This is a designation to enable regional public health to gain rapid access to hospital physicians, records, and patients in a public health emergency. It is not synonymous with admitting privileges, but would allow consultation, record review, and patient interviewing by public health without the necessity of clearance by hospital administration during an event.

Martha and Industrial Hygienist Wendy Kady have conducted trainings in respiratory protection, chemical and biological agents to the SMAT III in Henderson County. They will be assisting with future SMAT II and III trainings as well.

Clay County BT Planner Darlene Lowe has developed an excellent SNS Plan. To test the plan, Epidemiologist Pat Fugate facilitated a tabletop exercise for Clay County. Key agencies from the county were represented and the exercise met the objective to increase awareness of the issues surrounding acquisition of the SNS. Plans for functional and full scale exercises to further assess the plan are in the works.

Wendy and Administrative Assistant Anita Dupree were honored to meet and learn from William Patrick, the research biologist best known as a pioneer in development and study of bioweapons in the United States beginning at Ft. Detrick in 1951. Mr. Patrick serves as faculty in the Louisiana State University course “Emergency Response to Domestic Biological Incidents” sponsored by NCEM and recently offered in Asheville.

Pat was recently appointed Chair of the Emergency Services Committee of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM). This is an emerging committee that unites EM, PH, EMS, Law Enforcement and other community response agencies on the national level. The committee will address emergency response collaboratively and provide a forum to communicate emergency management principles. The committee will provide a conduit for IAEM to accurately represent emergency services issues with the Department of Homeland Security.

Martha attended the CDC's Public Health Preparedness Conference in Atlanta with the North Carolina contingent last month. She and other attendees brought home useful information about a risk communication resource created by California, an exercise involving public health and law enforcement that furthers experience in forensic epidemiology, program evaluation, and much more.



Alexander, Anson, Cabarrus, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly and Union

PHRST 7 ushered in the New Year with the inaugural Region 7 Preparedness meeting, held on January 10. The meeting brought together agencies and functions to serve the entire 12-county region, providing an opportunity of communication and information sharing.

Participants in the meeting included hazmat regional response team, academia, SBI, ALERT, Public Health Regional Laboratory, Metrolina Trauma Advisory Committee, regional emergency management, Urban Area Security Initiative (USAI), and Department of Agriculture, Regional Response Team and PHRST-7. Each participant updated the regional partners on notable activities that they have been involved in and on upcoming exercises and trainings.

The Region 7 Preparedness meeting is held the second Monday of every month at the PHRST-7 Office located at 618 N. College Street, Charlotte.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Defense conducted a tabletop exercise of the Catastrophic Incident Response Annex (CIRA) in Charlotte on January 27 to assess the level of local, regional, state, and federal preparedness to respond to a catastrophic incident. In the exercise scenario, a 10,000-ton nuclear

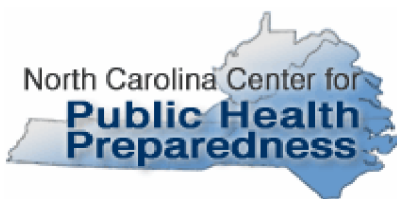
bomb was detonated in the center of Charlotte's business district. This act of terrorism led to extreme number of problems for the exercise participants to deal with, including: mass casualties, deaths, evacuations; fires; radiation contamination; security; search and rescue operations; mass care; decontamination; orphans; communication; and shelters.

Representatives from federal, state, and local government from all emergency responder groups were present as well as a large portion of Region 7 counties. The participants quickly realized that such an event would not only require a major response effort and demand for resources in Mecklenburg County, but would greatly impact the region and state as well. Coordinating response efforts over multiple jurisdictions and levels of government became a major focus of discussion, as well as identifying needs each would have. The regional partners came to a consensus that there was a tremendous need for each county developing their own Catastrophic Incident Response Annex (CIRA) in their All Hazards Plan, and as equally important, developing a regional CIA plan. Much of the discussion and issues raised from the exercise will serve as an excellent starting point to develop these plans.

Counties in Region 7 have begun training public health workers in Weapons of Mass Destruction Awareness. Mecklenburg County held the first of its classes on February 11 and Cleveland County is to begin its training in April. PHRST 7 Epidemiologist Belinda Worsham is a certified trainer for the program.

As introduced in January of this year the course is a product of the Office for Domestic Preparedness under the direction of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. It is designed to provide awareness level training to all employees of the 10 designated responder agencies, of which public health is one. This course provides a common baseline to ensure nationwide consistency in WMD education and training. The six-hour course covers the five WMD components, chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive.

The Region 7 BT coordinators gathered on Wednesday, February 23 for their bimonthly meeting hosted by the Lincoln County Health Department. After the welcome and introductions, Region 7 Team Leader Stephen Keener presented a briefing on developing and maintaining effective Epi Teams. Proper Epi Team composition, regular and consistent meeting times, and anticipation of community problems were identified as key principles in the success of Epi Teams. The BT coordinators then shared their activities and challenges with each other. There also was discussion about developing local partnerships among first responder agencies, hospitals, emergency management, and public health.



Online Certificate in Field Epidemiology Available in Fall 2005

According to a survey conducted by the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) in November 2001, 42 percent of epidemiologists working in state and territorial health departments have had no formal training in epidemiology. To address this need, an online Certificate in Field Epidemiology has been developed that allows people to attend a top university at a reasonable cost, with 12 academic credits

that can be transferred into a graduate program. Courses will be taught completely online by faculty in the Department of Epidemiology at the UNC School of Public Health.

Courses will cover concepts and methods of conducting field epidemiology, as well as public health surveillance and infectious disease epidemiology. The first class will begin in fall 2005. To find out more or to apply online, visit www.sph.unc.edu/nciph/fieldepi/.

The online Certificate in Field Epidemiology was developed by the Department of Epidemiology and the North Carolina Center for Public Health Preparedness in the North Carolina Institute for Public Health.

Editor's Note:

The purpose of this newsletter is to provide information briefs that are useful and timely. It is designed to be scanned quickly to determine topics of interest and then provide pertinent information in two or three paragraphs. The primary contributors to the newsletter are the Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response and the state's seven Public Health Regional Surveillance Teams. This is because the PHRST Line Report is one of our primary communication tools as well as an historical record of our efforts. Topics submitted by counties, partners and stakeholders are also welcome as they pertain to bioterrorism and natural outbreak preparedness. Submissions should be e-mailed to our editor at Bill.Furney@ncmail.net.

This newsletter is also posted at www.epi.state.nc.us/epi/phpr/newsletters.html.

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