

**Emergency Response
Communication Planning and Preparation
Checklist**

! Partners

- ' Identify important partners now - before an event occurs: law enforcement, medical, media, first responders
- ' Clarify levels of jurisdiction and responsibility
- ' Clarify the roles of each group
- ' Clarify how information will be shared (i.e., who is responsible and “in charge” when during process of releasing information)
- ' Obtain and regularly update all partners’ phone/fax/cell numbers including those at the state and national level that might be needed as well as after hours contacts
- ' Designate alternate spokespersons and delegate responsibility to them...start now...
- ' Identify credible communicators/spokespersons from partners in a variety of sectors who elicit trust and respect

! Public Inquiry

- ' Identify qualified people to take phone inquiries; consider staff from throughout the health department as well as in partner organizations
- ' Consider recruiting volunteers from medical community to help with phones, esp. infectious disease specialists
- ' Train communication and other staff as well as volunteers now with basic information and do updates if information changes significantly
- ' Consider phone system/contractor that can supply phone menu that directs type of caller and level of information desired:
 - < general information about the threat
 - < tip line...listing particular actions people can take to protect themselves
 - < reassurance/counseling
 - < referral information for health care/medical facility workers
 - < referral information for epidemiologists or others needing to report cases
 - < lab/treatment protocols
 - < managers looking for policy statements for employees
- ' Categorize information from public inquiry lines immediately and use to craft proactive messages for the public and media statements
 - < REFRAME (or approach?) public inquiry as a dialogue opportunity - receiving as much valuable information as delivered

! **Emergency Operations Center**

- ' Identify available location(s) that can provide proper support...computer, phone, copiers, fax, creature comforts
- ' Have both cell and regular phone capability...cellular use unpredictable during crisis
- ' Have alternate location(s) if needed
- ' Have hard copies of important data...printed versions that can be faxed or transported in case of computer/equipment failure
- ' Make sure everyone in loop has consistent information...the same contacts and information sources
- ' Have a plan to stagger staffing schedule to prevent burnout

! **Press Briefings/Releases**

- ' Determine approval/clearance processes at all levels...try to make it as expedient as possible
- ' Set a specific daily time for press briefings
- ' Identify qualified print/on-air spokespersons ahead of time...train if necessary...have several trained back-up spokespersons in case lead speakers are not available
- ' Start developing Q & As and press kits ahead of time for all potential Bioterrorism agents
- ' Brainstorm Q & As with information from BOTH public inquiry lines and media coverage
- ' Keep all media and spokespersons contact information up-to-date
- ' Trust and empower your Public Information Officers to do the job they were hired to do

! **General Tips:**

- ' Get a laptop and portable printer (and paper) and make sure they work
- ' Find ways to communicate with agencies in other states in a timely fashion; neighboring health departments may be able to help you in times of crisis
- ' Start promoting services of state/county health department so public knows where to call
- ' Identify and utilize all local media...radio, newspapers, local access
- ' Identify locations where people can access information..libraries...public schools...grocery stores....do not assume everyone has computers/tv/radio
- ' Keep your whole team informed with consistent information
- ' Keep printed manuals of all material
- ' Voice mail can slow things down - identify someone who can personally deliver crucial messages

Source: "Managing the Media and Public Health Communications" teleconference, 11/15/01, sponsored by CDC Office of Communication and the National Public Health Information Coalition (NPHIC)