


1



ICE STORM!

a "mini tabletop" exercise for home care agencies

HCA Education and Research
Winter 2010 - 2011

2

What is a tabletop exercise?

- People come together to review and discuss a hypothetical emergency situation
- Designed to allow participants to talk through plans and problems
- NOT designed to measure anyone's performance
- Serves as a springboard for further planning and more comprehensive exercises

3

Exercise Format

- This tabletop is designed for you to do on your own, with your staff and/or colleagues
- The scenario has five sections with discussion questions following
- At the end of the scenario, everyone should participate in a debriefing or "hotwash" and discuss successes, failures, and lessons learned

4

Exercise Roles/Rules

- Facilitator (voice over for this drill)
 - Provide instructions, tell the story, introduce the questions, guide the discussion
- Participants (you)
 - Immerse yourself as if the scenario were truly occurring in your jurisdiction, using resources that are available to you (Emergency Operations Plan, policies, procedures, references)
 - Participate in the group discussions
- Evaluators (someone who doesn't participate)
 - Observe the exercise to evaluate the process

5

Ground Rules

- Respond as if the scenario is real
- Play the role of your department throughout the exercise
- Operate within current resource constraints, knowledge base and realities
- Use your plan as the construct for your decisions

6

Objectives

By the end of this exercise, you should be able to:

- Describe your individual role in the response
- Identify at least one gap in your agency's existing Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)
- Identify your personal knowledge gaps
- Understand and plan for potential specific needs of both staff and patients during an ice storm emergency
- Identify and contact appropriate partnering agencies during business hours as well as after hours

7

Today - Ice Storm Warning

- Winter is here!!! A Special Weather Statement identifies an impending Ice Storm
- Forecasters are expecting freezing rain to produce ice accumulation greater than ½ inch

Freezing Rain Warning Criteria

8

Heavy Rains & Icing Expected

- National Weather Service is reporting ice accumulations in excess of 3 inches and a warm air mass is expected along with the dense layer of cold air that will produce significant rainfall.
- Heavy rainfall combined with significant runoff from melting ice may produce flooding

9

The Storm Strengthens

- Winter storm watches throughout the Mid Atlantic Region.
- High threat of downed trees and power lines.
- Severe flooding and icing expected.

10

Questions - I

- How will this storm impact your agency operations?
- What is your agency's activation procedure and staffing plan for emergency situations?
- What information do you have available for patients to assist them in storm preparation?

11


Local Government Prepares

Your County Health Department and Emergency Management Office requests local healthcare providers to review emergency plans relating to:

- Downed trees & power outages
- Hazardous road conditions
- Interruptions in public transportation
- Flooding
- Evacuation & Sheltering

12

Pre-Storm Readiness



- Shelters opened, including a limited number of medical and functional needs shelters to accommodate those with out power.
- Media publicizes shelter locations

A Plea from the Governor

- The Governor appears on TV, making a personal appeal to all people in the path of the storm to avoid traveling in the icy conditions as roads will be treacherous and asks people to sign up at NY-Alert to get emergency updates.



History Repeats Itself

- The Ice Storm of 2008 left upstate New York and much of New England without power for days and in some places, for several weeks - are still fresh on everyone's mind.
- What lessons were learned?
- What was done right? What wasn't?


Questions - II

- Who will identify the vulnerable/special needs populations you need to reach immediately among your patients?
- What emergency supplies should your patients and staff have on hand? Have you provided any "shelter in place training?"
- What support does your staff need to be able to maintain agency operations?
- Do your patients know what type of shelter they should go to, where it is, and how they will get there?

16

The Storm Hits

- Everything is encased in ice
- Downed trees, utility poles and power lines are widespread
- Roadways are sheets of ice and many are closed




17

Questions - III

Situation assessment – at this time:

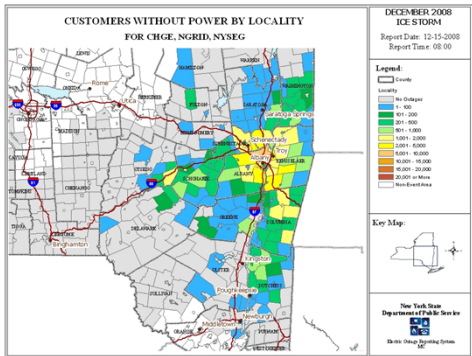
- What's your current agency management or incident action plan?
- Without normal means of communication, how will you communicate with your staff?
- Who is in charge of your Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)?
- Who do you call at the Department of Health? And what questions should you be asking?
- If the roads are closed, who should you be talking to about getting "essential worker" status for your employees?

18



ICE EVERYWHERE!!!

- Roads are closed
- It's cold and windy
- People are trapped in devastated areas without power or heat
- Damaged shelters must be evacuated
- Creates overflow in other shelters



Response Effort Challenged

- Fire, police and first responders severely hindered by roadways
- Staff shortages everywhere
- Destroyed or damaged vehicles and equipment



Homes burning from chimney fires



Restoring Daily Operations

Officials estimate that it will take weeks and maybe even months to restore critical infrastructure to all areas.

- Power
- Natural gas
- Communication systems
- Transportation
- Garbage collection

Need for More Medical Attention

- Shelters fill and overflow as people run out of food, cold tolerance and patience
- Healthcare providers responding to sharp increase in patients
 - Hypothermia and Frost bite
 - Carbon Monoxide Poisoning
 - Respiratory Infections

Winter Wonderland Nightmare



Questions - IV

- What process do you have in place to locate patients who may be in shelters? How are you collaborating with shelters to take care of them? Will they ask you to take on additional shelter patients? Can you? Are you allowed to? Who will pay for the care?
- Will your staff be staying in shelters as well? What about child care and other family responsibilities?
- What other agencies/providers should you be collaborating with?
- Who is in charge of communicating with outside entities?

No Easy Resolution

- Recovery is slow despite round the clock efforts
- The ice is not melting
- Damage is widespread and bitter cold weather limits the amount of time crews can put in each day

Questions - V

It's going to be a long haul...

- What services might your staff or patient evacuees need when displaced for longer than a few days?
- Do you know what a disaster assistance center is and what services it provides? How do you find out about them?
- Will you need any mental health supports for patients and/or staff?

End of Storm Scenario

Discussion

- How did you do? Anything "stump" you?
- What do you need to improve on?
- Should your emergency plan be modified in any way?

After Action Report

- *Brief overview of the exercise*
- *Major strengths demonstrated during the exercise*
- *Areas that require improvement*
- **Template:**
www.wvdhsem.gov/Training/training_AAR_Template07.doc

Communications Resources

- NY-Alert
<http://www.nyalert.gov/home.aspx>
- Advanced Warning System – for people with special needs and for providers that serve them:
<http://www.advancewarningsystemnyc.org>
- Government Emergency Telecommunications Service - GETS:
<http://gets.ncs.gov/faq.html>

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