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LESSON LEARNED

Strategic National Stockpile Operations: Training Receipt, Storage, and Staging Facility Managers in Cold Chain Handling Requirements for Vaccines

SUMMARY

Receipt, storage, and staging (RSS) facility personnel should receive guidance and training on cold chain handling requirements for vaccines. This will enable personnel to address temperature control and tracking issues throughout the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) distribution process.

DESCRIPTION

On August 1, 2008, the Maricopa County, Arizona, Department of Public Health (MCDPH) sponsored an RSS Multi-Site Distribution Full-Scale Exercise (FSE). The FSE assessed the county's SNS distribution plans and procedures for receipt, storage, staging, and delivery of SNS materials. The FSE evaluated MCDPH response plans and capabilities for public health emergencies involving distribution of vaccines or other temperature-controlled assets. The FSE coincided with a mass vaccination FSE that was held the following day. Thirty six representatives from eleven state, county, and local agencies participated in the FSE.

The "cold chain" is the process used to keep and distribute vaccines in good condition. This process includes storing vaccines at the proper temperature to maintain their potency. For more about the cold chain, see the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's [Vaccine Storage and Handling Toolkit](#).

In the FSE, the RSS facility received two vaccines and broke them down into equal allotments for six vaccination sites. The vaccines were then transported to three clinics while maintaining cold chain requirements. Exercise observers noted that several RSS personnel were unfamiliar with handling vaccines or with the proper method of packing and maintaining cold chain requirements. The FSE after-action report recommended that RSS staff members be provided with training and additional written instructions on vaccine handling and packing. This should include information and guidance about maintaining cold chain handling requirements. Shortly after the FSE, MCDPH expanded its RSS field operations guide to include specific vaccine handling and repacking instructions, created a vaccine temperature log for use by RSS staff, and revised RSS dispatch forms to allow staff members to record vaccine temperature during repacking.

RSS facility personnel should receive guidance and training on cold chain handling requirements for vaccines. This will enable personnel to address temperature control and tracking issues throughout the SNS distribution process.

CITATION

Maricopa County Department of Public Health. *Maricopa County Department of Health Emergency Management RSS Full-Scale Distribution Exercise After Action Report/Improvement Plan*. 16 Feb 2009.
<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=35231>

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