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Lessons Learned Information Sharing

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LESSON LEARNED

Joint Information Centers: Developing Standard Operating Procedures for Communicating Telephone Line Functions

SUMMARY

Exercise managers should consider developing standard operating procedures (SOP) to identify which telephone numbers partner agencies should use to communicate with a joint information center (JIC). This can help streamline information sharing between the JIC and its partner agencies.

DESCRIPTION

The 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic began in the spring of 2009 when Mexico experienced an unusually high number of respiratory illnesses. By mid-April, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported confirmed cases of H1N1 in several US states. Columbus Public Health and the Franklin County Board of Health established a JIC in Franklin County, Ohio, on April 29, 2009, to disseminate accurate and timely information about H1N1 to residents of central Ohio. Ten state and local agencies deployed personnel to the JIC, which operated for seven days. JIC personnel drafted press releases, answered phone calls, and communicated directly with the local media. When the JIC demobilized on May 6, 2009, the Ohio Department of Health had reported 5 confirmed H1N1 cases in the state, with 2 confirmed and 1 probable case in Franklin County.

Emergency managers had assigned two telephone lines for incoming media calls and two other lines for JIC personnel to communicate with its partner agencies. However, the JIC did not sufficiently publicize each telephone line's number or function to its partner agencies or the media. Partner agencies called incorrect telephone lines or contacted JIC staff members on their personal or work cellular telephones. This hindered JIC operations and complicated information sharing between the JIC and its partner agencies. Further, JIC personnel encountered difficulties determining which phones were ringing and for what those phone lines had been designated. The after-action report recommends that emergency managers develop SOPs to identify which numbers partner agencies should use to communicate with the JIC.

Exercise managers should consider developing SOPs to identify which telephone numbers partner agencies should use to communicate with a JIC. This can help streamline information sharing between the JIC and its partner agencies.

CITATION

Central Ohio Public Information Network. *H1N1 Influenza Outbreak: JIC After-Action Report*. 13 Jul 2009.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=38630>

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