

RELATED TERMS

- Emergency Support Function-4
- Emergency Support Function-8
- Tabletop Exercise



**Lessons Learned
Information Sharing**
www.LLIS.gov

PRIMARY DISCIPLINES

- Public Health
- Emergency Medical Services
- Healthcare

LESSON LEARNED

Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Planning: Examining Triage Alternatives to Minimize Surge

SUMMARY

Pandemic influenza planning efforts should examine triage alternatives to attempt to minimize surge and emergency medical services (EMS) wait times after delivering patients to healthcare facilities.

DESCRIPTION

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals/Office of Public Health sponsored a series of pandemic influenza tabletop exercises (TTX) throughout the state from December 2006 to February 2007. On January 25, 2007, the Louisiana Office of Public Health (OPH) Region III conducted a TTX in Thibodaux, LA. TTX participants represented 7 state organizations, 47 regional and local organizations, and the American Red Cross. The goal of the TTX was to engage community partners in a discussion of Emergency Support Function (ESF)-8 (public health and emergency medical) roles and responsibilities, expectations, and anticipated challenges in the face of an influenza pandemic. One TTX objective was to assess risk communications consistency, message content, and methods for dissemination. The TTX scenario consisted of a severe influenza pandemic emerging in OPH Region III.

Region III

Louisiana's Office of Public Health Region III is comprised of the parishes between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, including Assumption, Lafourche, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Mary, and Terrebonne Parishes.

TTX participants observed that the public will surge to healthcare facilities during a pandemic outbreak, especially once they become aware that some facilities are distributing antivirals to patients. Participants noted that healthcare facilities need to begin planning for a possible influx of patients, which is anticipated to exceed "traditional" surge planning for other types of emergencies. The TTX after-action report (AAR) concluded that Region III "should collaborate with the healthcare facilities in the area to come up with possible solutions to managing the anticipated surge." The AAR recommended that Region III consider several triage alternatives as part of its regional planning to help manage the anticipated surge, including:

- Encouraging local hospital chief executive officers and medical directors to create holding areas to free up ambulance teams;
- Planning to establish a phone triage system to limit the number of ambulance runs;
- Engaging ESF-4 (firefighting) for assistance as alternate EMS providers; and

- Discussing with regional medical associations the potential for placing healthcare providers with ambulances to conduct home-based triage.

Pandemic influenza planning efforts should examine triage alternatives to attempt to minimize surge and EMS wait times after delivering patients to healthcare facilities.

CITATION

Louisiana Office of Public Health, Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals. *Pandemic Influenza External Tabletop Exercise Program After-Action Reports*. 26 Feb 2007.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=26393>

DISCLAIMER

Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS.gov) is the US Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency's national online network of lessons learned, best practices, and innovative ideas for the emergency response and homeland security communities. The Web site and its contents are provided for informational purposes only, without warranty or guarantee of any kind, and do not represent the official positions of the US Department of Homeland Security. For more information on *LLIS.gov*, please email Feedback@llis.dhs.gov or visit www.llis.gov.