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MRC-FNC Participates in Countywide Areosolized Anthrax Exercise

On May 12, 2010, five Far Northern California (FNC) MRC volunteers participated in a countywide areosolized anthrax exercise at the United States Postal Service (USPS) Redding, California–Churn Creek main mail facility.

The MRC was requested by the Shasta County Public Health Department to participate with the United States Postal Inspection Service and USPS employees.

The exercise solidified the relationship between all participating agencies and emergency responders, and it tested the readiness to mount a unified response to a Biohazard Detection System (BDS) alarm at the post office.

About BDS

The BDS is used to help counter the threat of anthrax in the mail at the post office. Once the BDS alarm is sounded, there is a multi-agency response to extract the filter cartridge, decontaminate people who may have been exposed to the anthrax, and provide prophylactic medications to people who may have been exposed to areosolized anthrax. During the exercise in March, the current processes and procedures for a BDS alarm response were tested and evaluated.

In order to participate in the exercise, volunteers had to complete registration via the state's ESAR-VHP database, receive a background check and identification badges showing their MRC-FNC affiliation, complete unit orientation, ICS 100 and NIMS 700 classes. To prepare, during the morning of the countywide anthrax contamination exercise, the MRC received just-in-time training related to the exercise plan and evaluation tools.

Volunteer Roles during the Exercise

During the exercise, five MRC volunteers functioned as exercise observers and evaluators using Homeland Security Exercise and

Evaluation Program (HSEEP) tools and methods to evaluate capabilities tested. They were stationed in several areas of activity that tested targeted capabilities. MRC volunteers also helped to ensure the exercise met HSEEP-compliance measures.

Essentially, HSEEP is a methodology used for planning, conducting, and evaluating exercises; it provides guidance, such as evaluation tools through a Web-based toolkit.

Several objectives were created and met for the exercise, including the implementation of interoperable tactical communications, on-site incident management and transition to unified command, responder health and safety, mass prophylaxis, and laboratory testing.

Identified Strengths

Evaluators are critical to the success of the exercise because information provided by evaluators is the foundation of an improvement plan. A key strength identified during this particular exercise was that the MRC evaluators were both knowledgeable and experienced in emergency operations, which gave them an excellent base from which to evaluate. Overall, the exercise was a success, and the evaluators helped to identify several key areas of focus for improvement.

Unit coordinator, Sherryl Berryman says, "This was a valuable first step for our MRC unit to be asked to participate in such a large and important exercise. It allowed partner agencies to see what the MRC volunteers could do and it gave the volunteers a chance to expand their working knowledge of unified command, anthrax response in a local community, and the duties of other responder agencies."

MRC/NACCHO Connections

Learn About the DGMQ Program at NACCHO

The Division of Global Migration and Quarantine (DGMQ) project at NACCHO was developed based on results of a workshop held in March 2009 with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's DGMQ. During this workshop, the Federal Risk-Based Border Strategy was unveiled. NACCHO and the CDC-DGMQ strive to enhance the capacity of local health departments (LHDs) to provide risk-based disease screening strategies to reduce the impact of pandemic influenza and other communicable disease. The primary means of achieving this goal are to identify, create, and expand opportunities for collaboration among federal, state, and local partners to plan for, respond to, and recover from an influenza pandemic and other communicable disease incidents.

A "Community Mitigation Resource Kit" was developed to be a Web-

based resource guide that provides a central location for LHDs to obtain planning guidelines, models, recommendations, and strategies on the development and implementation of community mitigation measures taken to limit the spread and reduce the impact of pandemic influenza. To view this toolkit, visit <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/DGMO/comm-mitigation-kit.cfm>.

In addition, five case studies were created to demonstrate how local health departments collaborated with local universities and businesses to respond to and mitigate the effects of H1N1 influenza pandemic. Read about how these unique partnerships were developed, maintained, and its impact.

For more information, visit <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/DGMO/partnersinprep.cfm>.

For more information about the DGMO project at NACCHO, visit <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/DGMO>.

Announcements



Register Today and Submit an Abstract for the 2011 Public Health Preparedness Summit

The 2011 Public Health Preparedness Summit will be held in Atlanta February 22-25, 2011. Register and submit your abstract today! Abstracts must be submitted by Monday, August 16 at 11:59 PM Eastern Time.

Abstracts are being accepted for the following:

- Pre-Conference Workshops (2, 4, and 8-hours)
- Interactive Sessions (90 minutes)
- Sharing/Roundtable Sessions (45 minutes)
- Poster Presentations

Learn more about submitting an abstract at <http://www.phprep.org/2011/abstract1.cfm>.

Register early to save money for the 2011 Public Health Preparedness Summit! Register today at <http://www.phprep.org/2011/register/>.

To learn more about why you should attend the 2011 Summit, visit <http://www.phprep.org>.

Spring 2010 "MRC-In Focus" Available

The spring 2010 edition of the "MRC-In Focus" has been mailed. If you are supposed to be receiving the newsletter in the mail and you have not, please e-mail mrcnewsletter@naccho.org.

The online version of the newsletter will be available at <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/MRC/newsletter.cfm>.

Do You Receive the "Preparedness Brief?"

Subscribe to the "Preparedness Brief," NACCHO's free bi-monthly public health preparedness e-newsletter. The newsletter features announcements, events, resources and "Stories from the Field" relevant to today's public health preparedness professional.

Sign up to receive the "Preparedness Brief" today! Visit <http://www.naccho.org/topics/emergency/AHIP/preparednessbrief.cfm> to subscribe.

H1N1 Stories from the Field

NACCHO has been collecting stories from the field from local health departments nationwide. Discover what practices have worked for health departments and what lessons were learned during the H1N1 response. You can also submit your own story from the field.

http://www.naccho.org/topics/H1N1/stories_search.cfm

2010 Integrated Training Summit Presentations Available Online

Presentations from the 2010 Integrated Training Summit held in Las Vegas, are now available online.

<http://www.integratedtrainingsummit.org/presentations/2010.php>

To submit information for either MRC: In Touch or MRC: In Focus, please contact Megan Skupien at mskupien@naccho.org or (202)783-1376.



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