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Featured Article

Developing and Enacting Animal Disaster Preparedness and Response Plans

The Louisiana Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals estimates that “tens of thousands” of animals died as a result of Hurricane Katrina.¹ The following year, Congress passed the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) and the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Act of 2006 (PETS Act). These acts of Congress addressed the need to include pets and livestock in emergency response plans. The PKEMRA made Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) the sole federal agency responsible for federal emergency response, and included pet rescue and sheltering within FEMA’s responsibilities. The PETS Act of 2006 requires states that receive federal funds for emergency management to have disaster plans for animals.² Despite this, a 2013 study of nine states affected by the policy concluded that animal response plans are still not sufficient, though compliant with the law.³ A 2018 evaluation of Texas’ emergency response supports this conclusion and found that while companion animal response plans can be improved, there has been an overall positive shift towards including them in response plans.⁴ Furthermore, a 2011 poll by the ASPCA found that more than one-third of American pet owners lack disaster plans for their pets.⁵

MRC Units can help better prepare their communities and animals for disasters. The 2017 Challenge Awards of the South Carolina Veterinary Reserve Corps (SC VRC) and the Indiana State Board of Animal Health Veterinary Reserve Corps (IN BOAH) focused on animal disaster preparedness and response. Their projects revealed three steps MRCs can take to address this area of emergency management:

1. Develop community animal emergency preparedness and response plans
2. Strengthen community outreach & recruitment from stakeholder groups
3. Enact specific volunteer trainings

Community Animal Emergency Plans

BOAH sought to improve state-wide animal emergency preparedness by hosting multiple sessions of courses focused on disaster planning for animals. BOAH hosted a FEMA virtual tabletop exercise on Agricultural-Based Animal Shelter Management with 60-70 participants from across the state. Additionally, BOAH later offered [Extension Disaster Education Network’s Strengthening Community Agrosecurity Preparedness](#) workshop to county extension educators at five locations throughout the state, training upwards of 100 people. Finally, BOAH helped districts compile large animal disaster response go-kits, using [Louisiana’s Ralph’s Responder Bags](#) as a model. One kit was distributed to each parish in the state. Participants in these trainings were able to share knowledge with their respective localities and further develop their animal disaster response plans. IN BOAH reported successful response to animals affected by flooding events in the spring of 2018.

Community Outreach & Recruitment

Through community outreach, MRCs can educate individuals, form partnerships with stakeholders in animal disaster preparedness and response, and recruit veterinary and non-veterinary volunteers interested in animal disaster preparedness and response.

Volunteer Training

Training volunteers, especially non-veterinary volunteers will allow them to act when disaster strikes. The SC VRC benefitted from an agreement between the South Carolina Emergency Management Division and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) to train and mobilize veterinary and non-veterinary volunteers. As a part of their 2017 Challenge Award, SC VRC held a small animal slack water rescue training event. The 16-hour training included classroom and simulation exercises for 25 participants who learned to safely operate boats, capture and rescue animals from floodwaters, place them in carriers, and bring them to safety. The VRC produced [a video on the training](#). Course materials were provided by the ASPCA. The ASPCA offers a number of webinars on disaster preparedness for animals, which are available [here](#). This type of training is especially important with hurricane season underway and flooding events becoming more frequent.

References:

1. Louisiana SPCA (2016). Hurricane Katrina. *Louisiana SPCA*. Retrieved from <https://www.la-spca.org/katrina>
2. American Veterinary Medical Association (2018). PETS Act (FAQ). *AVMA*. Retrieved from <https://www.avma.org/KB/Resources/Reference/disaster/Pages/PETS-Act-FAQ.aspx>
3. Austin, Jessica J (2013). Shelter from the Storm: Companion Animal Emergency Planning in Nine States. *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 40(4), 11. Retrieved from: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol40/iss4/11/>
4. Glassey, Steve (2018). Did Harvey Learn from Katrina? Initial Observations of the Response to Companion Animals during Hurricane Harvey. *MDPI*, 8(4), 47. Retrieved from <http://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/8/4/47/htm>
5. ASPCA (2011). ASPCA Urges Pet Owners to Plan Ahead for Disasters. *ASPCA*. Retrieved from: <https://www.asPCA.org/about-us/press-releases/asPCA-urges-pet-owners-plan-ahead-disasters>

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MRC/NACCHO Connection

2018 NACCHO Model Practices and Promising Practices Selected

The NACCHO Model and Promising Practices Program nationally recognizes exemplary local public health practices. The 2018 NACCHO Model and Promising Practices were announced at the 2018 NACCHO Annual Conference in New Orleans, July 10-12, 2018. Model Practices are those that develop outstanding local public health initiatives through use of resources, administration, or tools that are easy to replicate. The role of the public health department in these initiatives is essential, characterized by collaboration, innovation, responsiveness, evaluation of processes and outcomes, and sustainability. Promising practices carry out programs or initiatives that show Model Practice potential. NACCHO shares the work of Model and Promising practices through the [Model Practices Database](#). Six of the peer reviewed Model and Promising Practices awarded this year were either MRC focused practices or included utilization of MRC volunteers to carry out public health initiatives.

MRC Unit #0005 Dakota County Health Department (Apple Valley, MN) Childcare Emergency Preparedness Outreach Program (Model Practice)

The Dakota County Childcare Emergency Preparedness Outreach Program, funded in part by a 2017 MRC Challenge Award, sought to improve the understanding of emergency preparedness practices and ensure compliance with new Minnesota regulations requiring childcare providers to have emergency preparedness plans. This was accomplished through the development of two trainings, offered on multiple dates: Childcare Preparedness and Emergency Preparedness Planning for Child Care Providers. Medical Reserve Corps volunteers participated by helping to guide participating childcare providers through developing their own emergency preparedness plans and assembling and distributing emergency preparedness starter kits (included weather radio, a flashlight, first aid kit, emergency blanket, and whistle). The project was able to impact 147 childcare providers in Dakota County, MN.

MRC Unit #0968 Central Nebraska (Hastings, NE) ACT F.A.S.T. Initiative (Promising Practice)

The Act F.A.S. T. (First Available Simple Treatment), funded in part by a 2017 MRC Challenge Award, trains public and private citizens about the importance of bleeding control before EMS arrival as a way to prevent death due to severe bleeding. The training involves tourniquet use, as well as hands-only CPR. The MRC has provided trainings and distributed hundreds of ACT F.A.S.T. kits to police, sheriffs, factories, schools, and churches. The kits include 5.5" shears, protective gloves, a 5x9 Gauze pad, a marker, and a tourniquet. The MRC has trained more than 1200 citizens and is currently working with AARP to amend this initiative for elderly populations.

Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services (LBDHHS) (Long Beach, CA) Public Health Emergency Response Team (Promising Practice)

The LBDHHS expanded its capacity to respond to epidemiological emergencies through developing a Public Health Emergency Response Team (PHERT). The health department was able to recruit and train 37 volunteers for periodic deployment. Volunteers included health department staff and MRC volunteers. The health department provided quarterly three-hour classes in concepts of epidemiology, communicable disease, and outbreak investigations to train these volunteers. The final class included a simulation in which volunteers were able to use their newly-learned skills. Since the implementation of this program in February of 2017, the PHERT has been utilized multiple times to carry out outbreak prevention and response efforts.

MRC Unit #1426 Monroe County (Monroe, MI) Potassium Iodide (KI) Community Education Program (Promising Practice)

Radiological events can release radioactive iodine into the air, which can be absorbed by the thyroid gland, affecting health. Radioactive iodine pills can prevent this absorption and its health effects. Residents living in close proximity to nuclear power plants are advised to keep KI in their homes, in case of emergency. Prior to this initiative, only 15% of the Monroe County population within 10 miles of the power plant had received KI from the

health department. Through an education campaign involving multiple community partners, including MRC volunteers, as well as pharmacists, MRC volunteers educated and distributed KI vouchers, redeemable at local pharmacies. The outreach campaign allowed the health department to distribute KI to 354 more families.

MRC Unit #1105 Uncas Health District (Kensington, CT) Virtual Operations Response Team (VOST) (Promising Practice)

The Uncas Health District used a 2016 MRC Challenge Award to develop a Virtual Operations Response Team platform and train MRC volunteers in its use. The goal of the VOST platform is to use social media analysis help inform the collaborative responses of local emergency management departments during disasters. The UHD contracted with Epimetra of Rochester, NY to develop the VOST platform. Since the project's implementation the VOST has been activated 10 times over 18 months in seven jurisdictions. The most common use of the VOST is to support mass gatherings.

MRC Unit #0034 University of Oklahoma Nursing Unit Nursing Student Summer Externship (Promising Practice)

The Nursing Student Summer externship provides nursing students with strengthened knowledge and skills in disaster response through a summer volunteer experience with OKMRC nurse educators. Twelve students participated in the Nursing Student Externship, contributing over 1283 hours of service and study. Activities included: community event First Aid stations, community preparedness education and outreach, psychological first aid training, and planning a volunteer training workshop. This program is a successful way to recruit new MRC volunteers.

Announcements

The Exchange Newsletter Now Available

The Exchange, a newsletter from [ASPR TRACIE](#), is now available [online](#). The articles in this issue highlight the healthcare response to no-notice incidents (in this case, mass shootings), and shares lessons learned from multiple scenarios: mass shootings at a large outdoor concert attended by thousands, at a nightclub that could hold hundreds, and at a relatively small place of worship. The professionals interviewed discussed how they provided emergency healthcare in the minutes, hours, and days after mass casualty incidents, how their plans worked (or were challenged), and how they will implement lessons learned to planning and exercises to bolster their response should another no-notice incident occur.

[Click here](#) to read this issue of The Exchange.

PHI 2018 Registration

Registration is open for the 2018 [Public Health Informatics Conference](#), August 20 - 23, in Atlanta, GA.

Join NACCHO and the CDC for the next Public Health Informatics (PHI) Conference: ***Connecting Systems and People to Improve Population Health***. The conference considers "population health" to broadly mean "the health outcomes of a group of individuals, including the distributions of such outcomes within the group." However, we also acknowledge that definitions of "population" - and therefore "population health" - vary by sectors and the collective individuals they serve. Recognizing that these sectors are critical components of the public health system, the conference welcomes engagement and perspectives from all sectors on how to collaboratively and comprehensively achieve better health outcomes for those whom they serve.

Request for Health Care Coalitions

ASPR TRACIE has shared a request for coalitions to participate in the health care coalition response leadership course at FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness in Anniston, Alabama. The purpose of the five-day course is to provide instruction and practical experience in optimal practice procedures for preparing and responding to community and regional public health and medical emergencies as a health care coalition leadership team. Read more about the course offerings and registration [here](#).

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