

Session Abstracts

National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)
71st Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition

Terrorism and All-Hazards Preparedness

Thursday, June 21

8:30 – 9:20am

Public Health Leadership Initiative for Emergency Response (PHLIER): A Case-Based Leadership Training Program

Rebecca E. Baron, REHS, Program Assistant, New Jersey Center for Public Health Preparedness, NJ

Drew Harris, DPM, MPH, Assistant Director, New Jersey Center for Public Health Preparedness, NJ

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UMDNJ –SPH developed the Public Health Leadership Initiative for Emergency Response (PHLIER), a case-based leadership training program, which enhances the skills and knowledge of today's mid to senior-level management. The program is designed to 1) foster the next generation of public health leaders; 2) promote excellence in leadership; 3) explore leadership responses to public health emergencies; and 4) encourage mentoring amongst public health leaders of varying experience. This presentation will describe how PHLIER was developed, including how a fictional health department was used as a platform for the case studies. Fellows were charged with effectively applying fundamental principles, plans, and strategies of public health leadership during three simulated emergencies: pandemic influenza, food outbreak, and flood and resulting chemical disaster. The experiences of the twenty emerging leaders located throughout the state of New Jersey who participated in the eight-month initiative will be described.

9:30 – 10:20am

Defining the Emergency Response Roles of Environmental Health Specialists in Northwest Ohio During Emergencies

Niki Lemin, MS, RS, Program Manager, The Ohio State University, OH

Aaron B. Otis, MPH, RS, Northwest Ohio Public Health Preparedness Coordinator, Toledo-Lucas County Health Department, OH

This session will review the reasons for, and consequences associated with, low environmental health involvement during emergencies.

According to a 2005 training needs survey, environmental health specialists in Northwest Ohio rated "Describe your functional role(s) in emergency response and demonstrate your

role(s) in regular drills” as their number one training need. Before training can be developed, the roles must be defined.

A survey to collect information on the emergency response role of the environmental health specialist was given to all emergency management directors, environmental health specialists, health commissioners, and 22 randomly chosen fire departments in NW Ohio. The assumption was that environmental health specialists did not want to be involved. We found that they do want to be involved in emergency response. What they lack is a clearly defined role and focused training. Future steps include developing training, policies, and procedures on emergency response roles for environmental health specialists.

10:30 – 11:20am

Developing a Preparedness Curriculum for Our Region

Adenike Bitto, MD, MPH, DrPH, CHES, FRIPH, Epidemiologist and Associate Professor of Health, East Stroudsburg University, PA

Michelle S. Davis, PhD, Public Health Consultant, PA

Due to prevailing exigencies/recent and ongoing experiences with extensive flooding and other disasters, preparedness is becoming a way of life. Environmental health specialists may be involved with public health emergencies or natural and technological disasters that result from a whole host of causes but with similar outcomes, in terms of human and other adverse effects. These include floods, fires, winter storms/summer heat, mine subsidence, landslides, hurricanes, tornados, power outages, water emergencies, hazardous materials spills, transportation accidents, industrial accidents/ releases, earthquakes / tsunamis, chemical/biological/ radiological/nuclear (cbrne)-terrorism, and the dreaded specter of pandemic influenza. Whatever the cause, responding agencies are charged with one mission – preparedness, response, control and mitigation. Hence the need to develop and conduct regional strategic collaborative training to provide training and help identify relative trainings to public health readiness that increase the environmental health/public health workforce response capabilities. Session participants will discuss and learn about one effort conducted to develop a regional preparedness training curriculum in the northeast.

1:00 – 2:50pm

Environmental Public Health Emergency Response—”What’s in Your Bag?”

Stephanie D. Carey, Health Officer, Montgomery Township Health Dept., NJ

Cory Frank, Community Health Consultant and EHRT Coordinator, Iowa Dept. of Public Health, IA

CDR John D. Smart, MPH, REHS, EH Officer, USPHS, IHS, MD

Mitch Stripling, Preparedness Education Coordinator, Florida Dept. of Health, FL

Everyday work that is performed by environmental health professionals entails sometimes long days in the field. Each environmental health professional must be prepared to use a wide variety of equipment while performing his or her daily work. Responding to an emergency or natural disaster mandates the same requirement. Recent events post 9-11, including several destructive hurricane seasons, have prompted many field responders to prepare “go-bags” that can be transported easily to any scene or disaster area to perform

the many tasks that involves environmental health issues. While there are hundreds of items available to respond, there are several essential items that are imperative to any strike team or responder's bag. The presentation will involve local, state, and federal environmental health responders and what they have prepared in their own go-bags, including personal protective equipment.

3:00 – 3:50pm

Preparing for TAP with a Tapped-Out Budget: How to Continue Preparedness When Funding Has Been Cut

Michèle Samarya-Timm, MA, CHES, REHS, DAAS, Health Officer, Health Educator, Franklin Township Health Dept., NJ

All-hazards preparedness is an integral component of environmental public health, as well as being essential to individuals and business communities. Shrinking budgets have become a critical reality of the world we live in, and this often forces essential preparedness planning to be reduced or sidelined.

Rising to the challenge of essential preparedness activities on limited budgets can be daunting to almost any workplace. However, continuing development of critical preparedness infrastructure under financial constraints can give rise to out-of-the-box solutions and non-traditional partnerships. Motivating buy-in from co-workers, managers, industry partners and stakeholders can serve to launch creative response initiatives that may have otherwise been left untapped. Awareness of existing and often “hidden” resources can help develop preparedness, response and recovery parameters.

This presentation will explore how collaborative efforts, creative assessment, and use of non-traditional resources can serve to augment preparedness planning and help to compensate for shrinking preparedness funding.