

Week 6: Collaboration Cafe: Are You Disaster Ready?

Do you know what your types of crises your healthcare system and community are prepared for? Explore your organization's Emergency Preparedness, or Disaster Plan. Share and discuss:

1. The types of emergencies or disasters for which there is a plan in your organization.
2. How does the organization's plan interface with the local Emergency Management System's Plan?
3. How is communication among agencies/facilities managed?
4. What are the criteria for initiating an official Incident Command System?

Reflect on how your organization's plan is similar and different from those of your classmates.

Hello All,

It is crucial to have a strategy for responding to a variety of unforeseen occurrences and natural disasters. Our facility has protocols in place for many events, including, but not limited to, active shooter, abductions, fire, flooding, and tornadoes. It is of the utmost importance to have a strategy in place far in advance in order to be prepared for any unforeseen incident. It is essential to conduct thorough periodic reviews and make any required improvements to strategies in order to guarantee that it will continue to be effective should an emergency or disaster arise. Our institution maintains frequent lines of communication with the local emergency response department that handles natural disasters; we have termed this group our Command Center. Heavy rains are a common occurrence here, and sometimes we even have tornado watches and warnings. When potentially hazardous weather is threatening, the organization that handles emergency responses contacts the facility by informing this group. By doing this, they guarantee that the proper personnel are aware of the situation and understand what individuals should do in the case of an emergency. Under these circumstances, communication is of the utmost importance, and everyone involved must be aware of the duties that are placed within their respective role. The task of analyzing and responding to messages has been delegated to the Command Center. It is of the utmost importance that this group develop a plan outlining how information will be distributed and who will be responsible for maintaining open communication. During times of crisis, it is priority to coordinate the communication across the different departments in a manner that is both effective and efficient.

-Stacy

Good afternoon all,

Heather, our facility is rather small and communication is handled similar to your facility, only we do not have the same tech capabilities. Much of communication done is one on one between department leaders and personnel. Before the Command Center is activated in the event that severe weather is forecasted, management reaches out personally to keep their workers informed. The staff members are promptly contacted and given instructions on how to proceed during and after an incident. Leaders have regular meetings before and leading up to the event to brief personnel on expectations and plan of action. Staff is alerted and told how to continue after the occurrence.

Taylor, in 2020, we were hit with unusually harsh winter conditions for which the area was ill-prepared. Because snow and ice are rare in our area, residents had a difficult time Navigating such incimate weather, whereas other areas of the country would likely find our predicament comical. We do not have the means to clear roads that other states do. Many workers were either stranded or prevented from making it there because of the icy conditions. Workers who could drive safely on ice were sent by management to transport fellow employees. Managment were seen working in the kitchen and on the units. It was truly inspiring to see everyone pull together for the community. I often wonder, how do communities and facilities manage during severe weather they are not accustomed to having?

-Stacy

- Within my organization the following disaster/emergency plans exist:
- 1) Code Weather - This is typically for tornado warnings and watches but may also include inclement weather which causes rode conditions to be unsafe (such as ice or snow). During this alert all visitors are escorted to the first floor of the building away in the innermost hallway away from windows and doors. If serious threat exists, patients may be moved to hallway areas away from windows.
- 2) Code Yellow - This code represents an active bomb threat and under this code status staff reports directly to the chief executive officer. Staff must avoid the usage of cell phones and an alert for "radio silence" will be given. Danger zones should be blocked off until further inspection by authorized personnel. If the internal disaster response authorization is given all hospital personnel should be removed to a safe distance.
- 3) Code Silver - This code represents an active shooter or hostage situation. If an active shooter is identified the first call should be to 911 followed with a call to the operator to announce a code silver. Per this policy the first step is to evacuate if possible or hide-out (lock doors and hide behind large objects). As a last resort when life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt or disarm the shooter.

- 4) Code Red- This is reserved for a fire. Under this code, the acronyms R.A.C.E. (remove, activate, contain, extinguish) and P.A.S.S. (pull, aim, squeeze, and sweep) are utilized if you are the individual that discovers the fire. For other personnel not in immediate danger, close all doors and windows and contain patients and visitors within the department.
- Other codes exist and include a code triage for partial or full hospital evacuation and a code white for utility system failures.
- The organization interacts closely with the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMHSA) for disaster preparedness and prompt activation of relief efforts when natural disasters occur. The GEMHSA as an organization is responsible for coordinating and managing the state's preparedness, response, and recovery efforts to disasters. In addition to this, they provide 24/7 support and plan activation when emergencies occur.
- Communication within the facilities occurs in a stepwise fashion starting from the top and the official disaster response plans are given by the chief executive officer. From there, leadership staff is notified (i.e., chief nursing officer, house supervisor, directors, managers) and the chain of command is utilized to disperse information in a timely manner. The hospital overhead paging system is also used to announce codes and notify all personnel at once.
- To process to initiate the incident command system depends on the circumstances. For example, in the event of a fire the alarm activation is what initiates or triggers the response. For an active shooter the response is initiated by calling 911 and a call to the hospital operator. Some events are activated by responding staff, while others are initiated by hospital executives as they receive pertinent information from GEMHSA and government officials (in evacuation circumstances).
- [Reply](#)[Reply to Comment](#)
 - [Collapse Subdiscussion](#)[April Rosa](#)

[April Rosa](#)

Nov 30, 2022 Nov 30 at

6:42pm [Manage Discussion](#)

[Entry](#) Mary,

During a disaster situation staff are often required to shelter with in the hospital or can be recalled. How does your hospital manage that process in the case of such an incident. When I lived in Maryland the winters would sometimes bring ice and snow that would activate our emergency snow plan for the hospital I worked for. This would include the organization of four