MANAGING EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
Academic Health Centers Organize and Innovate

Association of Academic Health Centers

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Managing Emergency Preparedness: Academic Health Centers Organize and Innovate provides academic health center leaders and policymakers at the local, state, and national levels with a short-hand guide on managing emergency response activities within academic health centers.

Academic health centers are leaders in emergency preparedness and disaster response from vigilance in internal security to protection of the research enterprise to collaboration with the surrounding community.

This brief guide by the Association of Academic Health Centers (AAHC) highlights ways in which academic health centers are developing and managing operations and systems to help ensure that institutions and communities can respond to an array of emergencies and natural disasters. It highlights the importance of academic health center resources, and how connectivity and integration of functions play a vital role in the event of an emergency.

Recent disasters highlight the need for institution-wide approaches and system-wide implementation plans. In light of the critical need to safeguard major university resources, this AAHC guide provides a short checklist to help secure and protect the research enterprise. Several key areas are highlighted, including leadership invovlement, implementation issues, and communication.

This guide offers suggestions to academic health center leaders intending to expand their networks and participation at the local, regional, or national level to enhance the emergency preparedness infrastructure for the nation.

AAHC activities are part of an effort to enhance public dialogue and further engage policymakers at all levels of government to improve the nation's infrastructure for emergency planning and response.

CREATE A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Academic health center leaders point to several foundational elements critical to success in emergency preparedness efforts and in developing strategies to ensure an integrated systems approach to preparedness and response.

DESIGN ORGANIZATION-WIDE PLANS THAT DEFINE:

- Authorities
- Procedures and criteria for activation
- Incident command structures
- Access to internal and external agencies and resources

DEVELOP AN INTEGRATED POLICY FRAMEWORK

- Integrate policies and systems created for health emergencies into the university's emergency response infrastructure
- Ensure seamless coordination and collaboration between the academic health center and university offices for emergency response
- Consider establishing a central office or unit for emergency planning and:
  - Share leadership across the university
  - Consolidate information, analysis, and decision making

- Ensure funding for the office: options include use of administrative funds from the university, with discretionary funds to the academic health center CEO to ensure that new, emerging, time-sensitive, or unfunded areas can be addressed in a timely fashion

ESTABLISH LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Include the university president, provost, academic health center CEO and other key personnel (e.g., chief fiscal officer, deans, department chairs) in top level decision-making committee to direct institution-wide emergency actions
- Work to ensure long-term commitment and involvement of leaders
- Support operations through dedicated leadership committed to the development, implementation, and management of planning efforts
- Involve leaders in regular institution-wide emergency practice drills
- Create advisory committees or crisis decision teams to ensure back-up leadership

PLAN RESPONSES FOR MANY KINDS OF EMERGENCIES

- Design plans to accommodate internal and external roles for institutional staff
- Develop strategies that permit academic health center principals to serve on external task forces and advisory bodies to share their expertise
- Permit flexibility to ensure that academic health center response system can accommodate establishing and maintaining a plan for local, regional or statewide response efforts

ACCOUNT FOR SUPPORT FUNCTIONS AND RESOURCES

- Develop situational assessment tools in order to assess and provide feedback on emergency situations
- Plan for business continuity solutions to bridge chasm between health and finance

ENHANCE COMMUNICATION

- Raise awareness within the community through the engagement and visibility of key university leaders
- Manage information across clinics, hospital(s), and educational units
- Sustain a consistent, uniform message in the event of an emergency
- Educate the university community about updates and changes to the emergency response plans
  - Post emergency plans on the university website
  - Use training videos
  - Explore the use of new media and technologies (e.g., text messaging, satellite phones) to communicate messages
- Ensure that all communication networks (e.g., school or department) are compatible and linked together
- Establish emergency event hotlines for employees, students, patients, and the community to call for up-to-date institutional response information
- Use local TV/radio stations and other media outlets to communicate with employees, students, patients, and the community

FOSTER BUY-IN AND SUPPORT FROM COMMUNITY

- Create a collaborative culture within the university and with the neighboring community to facilitate development of institution-wide planning
- Collaborate with the local community in strategic planning, testing, and analyzing concepts, policies and operations
- Remain in the vanguard and continually evolve to increase community outreach and to enhance efficiencies in the established system
- Always remain attentive to the toll of human suffering

PREPARE THROUGH PRACTICE

- Ensure that the university and/or academic health center community is motivated to participate in emergency preparedness efforts
- Ready the institution with practice drills
- Utilize and test available technology in daily operations, not solely for disasters
- Anticipate second guessing and political issues and be prepared with answers

DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT

- Ensure responsibilities for documenting damages and disruptions are assigned (e.g., risk manager, legal counsel)
- Know your property insurance claims language
- Analyze costs—from lost revenues, personnel expenses, property, indirect costs of research

ESTABLISH PRIORITIES FOR THE RESEARCH ENTERPRISE

The research enterprise requires constant vigilance to be prepared for events that range from power outages to bioterrorist attacks. To establish research priorities and manage the research enterprise during emergencies:

ESTABLISH POLICIES

- Recognize that research is an institutional policy issue; do not leave policymaking to individual researchers
- Assist senior management teams in communicating with faculty and staff about significance of emergency response policies
- Get commitment and engagement from senior management, including the CEO of the academic health center, deans, and other senior administrators, such as directors of human resources, facilities, and communications
- Create a research "to do" list
- Plan for natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes) and analyze the impact and implications for the research infrastructure

- Ensure that emergency preparedness personnel update senior management about the development, implementation, and assessment of plans on a regular basis
- Include emergency preparedness in the institution's research guidelines
- Use outside consultants when necessary for needs assessment
- Encourage researchers to build costs of emergency preparedness into grant requests and research budgets

PROTECT EQUIPMENT

- Establish a back-up system for electronic data and use an uninterruptible power supply device or (at a minimum) a high-quality surge protector to protect electronically sensitive equipment (e.g., computers, monitors, and servers)
- Back up sensitive material or store such information off-site
- Develop mechanisms and systems to keep essential equipment operating
- Focus on research freezers
  - Inventory and analyze the location and contents of freezers used for storing research samples
  - Network freezers to permit monitoring and surveillance

Research equipment is seismically restrained in earthquake-prone areas.

- If feasible, use one service company that can be automatically notified in the event of equipment malfunction
- Identify freezer management vendors that can store and manage material off-site, including documentation of samples, periodic maintenance, and a commitment of no more than a one-day turnaround to get samples to an investigator
- Purchase an emergency freezer for sample storage
- Encourage administrators to establish cooperative agreements—or "freezer buddies"—for investigators in different departments and/or buildings to ensure cost-effective protection and storage of research samples
- Focus on bench equipment
- Require large and bench top equipment (e.g., microscopes, balances, and water baths) to be seismically restrained in earthquake-prone areas
- Consider costs in terms of benefits vs. risks: a $50,000 microscope can be secured for less than $50 and the average equipment stored on a bench can be secured for $250

- Ensure protection plan for research animals
- Manage relocation of research animals in vivaria, if needed
- Provide large amounts of back-up food and water, and ventilation on back-up power

MONITOR AND ENFORCE EMERGENCY RESPONSE POLICIES

- Monitor implementation of and compliance with emergency response policies
- Ensure that all faculty and staff are aware of the institution's emergency plans and policies and know how to protect their research.
- Incorporate emergency preparedness into training for all new faculty and staff
- Develop ongoing education and training given the natural turnover of staff working within the research enterprise
- Include elements from emergency response guidelines in annual inspection surveys for each administrative department
- Send regular communications about emergency preparedness to keep faculty and staff informed about institutional policies

CREATE INFRASTRUCTURE TO ENABLE OUTREACH TO THE REGIONAL, NATIONAL, AND GLOBAL COMMUNITY

Examine academic health center programs nationwide and the organization and practices that enhance emergency preparedness outreach and response. Build partnerships and relationships that strengthen the existing national infrastructure for emergency response.

COLLABORATE WITH STATE AND REGIONAL PROGRAMS

Consider lessons learned from the University of Minnesota's Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) (http://www.ahc.umn.edu/about/admin/oer/mrc/home.html), the first established within an academic health center and a model for assembling and coordinating volunteers in the event of a medical or public health emergency.

- Strive to involve faculty, staff, and student volunteers representing all health professions schools
- Link to top leadership, perhaps by having the director for emergency response report directly to the academic health center CEO
- Create strong external ties with departments of public health, local community, and other public and private organizations

- Maintain a flexible infrastructure; volunteers can provide assistance in a variety of emergency situations (e.g., Mississippi River bridge collapse, school bus crash) ranging from medical services within a local hospital to behavioral health assistance
- Organize in teams based on function, such as mental health, health education, and veterinary medicine

COMPLEMENT NATIONAL PROGRAMS

Examine and strengthen existing national networks targeted to improve hospital response capabilities, such as the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) (http://www.bt.cdc.gov/stockpile/), established to store large quantities of medicine and medical supplies for distribution in the event of a catastrophic public health emergency.

- Evaluate pharmaceutical supplies and emergency plans within regional hospitals
- Identify and assess current regional pharmaceutical response plans
- Examine potential for integrated response plans and local or regional networks to supplement the SNS and ensure that pharmaceutical needs are met in the event of a public health emergency

- Assess how pharmaceutical surge capacity in affiliate and regional hospitals will affect the academic health center
- Explore guidelines and best practices under study and development at the Johns Hopkins University Office of Critical Event Preparedness and Response (http://www.hopkins-cepar.org/)

SHARE EXPERTISE

Consider developing training and education programs targeted at health professionals, law enforcement and other first responders, and community participants. Assess training programs for both urban and rural areas, such as the Kansas Disaster Response Training Program (http://kuhto.kumc.edu/antiterror/trainingResults.html), a statewide program developed and managed by the University of Kansas Medical Center.

- Use joint projects with the community to generate awareness of issues within the institution, build skill capacity, and enhance a culture of emergency preparedness
- Develop grassroots outreach to enhance partnerships with the government, other academic institutions, and public and private organizations

- Address the specific needs of the state while working within the region's existing infrastructure
- Develop programs and educational materials in collaboration with community members and local, regional, and national organizations, ranging from local health departments to private sector organizations

BUILD A GLOBAL NETWORK

- Join global networks that provide participants with data and information in an interactive format.
- Facilitate the flow of information nationally and globally

Tap unique preparedness and response programs and activities managed within academic health centers, such as the Clinicians' Biosecurity Network (http://www.upmc-cbn.org/), an online information sharing network on biodefense security and response managed by the Center for Biosecurity at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

- Increase awareness about biodefense among clinicians, government officials, and academia by encouraging the use of the CBN and other resources that disseminate authoritative and timely information about biodefense preparedness and response

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