

# Public Health Emergency Preparedness

BRAZORIA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

## PUBLIC HEALTH MATTERS

NOVEMBER 2010



### MISSION STATEMENT

BRAZORIA COUNTY WILL BE PREPARED FOR AND READY TO RESPOND TO A HEALTH AND MEDICAL EVENT DUE TO EITHER A MAN-MADE OR NATURAL DISASTER

### Inside this issue:

Reportable Diseases	2
Incident Command System	3
Food Safety	5
Food Safety Continued	6
Training	7
Volunteer	7

### EMERGENCY EXERCISES HELD IN NOVEMBER

#### COMMUNICATION DRILL

ARES in conjunction with Brazoria County Health Department's Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) program completed a HAM Radio Communication Drill the evening of Tuesday, October 19, 2010. The premise of the drill involved an incident at the Brazoria County Fairgrounds that left primary communication systems (land line telephones, cellular communications, radio communications, and internet) inoperable and redundant communication systems needed.

ARES operated out of PHEP's operation center and began with an initial call down to the 40 ARES members within Brazoria County. The call down notified HAM radio operators of an emergency and their need to report to PHEP's operation center to pick up their Go-Kits containing HAM radios, *continued.....p 4*



Some of the ARES Members who responded and participated in the Drill. From L to R - Frank Curl, Eric Varnado, Terry Bowersmith (E/C), Jeff Owens (A E/C), Eric Schmidt (A E/C), Forrest Carpenter (PIO), Steve Clark (A E/C)

#### MEDICATION DISPENSING EXERCISE

Alvin Community College was the location for an exercise to test the Brazoria County Plan to respond to an Anthrax attack.

The expectation is that medication (countermeasures) that will prevent Anthrax can be distributed to everyone in Brazoria County within 48 hours of the decision to do. Many jurisdictions and organizations that would be involved in an Anthrax response participated in the drill.

The exercise took place during the regularly scheduled meeting of the Brazoria County Emergency Managers. Participants included emergency management personnel from Brazoria County, Alvin, Angleton, Manvel, Hillcrest Village, Sweeny, Lake Jackson, Clute, Freeport and Liverpool along with representatives from law enforcement, DPS, Fire Departments, Dow Chemical, Homeland Preparedness Project, EMS and Sweeny Hospital.



Following the exercise, Ron Schmitz, Alvin Assistant Emergency Manager conducted a "hotwash" to identify strengths of the plan and areas for improvement.

*Continued..... P 4*

**DISEASES REPORTED TO BRAZORIA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT BY MONTH FOR 2010**

Reportable Diseases	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Bacterial Meningitis													0
Campylobacteriosis	1	4	2		1	1	1			1			11
Chlamydia	19	10	7	6	22	5	10	15		15			109
Clostridium difficile		1											1
Cryptosporidiosis													0
Dengue													0
E. Coli									1	2			3
Gonorrhea	6	3	1	2	8		2	6	2	1			31
Group A Strep-invasive						1			1				2
Group B Strep			2	1		1	3		1	3			11
Guardiasis													0
Haemophilus Influenza		1	1										2
Hantavirus				1									1
Hepatitis A, acute	2		2	2				1	1	1			9
Hepatitis B, acute	2	2		1	5	2	1	2	3	3			21
Hepatitis C, acute	11	4	1		7		7	20	7	3			60
HIV infection, Adult					1		1						2
Invasive Group A Strep			1										1
Invasive Group B Strep			2										2
Legionellosis													0
Lyme Disease													0
Malaria													0
Meningitis (Viral)	1					3	3	5	2	4			18
Pertussis				2	1	1	1	1	1				7
Salmonellosis	4	5	3	2	1	3	4	8	14	10			54
Shigellosis								6	1	1			8
Streptococcus pneumoniae, invasive	5	3	2	3	2	1	1		1	1			19
Syphilis	2					3	2	3		1			11
Tuberculosis	1	1						1					3
Varicella -Chicken Pox	11	1	1	2	3		1	1	1	1			22
Vibrio						4	2	1					7
West Nile Virus													0

***“No health department, state or local, can effectively prevent or control disease without knowledge of when, where, and under what conditions cases are occurring.”***  
 —Public Health Reports, 1946

**Specified diseases and conditions are mandated by State laws and regulations to be reported to the local health department. Report by email (info@brazoria-county.com), fax (979-864-1501) or phone (979-864-1166).**

**PHEP TEAM**

Cathy Sbrusch, RN, BSN, CIC	Health Services Director
Jo Mapel, RN, BSN, MPH	Team Leader
Jan Prejean, RN	Disease Surveillance
Barbara Perkins, BA, MEd	Facilitator
Stephanie Smith, MPH, RD	SNS Coordinator
Tamara Tisdale	Assets Analyst
Chasey Reed-Boston, BS, MA	CBRNE Analyst

**CONTACT US**

432 E. Mulberry      Angleton, Tx 77515  
 979-864-1166      Fax: 979-864-3694



# WHAT IS THE NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM?

## Incident Command System

*A Tool for Responding to Emergencies*

### When leading a response, remember:

Your top priorities are to save and protect: ① life ② environment ③ property

Effective communication makes or breaks a disaster response.

To make your best decisions, remain calm and focused.

### Disaster Response At-a-Glance

**Incident Command:** Leads the response; appoints and empowers team leaders; sets tone and standards for response. Encourages teamwork and communication.

- **Safety and Security Officer:** Focuses on the safety of all people responding to the incident.
- **Public Information Officer:** Works with the media and distributes messages to the public and local community.
- **Liaison Officer:** Links to and supports external partners and organizations.
- **Operations Team:** Handles key actions including first aid, search and rescue, fire suppression and securing the site.
- **Planning Team:** Gathers information, thinks ahead and keeps all team members informed and communicating.
- **Logistics Team:** Finds, distributes and stores all necessary resources (supplies and people) to respond appropriately.
- **Finance/Administration Team:** Tracks all expenses, claims and activities, and is the record keeper for the incident.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



[www.metrokc.gov/health](http://www.metrokc.gov/health)



[www.FirstVictims.org](http://www.FirstVictims.org)



[www.uwkc.org](http://www.uwkc.org)

For more information on NIMS and the Incident Command System go to: <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/NIMSTrainingCourses.shtml>

## Communications Drill *continued from page 1*

antennas, and all other necessary equipment for establishing communications. Of the 40 ARES members, 30 responded, and 25 were used to report to remote locations throughout the county and establish communications with PHEP's operation center.

Within a little over an hour of the initial call down, HAM radio operators had reported to PHEP's operation center to sign out equipment, if needed, and had arrived at their remote location, met their site contact, set up their antennae and HAM radio, and had established initial contact with the ARES controller already positioned at PHEP's operation center. The initial call down was sent out at 6:15 PM, and the last initial transmission recorded was received at 7:25 PM.

ARES representatives reported to and operated out of a total of 7 remote locations. PHEP's operation center was treated as headquarters. Remote locations for the drill included the Brazoria County Fairgrounds, county and city Emergency Operation Centers (EOCs), city Emergency Medical Service (EMS), and three hospitals within the county: Angleton-Danbury Medical Center, Brazosport Regional Medical System, and Sweeny Community Hospital.

Overall, the drill was a success, and ARES representatives were able to establish HAM radio communications between PHEP's operation center and all 7 remote locations within a little over an hour of the initial notification. Primary, secondary, and simplex channels were tested for each location, and all functioned well. Moreover, hospital ER status and bed capacity were communicated effectively during the drill via HAM radios.



ARES plans to work with PHEP in the future to set up and operate HAM radios during open point-of-dispensing (POD) site operations used by PHEP during biological emergencies to dispense medication and/or vaccinations to the exposed public. ARES also plans to support PHEP in encouraging each remote location to obtain a permanent antenna on their premises to aid in the efficiency of ARES' ability to report to remote locations and establish communications during an emergency in which primary communication systems are unavailable.



## Assembly of the Drive Through Tent

### Mass Dispensing Drill



Alvin Core Team led by Ron Schmitz (POD Manager), Patricia Williams (Operations Chief) and Richard Williams (Admin Chief) work with Alvin EMS to follow directions on drive through tent construction.



Alvin Community College hosted the exercise and Chief Andy Taquard was head of Security for the POD.



United States Department of Agriculture  
Food Safety and Inspection Service

## Food Safety Information



PhotoDisc

### Hotline Answers "Panic Button" Food Safety Questions

*"Help! I'm having 20 people over for dinner and I think I cooked the meat unsafely!" The USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline receives similar calls every day about the safety of food. During the holidays, people are busy and sometimes forget that unsafe handling and cooking can lead to foodborne illness.*

*Here are some questions callers have asked regarding the safety of their holiday foods.*

**Q. "I just discovered I cooked the turkey with the package of giblets still inside the cavity. Are the turkey and giblets safe to eat?"**

**A.** If giblets were left in the cavity during roasting, even though this is not recommended, the turkey and giblets are probably safe to use. However, if the packaging containing the giblets has changed shape or melted in any way during cooking, do not use the giblets or the turkey because harmful chemicals from the packaging may have penetrated the surrounding meat.

**Q. "This morning, I discovered the pork roast was left out all night. I took it out of the freezer to thaw for awhile last night and forgot to put it back in the fridge before I went to bed. The roast is completely thawed and warm to the touch. If I cook it, will it be safe?"**

**A.** Unfortunately, this roast should not be eaten. It has been out of refrigeration too long. Refrigerate perishables, prepared foods, and leftovers within 2 hours (1 hour if the temperature is above 90 °F). At room temperature, bacteria that may be present in raw meat and poultry multiply very rapidly and some types of bacteria will produce toxins which are not destroyed by cooking and can possibly cause illness. Never thaw frozen meat or poultry on the kitchen counter. Refrigerator thawing is much safer. You may also thaw foods in cold water or in the microwave. These foods must be cooked immediately to a safe minimum internal temperature before refrigerating.

**Q. "I received a gift of a smoked pheasant from a mail order company. It was packed in a box with no dry ice or frozen gel packs. It wasn't cold even though the label said "keep refrigerated." Because it is smoked, will that make it safe?"**

**A.** Poultry and hams are smoked for "flavor," not preservation. The only exceptions are country hams and dry sausages which are safe at room temperature

because of their high salt content and dryness. If a product is labeled "keep refrigerated," that's a warning that it must be kept cold to be safe. Don't eat the product. If perishable food arrives warm — above 40 °F as measured with a food thermometer — notify the company. It's the shipper's responsibility to deliver the product on time, properly packaged and handled safely; the customer's responsibility is to have someone at home to receive it and refrigerate it immediately.

**Q. "I purchased a fresh stuffed turkey from my local grocery store in the deli department. One of my houseguests said it's not safe to cook and eat it. Is she right?"**

**A.** Your houseguest must be well-informed on food safety. She's right: DO NOT USE IT! We recommend discarding or returning the product to the store where purchased.

USDA recommends only buying frozen pre-stuffed turkeys that display the USDA or State mark of inspection on the packaging. These turkeys are safe because they have been processed under controlled conditions. DO NOT THAW before cooking. Cook from the frozen state. Follow package directions for safe handling and cooking.

**Q. "The instructions on the ham said it would take about 4 hours to cook, but the thermometer read 160 °F after 3 hours. The problem is that we won't be eating for another 2 hours. Can I leave it out on the counter covered with foil?"**

**A.** That's not a good idea. Bacteria that cause foodborne illness can contaminate safely cooked food left out at room temperature. Scientists have found that after 2 hours at room temperature, bacteria can multiply on foods to high enough levels to cause illness. Since the ham will be out extra time for carving and serving, it's better to cover it and keep it in a 200 °F oven until you're ready to serve it. Check the ham with a food thermometer to make sure it doesn't go below an internal temperature of 140 °F while it's in the oven.

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is the public health agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture responsible for ensuring that the nation's commercial supply of meat, poultry, and egg products is safe, wholesome, and correctly labeled and packaged.

**USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline**  
**1-888-MPHotline**  
**(1-888-674-6854)**

## "Panic Button" Food Safety Questions

**Q. "What should I do? I put a 20 lb turkey in a 200 °F oven before I went to bed last night, and the pop-up timer says it's already done at 7:30 this morning. We won't be eating until 3 p.m."**

**A.** You have two problems here. First, overnight cooking of meat at a low temperature isn't a safe method so we don't recommend eating this turkey. It's not safe to cook any meat or poultry in an oven set lower than 325 °F. At 200 °F, meat remains in the "Danger Zone" too long (between 40 and 140 °F) where bacteria multiply rapidly and can form toxins.

Secondly, holding a safely cooked turkey at a safe internal temperature of 140 °F or above for this amount of time can dry it out and affect the quality. If a safely cooked turkey must be held from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., for optimal safety and quality it should be carved and refrigerated in covered shallow containers and served cold or reheated to an internal temperature of 165 °F. Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature.

**Q. "My aunt has a holiday party every year. It lasts all afternoon and into the evening. She leaves food sitting out on the table for hours. I have small children and am concerned that they could get sick if they eat it. What should I do?"**

**A.** You're right to be concerned about your children. They, as well as pregnant women, older adults, and persons with a weakened immune system stand a greater chance of getting sick from food poisoning and suffering complications. Everyone should avoid eating perishable foods which are not either kept cold or hot. Hopefully your aunt will keep hot foods hot (140 °F or warmer) in a chafing dish, slow cooker or warming trays. Cold foods should be held at 40 °F or colder, nestled in bowls of ice or replaced often from the refrigerator. You can offer your child these with confidence.

**Q. "I baked some pumpkin pies over the weekend to serve tomorrow on Thanksgiving. They've just been sitting on the counter. Should I have refrigerated them?"**

**A.** Yes. Foods made with eggs and milk, such as pumpkin pie, custard pie and cheesecake, must first be safely baked to a safe minimum internal temperature of 160 °F. Then, they must be refrigerated after baking. Eggs and milk have high protein and moisture content and when these baked products are left at room temperature, conditions are ripe for bacteria to multiply. It's not necessary to refrigerate most other cakes, cookies or breads unless they have a perishable filling or frosting.

**Q. "I roasted my holiday turkey yesterday and put it in the refrigerator. It isn't stuffed so I thought it was safe. Then my daughter said I shouldn't have refrigerated it whole. Is it safe to eat today?"**

**A.** We do not recommend you refrigerate a cooked turkey whole — it could take too long to cool down to a safe temperature. For optimal safety, cut whole or large pieces of poultry into small pieces. It's okay to leave the drumsticks, thighs and wings intact, if you prefer. Refrigerate in covered shallow containers within 2 hours of cooking. This is very important to ensure rapid, even cooling and quick reheating.

## Food Safety Questions?

### Call the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline

If you have a question about meat, poultry, or egg products, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline toll free at **1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854)**; TTY: 1-800-256-7072.



The Hotline is open year-round Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET (English or Spanish). Recorded food safety messages are available 24 hours a day. Check out the FSIS Web site at [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov).

Send E-mail questions to [MPHotline.fsis@usda.gov](mailto:MPHotline.fsis@usda.gov).

### Ask Karen!

FSIS' automated response system can provide food safety information 24/7



[www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov)

FSIS encourages the reprint and distribution of this publication for food safety purposes. However, the included image from PhotoDisc, used under license, is protected by the copyright laws of the U.S., Canada, and elsewhere, and may not be saved or downloaded except for printing of this publication.

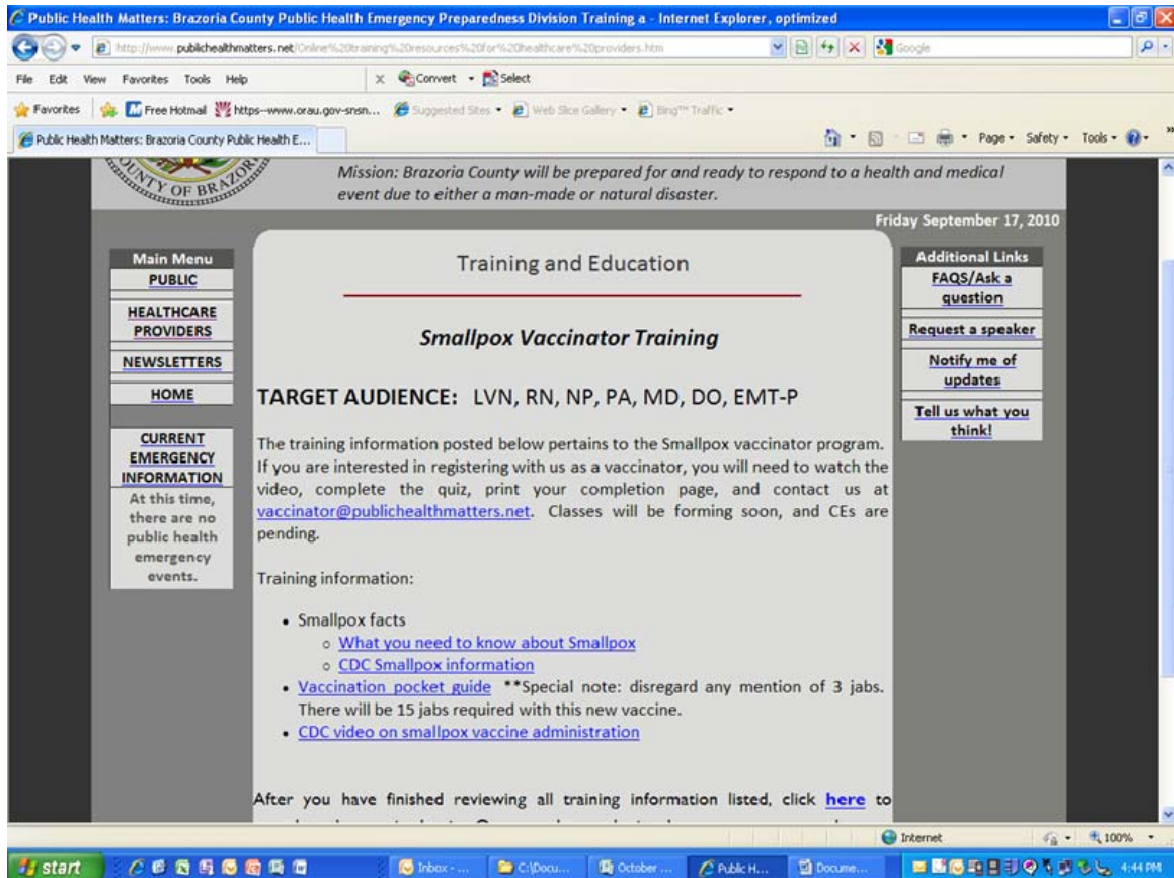
The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Revised February 2007



# VOLUNTEER AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

## **NEW!** PHEP offers Smallpox Vaccinator Training **ONLINE**

www.PublicHealthMatters.net



### **Brazoria County Has Two Citizen Corps Groups**

#### **Pearland Area Citizen Corps**

<http://www.PearlandCC.org>

281-997-9777

#### **Brazoria County Citizens Corps**

<http://homelandpreparedness.org/>

281-844-3653