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Upcoming Events!

2nd Health Emergency Management In-Service
February 19th/20th
New Westminster, BC
For invitation information or to RSVP, please contact: Shawna Lynch, Manager Program Administration and Strategic Initiatives, Emergency Management Unit at shawna.lynch@gov.bc.ca or by phone at (250) 952-3334.

International Working Group Conference: Hospice and Palliative Care and the Aftermath of Trauma and Disaster
Saturday April 27, 2013
Inn At Laurel Point
Victoria, BC

ShakeOut Success!
Harpreet Jaswal, A/Manager, Social Policy and Programs, EMU

Recent seismic events along the British Columbia coast, particularly near Haida Gwaii, serve as a reminder that we live in Canada’s most seismically active region. Beyond knowing to “Drop, Cover and Hold On” during the shaking, it is crucial that individuals and families prepare themselves for a minimum of 72 hours following an earthquake.

On Thursday, October 18, 2012 at 10:18am, over 590 000 British Columbians practiced the “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” technique by participating in The Great British Columbia ShakeOut; the largest earthquake drill in Canadian history. In promoting the important safety message of what the public should do in the event of an earthquake, health authorities and a wide range of health sector partners participated in the ShakeOut drill in a variety of hospitals and corporate settings.

This year’s Ministry of Health ShakeOut Campaign focused mainly on communication and engagement. Internal communications included articles promoting the ShakeOut in the Weekly Digest and ENewsletter, as well as a feature article on the Health ePlace - the ministry wide intranet. ShakeOut posters were also displayed on every floor. A lobby display during the week of the ShakeOut displayed various resources and educational materials on how to better prepare for an earthquake, both at home and at work.
ShakeOut Success continued...

The engagement part of this year’s campaign had two main components: (1) The Ministry of Health ShakeOut FlashMob, and (2) the Emergency Warden exercise. The Ministry of Health ShakeOut FlashMob took place on Oct. 17 and involved volunteers from different divisions and branches across the Ministry. To learn the dance, the group of 18 employees met three times a week for five weeks leading up to the event. On the morning of Oct. 17, Ministry employees who gathered in the lobby to support ShakeOut’s launch were pleasantly surprised when the FlashMob broke out at 10:15am.

Following the Flash Mob, Assistant Deputy Minister for Population and Public Health, Arlene Paton, spoke about the importance of personal preparedness both at home and at work. She encouraged all Ministry of Health employees to lead by example, and to participate in the ShakeOut the following day.

The second component of this year’s campaign involved an exercise with the Emergency Floor and Zone Wardens. In the weeks leading up to the ShakeOut, three information sessions were held for the Emergency Wardens to explain the purpose and importance of the ShakeOut. They were also informed about various ways they could help make the ShakeOut a success, including: encouraging drill day participation, distributing educational resources available on the ShakeOut website, and playing the drill broadcast at 10:18 am on October 18. For the exercise portion, the Emergency Warden were asked to facilitate “What to do Next Huddles” after the ShakeOut drill, during which they huddled with staff in their zone to discuss what should be done, had it been an actual seismic event. The Wardens were provided with pointers to help facilitate these discussions.

This year's ShakeOut Campaign was a great success and the Emergency Management Unit would like to thank everyone who participated. With the aim of increasing participation in the 2013 Shakeout event, we encourage all areas of the BC health sector to “Drop, Cover, and Hold On” on ShakeOut day, as a means of enhancing seismic preparedness within their organizations. And with less than a year until the next Great British Columbia ShakeOut, it is time to think about how your organization will participate.

Develop the plan.....Plan to Exercise

Sue Munro, Manager, VIHA, EMBC and Krystal Hanson, Coordinator, VIHA, EMBC

In the past year, VIHA’s Emergency Management and Business Continuity (EMBC) team has worked diligently with internal and external stakeholders to initiate the development of disaster/emergency response plans across the organization.

As emergency planners know, once the plans are developed they need to be exercised and the lessons learned incorporated into the revised plan.

In conjunction with the plan development at a few sites and in collaboration with key stakeholders, VIHA’s EMBC team has utilized a variety of strategies to exercise disaster response.

In May: Tofino General Hospital completed a table top mass casualty exercise in response to a simulated chemical plant explosion. This exercise had participation from housekeeping, nursing, registration, food services, facilities maintenance, stores and administration personnel.

In June: Lady Minto Hospital participated in a Code Red (fire) functional exercise that gave staff an opportunity to exercise their fire procedure responses. This was in collaboration with VIHA Protection Services, Saltspring Island Fire Department, British Columbia Ambulance Service (BCAS) and the Saltspring Island Community Emergency Program.

In September: The Mobile Medical Unit (MMU) visited rural and community sites in the centre and north island. The focus of this deployment was interdisciplinary education for trauma and mass casualty events, as well as to familiarize staff with the MMU. Taken one step further Campbell River and St. Joseph’s Hospital physicians, staff and BCAS participants engaged in a simulated mass casualty event using the MMU as an extension of their emergency department. (See photo)

In October: VIHA and Saanich Peninsula Hospital (SPH) were invited to participate in the Victoria Airport Authority’s exercise as mandated by Transport Canada. This was a full scale exercise with participation from multiple external provincial and federal partners. A few moulaged patients of all acuities were transported via BCAS to SPH where physicians and staff had the opportunity to employ their Emergency Department Activation kits, incident command structure (ICS), START triage and designated treatment zones (Red, yellow, green).

Also in October, VIHA participated in the Great British Columbia ShakeOut. This included operationalizing fan out lists at leadership, program and unit levels; the activation of four Emergency Operations Centres (EOC) across the island, with executive participation in each; and the testing of VIHA communication systems between each EOC via email, satellite phone and amateur radio. At 10:18 am staff were advised of the simulated earthquake and reminded via overhead announcements that if this were an actual event they would drop, cover and hold. For ShakeOut, EMBC encouraged clinical units to conduct safety huddles.

The response by all levels of staff following each exercise has been overwhelming positive and rewarding. Without exception staff have voiced their appreciation of the opportunity to practice, revise and test their emergency response plans in the event that one day this
On October 19 and 20, 2012 BC’s Mobile Medical Unit (MMU) participated in Exercise Magnitude 2012, testing its emergency response capacity and providing intensive hands-on disaster simulation education to 30 clinicians from across the Lower Mainland.

The MMU was invited to participate in this exercise by the Ministry of Health Emergency Management Unit (MOH EMU). With full support of the MMU Provincial Advisory Committee, a call was put out to each of the six provincial health authorities requesting nominations for clinicians to participate in a seven hour intensive disaster medicine education session. After receiving overwhelming interest, a decision was made to run this education session twice and the MOH EMU provided funding to allow all participating clinicians to attend.

The MMU team participated in Magnitude 2012 in real time, receiving notification of a 7.3 MR earthquake the morning of October 18. The MMU was formally requested for support at the Heavy Urban Search and Rescue (HUSAR) base and was packed and ready to deploy from its warehouse by 2200hrs on the evening of October 18. As a part of exercise design, St Paul’s Hospital sustained significant damage and the MMU functioned as an extension of Vancouver General Hospital, providing surge support at its highest clinical capability: a range of care from first-aid level through to emergency resuscitation and life-saving surgery.

Education session participants included expert clinicians from across the Lower Mainland (Fraser Health, Providence Health Care, Vancouver Coastal Health, and Provincial Health Services Authority) with expertise in emergency, surgery, trauma, intensive care, pediatrics, anesthesia, respiratory therapy, and diagnostic imaging. Curriculum included:

- MMU facility orientation and safety brief;
- introduction to disaster management for clinicians;
- guest presentation from Vancouver HUSAR;
- disaster medicine case-study reviews; and
- several hands-on simulated scenarios.

The simulated scenarios were delivered using a combination of high-fidelity simulation mannequin technology, provided by the Justice Institute of BC, and real patient actors extracted from the exercise rubble site. Over the course of the two days, session participants received and cared for 22 simulated casualties.

Exercise Magnitude 2012 proved successful on many levels for the MMU, providing opportunity to test our team’s state of readiness in real time; allowing collaboration and interoperability with a range of municipal, provincial, and federal teams; and providing a realistic platform in which to pilot an intensive disaster medicine education program within the MMU. Currently, the MMU is in the process of developing an educational program for a Provincial Clinical Support Team. This team concept is supported by the MOH EMU and will increase provincial clinical response capacity and will be available for deployment with or without the MMU facility, depending on situational needs. For more information on the MMU please visit www.bcmmu.ca.
Stay Warm and Prepared this Winter

Winter is here and with it brings new health threats and potential dangers of short or long term power outages. Here are some helpful tips to ensure you are prepared for your next power outage.

1. Check whether the power failure is limited to your home. If your neighbour’s power is still on, check your circuit breaker panel or fuse box.

2. Call BC Hydro at 1 888 POWERON (1 888 769 3766) or *HYDRO (*49376) on your cell phone. Tell them about the outage so they can send the right crews and equipment to the right location.

3. Tune into your local radio station for storm and power outage updates.

4. Turn off all appliances, including home computers and peripherals, especially those that generate heat. This helps prevent hazards or damage when service is restored.

5. Turn off all lights except one inside your home and one outside. The inside light lets you know and the outside light lets BC Hydro crews know, when the power is back on.

For extended power outages:

Have at least 72 hours of safe drinking water and food on hand, never operate a portable generator inside, and ensure home generators are connected properly to reduce the risk of electrocution.

For more information, please visit: www.bchydro.com

Exercise Magnitude 2012: The Ministry of Health’s Experience

By Julia Berry and Melia Walker, EMU

Exercise Magnitude 2012 was a Public Safety National Exercise Division lead functional and full-scale exercise, with the main effort focused on the activation of the Federal Coordination Centre (FCC) and the Federal Coordination Steering Committee (FCSC). The exercise included a real time deployment of the Heavy Urban Search and Rescue (HUSAR) task force personnel from across Canada to the simulated disaster site in Vancouver BC, as well as drill activities at the Port of Metro Vancouver.

The participants were presented with the scenario that a 7.3M earthquake occurred along the northwards dipping fault in the Strait of Georgia with an epicenter 30kms west of Vancouver. The exercise commenced following the Great BC Shakeout drill and started at 1018 Pacific Daylight Time on October 18, 2012.

In accordance with the Emergency Program Act, the Ministry of Health Emergency Management Unit (EMU) conducted a full-scale activation of the Health Emergency Coordination Centre (HECC). Four Provincial and Federal Health Agencies participated in the exercise, which included; the British Columbia Ambulance Service, Provincial Health Services Authority – Mobile Medical Unit, Public Health Agency of Canada and the Ministry of Health. In addition to the Ministry’s Emergency Management Unit, five divisions participated in the exercise; Population Public Health, Health Authorities, Medical Services, Health Link BC, and Government Communication and Public Engagement.

Overall, Magnitude 2012 was a positive experience for all participants. The exercise provided an excellent opportunity to activate the HECC and bring in expertise from the Ministry to support various functions in the HECC, as well as exercise the Ministry’s BCP. Exercises in general are always a great learning opportunity for participants to strengthen their knowledge in a no fault environment.

RSVP for Health Emergency Management In-Service!

By Kirsten Brown & Shawna Lynch, EMU

The BC Ministry of Health, with support from the Justice Institute of BC, will be hosting the second Health Emergency Management In-Service February 19/20th, 2013 in New Westminster. The HEM In-Service will bring together emergency managers and staff with a specific emergency management interest and/or expertise working in the health system to engage in 2 days of new learning, networking, enhancing program best practices through knowledge sharing and exploring opportunities for enhanced collaboration. The program will address a wide range of topics and subject matter of interest to those staff working at both the strategic and operational levels. This session is by invitation only and there is no fee for registration. For more information and invitation information or to RSVP, please contact: Shawna Lynch, Manager Program Administration and Strategic Initiatives, Emergency Management Unit at shawna.lynch@gov.bc.ca or by phone at (250) 952-3334.

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Cartoon from the Federal Emergency Management Agency