Emergency Preparedness Critical Part of Our Mission

Emergencies and disasters often come without warning, and last month’s 6.0 earthquake was a jolting reminder that we need to be prepared for disasters—natural or man-made.

Part of being prepared is understanding our role in disasters and being familiar with our emergency operations here at Contra Costa Health Services. It’s a timely topic given the recent quake and the fact that September is National Preparedness Month (www.ready.gov/september).

We are fortunate that Contra Costa suffered only minor impacts and our thoughts are with our neighbors in Napa and Solano counties. We were able to provide some assistance in response to Napa’s request for mutual aid through our Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division, which coordinated local ambulance providers to send seven available ambulance units (they were needed just for one day). Because we live in earthquake country, we know the likelihood of another earthquake is high. So what happens if a major earthquake hits here? We will certainly need mutual aid, and we’ll also be using all of our own available resources—and that includes you.

We are Disaster Service Workers

Some of you have told me that when the shaking jolted you awake about 3:30 am on August 24, the first thing you did, after making sure your family and home was safe, was to jump onto social media, turn on the news or check your email for an alert. Some of you initially wondered if you might need to come into work. How do you know what you are expected to do?

Public employees, including CCHS staff, other county and city workers, police, fire, and school personnel, are designated as Disaster Service Workers (DSWs) and required by law to report for duty as DSWs in the event of an emergency or disaster if needed. Of course, this is after you’ve made sure your own family is safe and if you are physically able.

There is a video on our website that does a good job of explaining the DSW role and also includes some helpful personal disaster preparedness information: cchealth.org/emergencies/disaster-service-worker.php.

Being Prepared and Staying Informed

Being personally prepared and having your own family disaster plan at home is an important part of being a DSW so that you are able to come in to help your community respond and recover. If you are needed to report to work, there are several ways you might be notified.
One way could be through our Staff Automated Notification Device (SAND). This system can be activated to send messages to specific groups of employees or to all CCHS staff via text, phone calls and emails. Another might be a call from your supervisor or through your division or program’s phone tree. You also can call the CCHS Employee Emergency Information Line. This number provides recorded information and instructions for staff during emergencies and is organized by Division mailboxes. The number is listed on your DSW badge and Employee Emergency Information Wallet Card, which outline your role following a disaster and what to do and where to get more information. (If you don’t have these, ask your supervisor or contact CCHS Personnel at 925-957-5240.)

In a large disaster when phones and the internet don’t work, we might use the media to communicate with you so we ask staff to listen to KCBS radio 740 AM or other news for instructions.

Another important source of information is our Incident Response Information System (IRIS). IRIS can send you emails or text alerts, such as when an incident has been started or if our emergency Departmental Operations Center (DOC) has been activated (see info box on page 2). For example, some of you may have received the email alert from IRIS sent by EMS about the earthquake less than 19 minutes after it happened. CCHS and the County also have some good tools for disseminating emergency public information, such as CCHS’ Twitter account and website, and the Community Warning System text alerts (see info box on page 1).

Emergency Response Planning

As a department, we have an Emergency Operations Response Plan (EORP), which we just updated and is available on iSITE (each Division is also responsible for having its own emergency response plan so check with your supervisor for more about that). Led by our Health Emergency Response Unit, the CCHS Emergency Management Team (EMT) workgroup is rolling out the Department EORP with trainings throughout the year for EMT members. EMT is a group of almost 200 staff across CCHS who are assigned to work in our DOC and operational branches during emergencies. We’ve held two EMT “Boot Camp” trainings so far this year and a third is planned for October.

As part of our preparedness efforts, we also participate in drills and exercises. In October and November we have several discussion-based exercises culminating in the November 20 statewide Med Health drill that we participate in annually with our hospital and community partners. Stay tuned for more details.

For more information on CCHS emergency preparedness planning efforts or if you are interested in getting more involved, talk to your supervisor or contact CCHS Emergency Services Manager Kim Cox at kim.cox@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6648.

Emergency Preparedness is an important part of our mission, and all this planning and practice will help us be better prepared to serve our community during disasters.

Sincerely,

William B. Walker, M.D.

Keep Your Contact Info Current

Our Staff Automated Notification Device (SAND) relies on information in our Staff Directory so make sure your contact info is up to date. Go to the iSITE homepage, hover your cursor over the “My Profile” tab near the top of the page and select “Edit Profile.” From there, you can update your phone number, work address, personal bio and even replace your photo. Please be sure to include numbers where you can be reached after hours. For personal privacy you can hide this information from view in the directory. In an emergency, however, the SAND system will attempt to reach you at all numbers provided.

Check IRIS Notifications Settings

Our Incident Response Information System (IRIS) can provide you with important emergency information about incidents effecting CCHS or our area. You can sign up to become an IRIS user by completing a UAF on iSITE. Then use iSITE to access IRIS to set your notification settings. IRIS will send you emails or text alerts based on what notifications you have selected. You can check or update your IRIS notification settings on iSITE as needed.
Environmental Health Adds SF, Oakland, L.A. to Inspection App

California Food Inspector, a mobile app created last year by our Environmental Health division and Information Technology unit, now has inspection information for restaurants beyond Contra Costa County. The app, which is available on iPhone and Android phones, recently added inspection results for San Francisco, Alameda County, including Oakland, and Los Angeles. Environmental Health Director Dr. Marilyn Underwood said that Contra Costa residents will benefit from the added coverage in the Bay Area because many eat at places in these nearby jurisdictions. “People who live in, say, El Cerrito are going to eat at restaurants in Oakland and San Francisco,” Dr. Underwood said. “Now they can see the health inspections for all those places on our app.” Mike Dickson of IT recently gave a presentation about the app at the California Conference of Environmental Health Directors’ Data Summit. Afterward, representatives from other jurisdictions expressed interest in having their counties’ inspection results included in the app, according to Mike, who developed the app along with fellow IT employees Dave Woodhouse and Benjamin Shaver.

West Nile Virus Present in Contra Costa County, State

Local and state public health officials are reminding residents to remain vigilant against West Nile Virus, which is typically spread by the bite of a mosquito. The proportion of mosquitoes infected is at the highest level ever detected in the state, according to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). As of September 2, 181 human cases had been reported to CDPH—including one non-fatal case in Contra Costa County—a significant increase compared to the 101 cases reported by this time last year. There have been nine confirmed deaths so far in California this year, although there have been no fatalities related to West Nile Virus in Contra Costa since 2006, said Erika Jenssen, Contra Costa Public Health’s Communicable Disease Programs Chief. Even though the risk of becoming ill from the bite of an infected mosquito is low, Erika said it’s important to protect yourself by taking precautions, such as wearing insect repellent that contains DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR3535 according to label instructions.

For more information about California Food Inspector, visit cchealth.org/eh or listen to a KCBS radio piece.

For more information about the West Nile virus, go to cchealth.org/westnile or westnile.ca.gov
Alhambra High Hosts Panel about Concussions Featuring CCRMC Doctor
CCRMC family physician Dr. Jose Yasul joined a panel discussion about concussions on August 18 at Alhambra High School in Martinez to help student athletes and their parents learn how to recognize the injury and understand the health risks they pose. Panelists discussed concussion symptoms, risks associated with repeated concussions and proper treatment. Former National Football League player Onome Ojo, now a Richmond police officer, joined the medical experts to discuss his own experiences with head injuries. The event was organized by Congressman Mike Thompson. Dr. Yasul has treated many youth sports injuries during his career with the County, and has volunteered on the sideline at local high school football games to ensure that players with potential concussions are properly screened and treated. Recent studies have solidified links between concussions and degenerative conditions later in life, such as Alzheimer’s disease and chronic traumatic encephalopathy, leading to changes in safety protocols and rules in many sports, from youth athletics to professional leagues.

You can read more about concussions in a Healthy Outlook column by Dr. Yasul: cchealth.org/column

Innovative Peer-Training Program Celebrates 20 Years
An innovative Behavioral Health Division program that trains consumers to put their own experience to work helping others celebrated its 20th graduating class this summer. The Service Provider Individualized Recovery Intensive Training (SPIRIT) program helps to prepare past and present mental health consumers for work as peer or family providers, and supports them after graduation with job counseling, additional training, resume help and job searching in the behavioral health field. Michael Peterson, valedictorian of the 2014 SPIRIT class, emphasized the value of the training during his commencement speech in July at Centre Concord: “We can redirect people’s lives, to instill the message of hope and to help people find the strength within them.”

A grant from the California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) will allow SPIRIT to accommodate more students next year, including family members or parents of consumers.

The deadline to apply for the 2015 SPIRIT program is October 10. For more information, call Emilse Faria at 925-957-5149 or Stephen Boyd, Jr. at 925-957-5147.
HazMat Takes Top Spot at 2014 Urban Shield

Members of our Hazardous Materials Division’s Incident Response Team took home the top prize after completing a battery of training exercises at the Urban Shield competition in Oakland earlier this month. Urban Shield is a full-scale exercise and competition testing the preparedness and capabilities of first responders in the event of a large-scale terrorist attack. Eleven agencies participated in the HazMat portion of this year’s event. It was the second time in the past three years our HazMat Division—the only one based in a health department—won the top prize at Urban Shield. While promoted as a competition, the real benefit to our HazMat Division is the opportunity to bolster preparedness and validate the benefits of such capabilities to the communities we serve. Congratulations to the winning HazMat crew!

HazMat Staff Helps Businesses File Reports Online

Since the beginning of the year, about 2,500 locally regulated businesses have switched to electronic reporting with significant help from our Hazardous Materials Programs staff. In the past, businesses that generated and/or stored hazardous waste would annually file paper reports under the California Accidental Release Prevention Program (CUPA). But a new state law now requires these businesses to submit their annual CUPA filings online through the California Environmental Reporting System (CERS). Our HazMat specialists held 18 free CERS trainings for local businesses to help them make the transition to electronic reporting. Specialists and clerical staff also assisted businesses outside of the trainings by answering questions, helping get the companies’ information on CERS, and making sure the submitted information was complete. Hazardous Materials Programs Director Randy Sawyer said the conversion required a great amount of work, and it couldn’t have been done without the tremendous efforts and dedication of staff.

For more information about CERS and to view training resources, visit cchealth.org/hazmat/cers-instructions.php
Health Leads Program Offers a Different Kind of Medicine

Providers at West County Health Center (WCHC) are now able to connect patients with needed services and resources thanks to a new partnership with Health Leads, a nonprofit organization devoted to addressing underlying socioeconomic issues that affect health. Advocates from Health Leads have been onsite at WCHC since June. The partnership allows providers to “prescribe” services to address issues such as hunger, lack of adequate housing and unemployment. In the program’s first two-and-a-half months at WCHC, Health Leads served nearly 220 unique clients and made more than 80 successful resource connections. The Health Leads program at WCHC is supported by a grant from the Kaiser Community Benefit Fund.

For more information about Health Leads, visit healthleadsusa.org or contact Program Manager Andrea LeBeouf at alebeouf@healthleadsusa.org.

Health Providers to Get Creative at 9th Annual Arts Event

Doctors, nurses, other Contra Costa Health Services’ staff, and patients will once again share their artistic sides this year for the 9th annual Health Care Workers as Creators event from 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. on September 30 at our Regional Medical Center in Martinez. This year will highlight South African Peace Train founder and Grammy nominee Sharon Katz. The program will also feature work by photographers and painters, musical performances, a sacred dance workshop, face painting, and hands-on art making guided by expressive arts therapists. While the event and food are free, people are encouraged to donate to Art of Health and Healing, a group of medical staff and others that promotes activities and programs designed to foster creativity, improve patient satisfaction and create a better healing environment.

For more information or if you’re interested in participating or volunteering, contact Karen Lloyd at karen.lloyd@hsd.cccounty.us.

Health Column: Screening for Prostate Cancer is Risky

While screening for some cancers can indeed save lives, there’s a growing body of research that shows screening can also be harmful, Dr. Craig Desoer wrote in a recent Healthy Outlook column. This is the case with screening for prostate cancer, one of the most common types of cancer in men. Recent studies show that only 1 in 1,000 people are saved as a result of prostate-cancer screening. In fact, non-symptomatic people are much more likely to suffer health problems as a result of further testing and treatment than they are to benefit from early screening, according to Dr. Desoer, a family physician at Contra Costa Regional Medical Center & Health Centers. Dr. Desoer recommends that patients without any symptoms—such as difficulty urinating or pain during urination—not get screened for prostate cancer. On the other hand, Dr. Desoer said he advises patients who are indeed experiencing symptoms to get tested.

To read Dr. Desoer’s column, visit cchealth.org/column
Patrick Ruliva, RN  
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers  
For coming every day with a very positive attitude and always being ready to help others even if he has his own patients to care for. For remaining calm and patient even during crisis.

◆ Nominated by Maria Suzana Espanol

Sheryl Garcia, PHN  
California Children’s Services  
For interceding to help the agency resolve an outstanding billing problem.

◆ Nominated by home health agency staff

Phyllis Howard  
Family Nurse Practitioner  
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers  
For promoting health and wellness in North Richmond and helping high risk patients to maintain the best health possible. For being a team player and extremely knowledgeable in the medical field, especially in diabetes education and metabolic syndrome.

◆ Nominated by Sue Meltzer

Diana Tinker  
Therapist Aide  
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers  
For never being too busy to respond to my questions, taking the time to obtain answers from others or refer me to the appropriate person.

◆ Nominated by Charlene McHugh

Steve Huck  
Emergency Preparedness Manager  
Emergency Medical Services  
For doing an extraordinary job coordinating the logistics on short notice for the recent public meeting on Doctors Medical Center. For demonstrating exceptional organizational skills coordinating with multiple county and city agencies.

◆ Nominated by Pat Frost

Health Information Management Staff  
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers  
For going the extra mile to make new employees welcome and quickly feel like family. For knowing their jobs extremely well and being patient while teaching others.

◆ Nominated by Ivania Nand

Jamie Pehling, MD  
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers  
For being a thorough and outstanding doctor. For going the extra mile for everyone.

◆ Nominated by Sue Meltzer

Do you know someone Going the Extra Mile?  
To recognize a CCHS employee, vendor or volunteer for outstanding Service Excellence performance, submit the commendation form by email to wanda.session@hsd.cccounty.us or fax to 925-957-5401. Forms are on our website (cchealth.org on the About Us page) or iSITE, our intranet, at http://cchs/. Nominations are subject to approval by Division Directors.
Regina Hawkins  
Francine Lewis  
Elizabeth Paez  
Ward Smedt  
Graiciela Vaquerano  

Patient Financial Services Specialists  
Finance  

For providing leadership in developing expectations for the Financial Counseling Unit. For exhibiting courage by allowing themselves to work outside of their levels of comfort with their colleagues and presenting information in a manner that was well received and invaluable to the unit.

♦ Nominated by Shannan Moulton

Ross Andelman  
Mental Health Medical Director  
Behavioral Health Services  

For consistently being a supportive leader and advocate of primary care and mental health integration. For his warmth and sense of humor.

♦ Nominated by Jessica J. Lee

Theresa Riggs  
Clerk—Experienced Level  
Contra Costa Regional Medical Center and Health Centers  

For helping a patient who had been discharged from the Emergency Department to connect with a social worker. For being energetic and always going the extra mile.

♦ Nominated by Sue Meltzer

September Milestones

Congratulations to these employees who have given us long years of service: Miriam Gonzalez, Laurie R. Crider, Tamera A. Rivas, Wendy E. Jimenez, Rinata K. Wagle-McClelland, James A. Rael, Ghulam S. Saied, Andrea Divina I. Dela Rosa, Marilou R. Arcamo (10 years); Latricia M. Johnson, Maria L. Lyttle, Christina L. Barron, Patricia M. Creel, Avtar Singh, Sherryl F. Cacacho, Karsen K. Kerns, Tina M. VanWolbeck, La Shan D. Haynes, Joy V. Mendoza, Barbara J.R. Benedict, Lorrie A. Knott, Michaela D. Mougenkoff, Andrea C. Aiello (15 years); Ann Harvey, Sonia Sutherland, Marguerite Lee, Christine Leivermann, Renee Matthews (20 years); Luz D. Baldoza, Hydee Tuason Ong (25 years); Charles A. Braggs and Donald N. Knepper Jr. (35 years).

The next Director’s Report will be the October issue. To publicize upcoming CCHS events and successes, contact Kate Fowlie at kate.fowlie@hsd.cccounty.us or 925-313-6636 by September 23. The Director’s Report is available online at http://cchealth.org/topics/publications/ and on isite at http://cchs/