




MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON

HEALTH DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES

SECTION: Emergency Management	NUMBER: EMG.03.02
CHAPTER: Notification	PREVIOUS NUMBER: NONE
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APPROVED: 	CONTACT
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Applies to: All Health Department Employees

Attachments: 1

OVERVIEW

Emergency management is an increasingly important dimension of public health. Public Health professionals work in a profession that emphasizes deliberate science, social welfare, and careful decision-making based on consensus or expertise. The profession must now additionally embrace the culture of emergency management - a culture characterized by command and control management, organizations formed "on the fly," rapid notification, decision-making, and action.

POLICY STATEMENT:

This guideline outlines the Department's emergency response protocols for:

- Receiving and processing emergency notification
- Alerting appropriate public health decision-makers so that they can decide on necessary initial actions, and
- Activating necessary departmental and community response operations

The attached flow chart illustrates how the Health Department will carry out these processes.

As the agency with overall responsibility for public health in Multnomah County, the department assesses, investigates, documents and intervenes to address routine medical, communicable disease, and environmental health threats. To protect the community and mitigate health impacts of emergency or major events, we must activate and organize appropriate departmental and community resources with speed and efficiency.

Major emergency events include:

- An unexpected occurrence or cluster of biological, acute chemical or environmental disease or injury;
- Any bio-terrorism incident, i.e. the criminal use of biologic agents;
- A mass casualty event involving a number of injuries and fatalities that requires health department resources and interventions; or
- An event (earthquake, flood, fire, etc.) with the potential to become a major event that will affect the public's health in Multnomah County or require sustained departmental resources to address.

Major emergency events require a sequence of actions to notify the Department, alert executives, decide on actions, and activate needed resources. (Please see attachment)

Notification

Depending on the circumstance, a variety of Multnomah County Health Department work units or personnel might receive notification of an emergency event.

Examples:

- The Communicable Disease Program could receive a report of an infectious disease emergency from hospitals, individual clinicians, medical clinics, laboratories, veterinarians, or the Medical Examiner.
- The Emergency Medical Services Program receives notification from the 9-1-1 dispatch center and pre-hospital care providers.
- Environmental Health might receive notification from regulated businesses, community members, or public health networks.

The Department must ensure that all reports of routine and non-major events are handled according to routine protocols. More importantly, programs and individual personnel receiving notification of major emergency events must immediately alert one or more of the Department executive(s) named below.

Alert

The person receiving notification of an emergency event must *immediately* alert the Multnomah County Health Officer (MCHO) or the Disease Prevention & Control Division Director (DP&C), or their designees of the actual or potential major event.

The MCHO or DP&C Director will be responsible for alerting the following MCHD Leadership of the actual or potential major event:

- a) Department Director or Deputy Director;
- b) Other appropriate MCHD Leadership (based on the judgment of the MCHO or DP&C Director)

Decision

In a time-critical, event the first alerted Department manager is authorized to immediately direct initial response actions if they deem necessary. He or she must then notify either, the Health Officer, the DP&C Director, the Department Director, or their designee. Executive Leadership, upon notification, will meet via any means necessary to determine the Health Department's initial response. This may take the form of a joint conference (in person or telephone) of several key executives or managers. The initial response could take a variety of forms:

- Continually monitor the event and assign representative(s) to other response organizations;
- Activate the Department's Incident Management Structure.

Activation of Incident Command Structure

Activation would include designating an **Incident Commander** and key leadership positions delegating responsibility and authority, setting initial priorities and setting guidelines for integrating with a larger response organization and/or other jurisdictions as needed or required. Activation will result in one or more of the following types of activities:

- **Department executives** inform, gain support, and coordinate activities of political, external agencies, and health care community leaders.
- **The Incident Command System is established** and an organization created for operations including selection of department staff and others to serve as members of the Incident Management Team. The Incident Commander leads this organization. Health and medical functions might include medical treatment, risk communications to reassure the public and encourage behavior that promotes resolution of the emergency, hazard assessment and prevention measures, environmental monitoring, and quarantine.
- **The Health Department Situation Room and/or a City or County Emergency Operations Center (EOC)** activates in support of the Incident Commander's organization. Support operations will align according to ICS functions and the needs of the field operations. Health and medical functions might include expanded dispatch of internal and external medical and health resources, coordination of health and medical support organizations, and arranging financing.

Last review date: March 2003

Attachment: Health Department Emergency Response Activation