

Winter Storm-Blizzard Extreme Cold

After-Action Report/Improvement Plan for the Eastern Virginia Healthcare Coalition (EVHC)

1/12/2018

The After-Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) aligns event objectives with preparedness doctrine to include the National Preparedness Goal and related frameworks and guidance. Exercise information required for preparedness reporting and trend analysis is included; users are encouraged to add additional sections as needed to support their own organizational needs.

EVENT OVERVIEW

Event Name	Winter Storm/Blizzard and Extreme Cold – RHCC Response
Dates	Wednesday, Jan 3 – Monday, Jan 8, 2018
Scope	The EVHC region experienced severe winter weather and the RHCC responded under a State of Emergency [MCI] from Thursday January 3 – Monday, Jan 8, 2018.
HPP Core Capabilities, Objectives & Activities	Response and Recovery
Objectives/ Assistance Provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operational Coordination - Intelligence And Information Sharing - Operational Communications - Public Health And Medical Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activated Eastern Virginia Healthcare Coalition Regional Healthcare Coordination Center (RHCC) to Level 2 Activation during the event. - Utilized the Virginia Healthcare and Alerting Status System (VHASS) during the event. - Provided medical and non-medical Situational Awareness to the following Partners: Acute Care Hospitals, Long Term Care (LTC) Facilities, End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Facilities, Home Health Agencies; Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/IID), Public Health, EMS and Emergency Management in the EVHC region. - Provided a communication/transportation bridge to Hospitals, LTC Facilities, ESRD Facilities, Home Health Agencies, ICF/IID Facilities, and local ESF-8 to reduce/close the gap.

**Threat or
Hazard**

Severe Weather: Blizzard and Extreme Cold

**Participating
Organizations**

- Eastern Virginia Healthcare Coalition

Point of Contact

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to analyze event results, identify strengths to be maintained and built upon, identify potential areas for further improvement, and support development of corrective actions.

Event Description

On Wednesday January 3, 2018^[MC2] around 9:30 a.m.,^[MC3] the National Weather Service issued a Blizzard Warning for the Southside of Hampton Roads, a Winter Storm Warning for the Lower Peninsula area and a Winter Weather Advisory for the Middle and Northern Peninsula of the EVHC. Snow began falling around 10:00 a.m.. Conditions deteriorated throughout the day, into Thursday, January 4, 2018 and Friday, January 5, 2018. Snow accumulation totals were between 3 to 11 inches throughout the region. By Friday, night temps were near single digits with 30 mph winds. Cold temperatures continued until Monday morning January 8, 2018.

Description of the Facility's Response to the Event

The RHCC created an Event in the Virginia Healthcare Alerting and Status System (VHASS) on January 3, 2018 around 8:50 a.m. Around 11:30 a.m., healthcare facilities began activating their Emergency Operations/Response Plans, standing up Command Centers, and reporting same in the VHASS.

Throughout the next several days, the RHCC assisted hospitals, LTC facilities, ESRD facilities, and ICF/IID facilities with connecting to their local ESF-8 (Health District Coordinators) located in their respective Emergency Operations Centers (EOC's) with transportation resources.

Major Strengths

The three major strengths identified during this event are as follows:

1. Marked improvement by healthcare facility utilization of VHASS, and the RHCC, clearly demonstrating bridging the communications gap previously noted in AAR/IP's that there was low interaction with both.
2. RHCC Situational Awareness with local and regional^[MC4] Emergency Management (EM) demonstrated improvement. The RHCC, during this event, had the most interaction and coordination with EM in its recent history.^[MC5]
3. RHCC assistance to ESRD facilities was very helpful in connecting them to local ESF-8 representatives for patient transportation issues.

Primary Areas for Improvement

Throughout the event, several opportunities for improvement in the RHCC's ability to respond to the incident were identified. The primary areas for improvement, including recommendations, are as follows:

1. RHCC staff did not establish a sustainable schedule for a long duration event. Roles beyond first operational period were not need to be better defined. [MC6]
2. Use of VHASS, while improving, is still not being utilized correctly for the information the RHCC staff need to better coordinate resources, set priorities, and demonstrate outcomes. Not used by all facilities, and facility types, in the affected area.
3. Transportation was a major issue, highlighted by several episodes of patient discharges from hospitals without a means of transporting themselves (homeless returning to homeless shelters, patients returning to a LTC facility). A significant portion of the problem was finding specialized transportation that could make it through the snow safely. Transportation of non-emergent patients from a regional prospective lacked coordination, i.e. moving an ESRD patient from their home in Virginia Beach to a dialysis center in Norfolk was a problem. [MC7]
[MC8]

Overall Performance

Overall, the RHCC performed well. This event demonstrated a need to prepare for, and have the ability to properly respond to Healthcare and Public Health needs over multiple operational periods. Reporting, prioritizing, and reflecting [MC9] the changing status of resource needs that need to be met need to be recorded by all VHASS users. [MC10] VHASS Status Boards need to be used more often by healthcare facilities and Public Health to report clear clinical status. Healthcare facility needs from the RHCC should be requested in Event Log and updates need to be provided by the RHCC staff until the need is met. [MC11]

A Medical Transportation Resource Guide should be developed and shared with local ESF 8. A regional Transportation Plan should also be developed in the future. [MC12]

APPENDIX A: EVENT PARTICIPANTS

The following is a list of organizations and facilities, emergency management and public safety organizations that assisted or participated in this event.

Participating Organizations	
State	
Virginia Department of Health	
Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association	
Region	
Eastern Virginia Healthcare Coalition	
Virginia Department of Emergency Management Region V	
City/County	
All EVHC Jurisdictions	
Other Facilities/Organizations	
ESRD facilities in EVHC	
Acute Care Hospitals in EVHC	
LTC/SNF's in EVHC	
ICF/IID Facilities in EVHC	

APPENDIX B: WINTER STORM-BLIZZARD EXTREME COLD IMPROVEMENT PLAN

This Improvement Plan (IP) has been developed for the RHCC EVHC as a result of the Winter Storm-Blizzard Extreme Cold that occurred Jan 3 – 8, 2018.

Area Identified for Improvement	Corrective Action Needed	Responsible Organization	Responsible Person	Start Date	Completion Date
Preparation and Response	Use of ICS Forms for assignments	EVHC	Metzner	1/15/18	2/15/18
Response - Sit. Awareness	Use VHASS Status Boards to indicate EOP, HCC Open and other info as requested.	All EVHC Members	All	1/9/18	1/9/19
Response – Logistics	Color Code RHCC Request on VHASS	EVHC Staff	All EVHC Staff	1/9/18	Ongoing
Response - Sit. Awareness	Local ESF - 8 to report on VHASS under same Event	Local ESF – 8	McBride and ESF 8	1/9/18	Ongoing
Response – Logistics	More education needs to be done on VHASS Event Log	EVHC Staff	All EVHC Staff	1/9/18	Ongoing
Response Communications (Comms)	More education needs to be done on RHCC Comms MMA and its limitations	EVHC	Metzner Banton	1/9/18	4/1/18
Preparation and Response	VHASS accounts need to be created before an Event	All EVHC Members	All	1/9/18	1/9/19
Preparation and Response	Transportation Resource Guide needed and shared with all	EVHC	Metzner E. Adams	1/9/18	6/1/18
Preparation and Response	Improve pre-storm assessment of transport needs by patients and staff	Dialysis, Home Health, Hospice	All McBride	1/9/18	Ongoing

