



Update on Public Health’s Response to H1N1 Influenza

H1N1 influenza, also known as “swine flu,” is a newly-identified flu virus that can spread from people who are infected to others through coughs and sneezes. The first outbreak of H1N1 in King County began in Spring of 2009.

Traditionally, cases of influenza increase significantly in the fall and winter seasons. Thus, much of the summer and early fall of this year were devoted to preparing communities for H1N1 outbreak. Public Health, especially, has been working on creating tools and resources (communication toolkits, factsheets, videos for practical planning, etc.) for King County schools, childcare and early childhood programs, healthcare providers, pharmacies, employers, community organizations, human service providers, and the general public. By addressing issues such as absenteeism resulting from illness and flu prevention, these resources can help everyone respond effectively. Public Education comic books and fact sheets were created in several languages to provide the general public with information on H1N1 symptoms and the appropriate time to seek medical care.

In October, a Flu Hotline was established, staffed by nurses, trained professionals, and PHRC volunteers, to answer flu related questions and concerns from the public. The Hotline continues its operation and is open 9am to 5pm every weekday.

Public Health Widens Eligibility Starting Saturday as Vaccine Supplies Increase

Starting this Saturday, December 12, those eligible to receive H1N1 influenza vaccine will be expanded to everybody six months of age and older in King County. Depending on early demand among this broader group, supplies may be limited for a time at some locations.

Public Health - Seattle & King County is taking this next step in widening H1N1 vaccine eligibility because many health care providers in King County are now reporting that they are able to meet the demand for their highest risk patients and vaccine supplies are increasing and expected to continue to rise steadily.

continued on page 2

Save the Date!

PHRC New Volunteer Orientation

January 11, 2010

If you are a volunteer who has not attended an in-person orientation, see page 3 for information on the next scheduled orientation.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- New Members of the PHRC Team 2
- PHRC Volunteers Serve in Vaccination Clinics for the Homeless 2
- PHRC and the Medical Examiner’s Office 3
- Volunteer Registration Gets Easier 3
- PHRC Opportunities and Required Training 3
- Green River Basin Flood 4
- A Fond Farewell to Mandi 4
- Personal Preparedness this Winter Season 5

New Members of the PHRC Team

Rosalind Monteros...

I have worked for King County in Human Resources for 19 years. In November 2008, I joined the Department of Public Health. I have enjoyed working for Public Health and really enjoy working with the Public Health Reserve Corps. One of my passions is outreach and recruitment and I am looking forward to recruiting more volunteers for our program. It is a very positive and delightful experience to interact with all the wonderful volunteers. I started working with Mandi George in June of this year and I have continued to act as the program manager in her absence. Mandi has been very successful in building and managing this program. I look forward to continuing her work.

Lauren Blesi...

In Spring of 2009, I graduated from Central Washington University, with a B.A. in Philosophy and an additional concentration in Religious Studies. I joined Public Health as a PHRC program coordinator in cooperation with Americorps in August and I have truly enjoyed every aspect. I hope to make a positive impact by advancing my passion through graduate study in philosophy and medical ethics. There are so many opportunities for our team ahead; I am looking forward to working with all of you in developing and cultivating our program throughout 2010!

Tien Ho...

I joined Public Health as an Americorp VISTA assigned to the role of Program Coordinator for the PHRC. I graduated in 2008 from Duke University with a B.S. in Psychology: Neuroscience Concentration. I am very interested in the medical field and hope to enroll in Pharmacy School in the future. I have always been involved in volunteer organizations and am excited to be part of such an important program. I look forward to working with all of you this year during my term of service.

Sarah Fish...

With the activation of the Area Command Center and an increase in interest in the PHRC, we asked Sarah, a HR associate, to join our team. She has helped us expedite the volunteer on-boarding process and is such a great asset. We cannot thank her enough.

continued from page 1

Public Health Widens Eligibility Starting Saturday as Vaccine Supplies Increase

As of December 4, an estimated 380,000 people in King County who are at high-risk for complications have been vaccinated for H1N1 influenza, and an additional 58,000 doses of vaccine are on the ground or in the process of being shipped to vaccine providers in the county.

Vaccination continues to be particularly important for people at highest risk for H1N1, including pregnant women, people who live with or care for children younger than 6 months of age, people between the ages of 6 months and 24 years old, people between 25 through 64 years of age with chronic health conditions or weakened immune systems, and healthcare and emergency workers.

Additionally, some health centers are offering free H1N1 vaccination to people who cannot afford to pay. On Saturday, December 12, HealthPoint's free H1N1 clinics are from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., or while supplies last. Public Health will also have five free H1N1 clinics December 12th and 19th from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. These same sites, except for Eastgate Public Health Center, will all have clinics on Wednesday, December 16 from noon to 7 p.m.

Vaccinations are first come, first served, and no reservations will be taken. If demand is high, people will be given a designated time later that day to return and receive their vaccination. Once supply is exhausted, people will be informed as soon as they arrive. For information about how to get vaccine and other general H1N1 questions, call the Flu Hotline at 877-903-KING (5464). To view resources, information, and updates related to H1N1, please visit: www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/preparedness/pandemicflu/swineflu.aspx

PHRC Volunteers Serve in Vaccination Clinics for the Homeless Community

The Public Health Reserve Corps has been critical in the H1N1 and seasonal flu response this season. To increase access to H1N1 and seasonal flu vaccines, Public Health worked with the Healthcare for the Homeless Network (HCHN) to set up free vaccination clinics in community centers and shelters. Every year, HCHN provides flu vaccine clinics at numerous sites throughout the county for people experiencing homelessness in King County. These clinics were located in downtown Seattle, most centered in the Belltown and Pioneer Square area.

Public Health relied heavily on our devoted Reserve Corps volunteers to serve as registrars, greeters, and vaccinators in these clinics. More than 800 vaccinations were administered over the span of two days, November 5th and November 6th. The clinics ran smoothly and were a great success. The health of our community involves the health of all our members. Providing access to healthcare to the uninsured population is a critical mission for Public Health. We would not have been able to provide this important service to the community without the help of PHRC volunteers and hope that in the coming future, we can count on you again. Your contribution is greatly appreciated!

PHRC and the Medical Examiner's Office: A Unique Collaboration in Preparedness

The Medical Examiner's Office, along with other agencies throughout the county, are working to prepare our community for emergencies and natural disasters. During October, the King County Medical Examiner's Office requested assistance from the Public Health Reserve Corps in creating a new surge team in light of the potential Green River Valley flooding and severe winter weather. It was our goal to provide a team of individuals who are able to bring trained medical evaluation to the investigation of deaths that are of concern to the public health, safety, and welfare of the community.

A number of dedicated volunteers responded to this request. This opportunity for our volunteers does, of course, come with resource limitations. Although we would love to train all those interested in opportunities such as this one, we were not able to and were required to narrow the team based on qualifications and skills that best matched this role. It is because of the collective commitment to service and civility, held by each PHRC team member, that we will now be able to respond to any potential needs from the Medical Examiner's Office. Again, thank you all for your outstanding response and contributions to the Public Health Reserve Corps. Stay tuned for updates!

Volunteer Registration Just Got Easier!

The PHRC program is excited to announce that, effective immediately, volunteers will no longer be required to provide vaccination documentation. By eliminating this requirement from the volunteer on-boarding process, our reserve corps will parallel other Medical Reserve Corps programs throughout the state. If you know of someone who was interested in volunteering with the Public Health Reserve Corps, but deterred by the volume of paperwork, please share with them that we've just made it easier than ever to join our team!

PHRC Orientation and Registration Opportunities

PHRC New Volunteer Orientation

January 11, 2009, 6:30 – 8:30 PM

Location: 401 Fifth Ave, Seattle, Chinook Building, Training Room 121

You must sign up by e-mailing phrc@kingcounty.gov. A confirmation will be sent to you 1-2 weeks prior to training.

Registration Workshops

Occurs every second and fourth Thursday of every month

Location: 401 Fifth Ave, Seattle, Chinook Building

Please visit our website at www.kingcounty.gov/health/phrc for dates of the Registration Workshops. Refer your friends!

*Unfortunately, due to King County budget constraints, providing food or beverages for events or reimbursement for parking is no longer allowed by Public Health. Volunteers are, however, welcome to bring in their own food and beverages.

Required Training!

National Incident Management System (NIMS) Training

PHRC volunteers are required to fulfill two specific NIMS online training courses upon registration:

1. IS-100.HC Introduction to the Incident Command System for Healthcare/Hospitals:
<https://training.fema.gov/EMIWWeb/IS/is100HC.asp>

2. IS-700 Introduction to the National Incident Management System:
<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWWeb/IS/is700.asp>

Volunteers should email copies of completion certificates to phrc@kingcounty.gov.

Welcome New PHRC Volunteers!

As of September 2009, we had 45 new volunteers join our team! Like all of you, they have decided to contribute their time and skills to helping others.

Our Reserve Corps team is now composed of 234 core members and is growing rapidly as we have many applicants in-process.

Our goal is to have a large pool of trained and skilled volunteers to call on in the event of an emergency, so please spread the word. The best recruiters are those who know the institution and believe in the mission of the PHRC.

Thank you all for making the Public Health Reserve Corps strong!

A Fond Farewell to Mandi

Please join me in wishing Mandi George a fond farewell. She has been presented a wonderful opportunity to work part time for a local company while spending more time with her family. Over the past two years, I have been fortunate to supervise, know, and watch her succeed as the face of our program.

Her successes and accomplishments are many. There has been a five fold increase in PHRC membership, new systems for badging and processing implemented, and most of all successful deployments during two full scale Alternate Care Facility (ACF) exercises, and no less than two storm responses. Each and every time, success was led by our volunteers under her guidance and every after-action review identifies the Medical Reserve Corps as the single most significant contribution to response capabilities.

Fortunately, Mandi has agreed to assist WA State with Medical Reserve Corps development and systems integration. So, we will see and work with her again! Next time you see her at one of our exercises or responses, please pass along your thanks and congratulations. My heartfelt “thank you” to Mandi and best wishes for her continued success.

Bryan K. Heartsfield, Manager
Preparedness & Medical Operations

Health & Medical Flood Preparedness: Green River Basin

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has discovered damage to a portion of the Howard Hanson Dam and has been actively installing temporary repairs. This dam has controlled flooding in the Green River Valley for the last 40 years, however, the dam will only operate at 30% capacity this winter until a full spectrum of testing can be completed next spring. If heavy and prolonged rain occurs this flood season (roughly October through March), many homes and businesses in the valley that don't typically see flood water—including parts of Auburn, Kent, Renton, South Seattle and Tukwila—could be flooded. King County and the effected cities are working closely with the USACE to manage this situation and any pending response.

On November 5, 2009, Colonel Wright announced the grout curtain in the abutment to the dam has increased protections from flooding downstream on the Green River. The grout curtain by itself decreases the chance of flooding to 1 in 25. When you factor in all the downstream measures on the levees, the chance of flooding drops even further to one in 33. He believes he can safely bring the pool behind the dam to 1170 feet, still much lower than the height of the pool in January 2009. Through the extraordinary efforts of the corps, the cities and the county, we have a reduced risk, but a permanent fix to the dam is up to five years away. Col. Wright advises us to continue to be prudent and prepare for an increased risk of flooding for the next five years while the Army Corps constructs a permanent fix.

Residents, businesses and farms below the Howard Hanson Dam in the Green River Valley need to prepare now for a higher risk of flooding. Evacuations in some communities are possible. Key transportation routes and transit service could be disrupted, and power outages and sewer back-ups are possible even outside the immediate flood zone. Please refer to page 5 for essential personal preparedness tips.

PHRC Volunteer Needs

- Licensed Medical Volunteers:
 - o Lab Technicians
 - o Mental Health Providers
 - o Paramedics
 - o Pharmacists
 - o Physicians and Physician Assistants
 - o Psychiatrists
 - o Registered Nurses
 - o and many more!
- Non-Medical Volunteers:
 - o Call Center Operators
 - o General/Administrative Support
 - o Hospitality Workers
 - o Interpreters
 - o Logistics Workers
 - o Spiritual Care Workers
 - o Any adult who wants to help!

For more information about the Public Health Reserve Corps, including how to apply and volunteer job descriptions, visit: www.kingcounty.gov/health/phrc or email phrc@kingcounty.gov.



Personal Preparedness this Winter Season: A Focus on Flooding

Preparing our county for natural disasters and other crisis events starts at home. Planning for emergencies at home is an important factor in safeguarding your family and other community partners such as businesses and schools when disaster strikes. Taking just a few simple steps will help you and your community to respond quickly and effectively when an unexpected emergency occurs. Below is a list of a few fundamental steps that you can take today to prepare yourself, your family and your home during an emergency:

1. Make an emergency plan and assemble an emergency kit with a minimum of three days worth of supplies. Essentials to include: food, water (1 gal/day/person), battery operated devices (flashlights, radios) and batteries, durable layers to keep warm (blankets, clothes, sturdy shoes), and first aid items (ibuprofen, thermometer, alcohol-based hand soap). Remember to make a kit for your car, too. Special needs to be considered can include: medications, extra pair of eye glasses and/or cane, and surgical mask. Remember to account for your pets, as well!

2. Buy insurance now. Flood insurance policies often take up to 30 days to take effect and most standard policies don't cover disasters like flooding.

3. Stay Informed. An inexpensive AM radio or NOAA weather radio (with batteries) should be kept on-hand for urgent news updates and weather forecasts. Know where to get current, detailed Emergency Alert System updates – King and Kitsap counties can tune to KIRO-FM (97.3), KOMO-FM (97.7), or KOMO-AM (1000). Listen for official emergency management instructions and evacuation routes.

4. Designate a meeting place and know emergency contact numbers. Ask an out-of-state friend to be your family contact. After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Post emergency telephone numbers by the phone and make copies for each member of the family to carry with them. Teach your children how and when to call 9-1-1.

5. Prepare your pet, too! Be ready to relocate pets and livestock to safer areas. Because of health regulations, many shelters, including the Red Cross, cannot allow animals. Be sure your emergency plans and kit can address the needs of your animals.

6. Minimize flood damage:

- Store valuables and electronics higher on the ground floor, on the second story or in your attic.
- Store chemicals above possible flood levels; recycle or dispose of them at the Wastemobile at the Auburn Supermall.
- Ensure underground storage tanks are sealed and secure.
- Learn how to use sandbags and locate where you can buy or get them ahead of time.
- Move vehicles and equipment to high ground before flood waters rise.
- Keep storm drains free of leaves and other debris.
- Know who to call and how to protect yourself if flooding leads to sewer overflows into homes and businesses.

7. Check out these website for more information and planning tools:

- Public Health – Seattle & King County: www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/preparedness.aspx
- Take Winter By Storm- Northwest Region: www.govlink.org/storm/default.asp
- City of Seattle - Office of Emergency Management: www.seattle.gov/emergency
- Seattle Red Cross: www.seattleredcross.org
- 3 Days, 3 Ways Campaign: www.govlink.org/3days3ways
- Washington's Military Dept. Management Map Your Neighborhood: www.emd.wa.gov/myn/myn_why.shtml