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CHEMICAL SAFETY NETWORK

How to Develop A Health Alert Network: Baton Rouge, Louisiana, LEPC

The Chemical Safety Network is designed to share successful practices in implementation, risk communication, and data use. The projects detailed in the Chemical Safety Network are easily reproducible, low cost and promote partnership-building in the community. This factsheet does not provide extensive information about a project. Rather, it is intended to help stakeholders generate ideas, identify tools and pinpoint funding sources for accident preparedness and prevention initiatives.

Purpose

The geographic location of the East Baton Rouge Parish makes it likely that natural disasters, such as floods, tornados, or hurricanes will occur. The region also has been declared a "High Risk" area for enemy attack and participates in the federal domestic preparedness program. The health alert network seeks to enhance the capabilities of local officials and emergency responders in incidents involving nuclear, biological and chemical terrorism. The Baton Rouge Local Emergency Planning Committee has identified people and equipment resources that may be needed during or following a deliberate or natural biological event.

Partnerships

The Director of Emergency Preparedness serves as the chairperson for the LEPC. The LEPC formed a Health Care Subcommittee that is chaired by the coroner and includes a psychologist, a pharmacist, an epidemiologist, a nurse, an emergency medicine physician, and others. The group is working to enhance their Metropolitan Medical Response System. This project could serve as a pilot to develop a national health alert network to deal with public health issues surrounding deliberate and natural biological events. The federal Center for Disease Control is interested in developing software aimed at helping State and local officials identify patterns of symptoms that could be identified quickly should an individual be exposed to biological contaminants.

Resources

The East Baton Rouge Parish LEPC does not have an operating budget or generate funds through an industry fee program. Grants awarded through federal and state programs provide funding for projects, which are developed and implemented through the LEPC. Partnerships serve as an additional source of funding for program implementation and development.

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Tips on Setting up a Medical Response System

The East Baton Rouge LEPC offers the following tips:

- Work toward a cooperative community effort;
- Incorporate the resources and response from jurisdictions that serve in a mutual aid capacity;
- Take a unified approach to communications and training;
- Build relationships with your neighboring communities. Remember, response may often spread outside your jurisdictional boundaries;
- Involve the right people. Include individuals from the public health service; public and private hospitals; other health-care facilities; departments of emergency medicine, veterinary medicine, and the coroner's office; environmental agencies and citizen groups.
- Focus initially on the key components of coordination and response; available community resources; first-responder education; coordination of plans and operating procedures; and communications and coordination of information.

For more information, contact ...

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