

OASPR TSA-O Regional Preparedness and Response Committee

Meeting Minutes

September 26, 2008

Attendees: Phil Alder, Billy Atkins, Rolando B., Vasanti Brandl, Nancy Brown, Renee Buhman, Joe Canfield, Joanne Dixon, Heidi Erwin, Chris Freeman, Kathleen Gann, Kim Gill, Jackie Gondeck, Jordan Gray, Robert Haugland, Linda Haynie, Jay Hoffman, Nancy Maschal, Dallas Mellichamp, Idalia Mendez, Ricky Nevels, Jeff Pick, Dave Rhinehart, Bill Shaffell, Linda Sifuentes, Don Walker, Ron Weaver

Handouts: Special Needs Sheltering 5 Levels of Care, DSHS Evacuation Transportation Triage Guidelines, Recommended Language for 3rd Party Emergency Plans RE: City of Austin OEM.

Next meeting: October 10, 2008, 9am – 11am, CATRAC office

I. Introductions

Attendees introduced themselves around the room. Joining the group were Jay Hoffman and Dallas Mellichamp from Williamson County ARES.

II. Review / Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Jackie Gondeck to approve the minutes from August 29, 2008, seconded by Dave Rhinehart. Minutes were approved.

V. Old Business

Equipment - Dave will send an email to the group with his availability to meet at the storage facility to distribute equipment. Our goal is to empty out as much as we can. There were recent Regional purchases made with the FY08 OASPR funds, which we want to distribute out to the hospitals.

FY09 Sub-recipient Agreement – many facilities have turned in their agreements, but not all. They are due September 30th. The signature page can be faxed if the original can't be mailed prior to this date, but the original still must be turned in.

VI. Drill Preparation

Ron weaver has been working with the Coalition on setting a date for the fall exercise. They would like to involve supervisors from Austin PD to participate for Unified Command. The dates they are considering are November 18th or December 9th or 11th. They intend to be testing HAM capabilities in this drill as well. The scenario is: blowing up one hospital while Seton is overwhelmed by hurricane patients. Money from OASPR is available for this drill, per previous discussions. If you know your facility has need for a drill, send an email to Ron Weaver. Johns Community Hospital in Taylor is holding a drill on November 6; the scenario includes collapsing bleachers at a major event.

Seton Medical Center got used heavily during Hurricane Ike, which taxed the facilities enough to count as their major drill. Dave will find out which forms are to be sent in for Ike and whether each individual facility sends one or if a summary for the whole network is sufficient. A lot of other facilities took patients during the hurricane event, but whether it stressed systems enough to count might be questionable per Joint Commission standards.

Be aware that these drills can utilize the area schools for "patients". The students often get class credit for participating, especially in Health Sciences classes. The next Drill Planning sub-committee meeting is on October 9; email Michelle with your reply as to whether your facility will play. Dave will send out Robin Wiatrek's spreadsheet next week.

VII. Radios

The project stage of programming of the Interop Radios is almost complete. The new template is far different and improved over the old one, adding several more talk groups and better capability. Chuck Brotherton and Patrick Cobb will soon begin setting up training times. Each facility will receive their radios after they are trained. Rodney Goodman from Motorola has been installing the base station radios.

VIII. EMSystem

Don Walker attended the EMSystems User Conference in Milwaukee. Dave Reimer and Ron Weaver had been scheduled to go, but cancelled due to the hurricane event. This conference was made up of hospital and EMS users from all over the country, though the majority of group was from within and around Texas. Topics covered included best practices and uses of the system itself. The system can not only can track beds, but also equipment. E.g. In Galveston, if everyone had been using the system fully, you could see patients that left UTMB and track where they went across the country. The system transfers information about the patient and is HIPPA confidential. If they were transporting equipment, such as an IV pump, with the patient, you could also track that. In our region, we aren't using this system to its fullest capacity. If you're interested in being on an EMSystem committee with Don, send Michelle an email. The purpose of this committee will be to discuss what parts of the system will be most beneficial to the RAC. In future meetings, we can get EMSystem representatives to talk to the IS people in your hospitals.

IX. Hurricane Update

On August 26th, when Hurricane Gustav came into the region, the state put out a situation report. The state works off of "H-120 hours." If they haven't gotten people out of the coastal area by H-36 hours, that window closes. They do not want to leave first responders in harm's way. There is also concern about depleting resources in this region, while others are deployed to coast. The State has a contract with FEMA: even if that truck's not running, they still get paid. Texas still foots the bill, so on the frequent conference calls, there's often discussion about whether they're needed.

When Ike changed direction, many were evacuated to Cedar Park Regional Medical Center and those patients did come with a few nurses. A number of patients from Victoria were taken to Seton Edgar B. Davis. UTMB faced a last minute evacuation; there was a lot of confusion, and not a lot of consistency. Patients came into ABIA on fixed wing small planes, 2-3 people at a time. Some had NICU nurses with them, some did not. Some went to SMCA, others went to SDMC. Most of the elderly patients didn't have care givers with them. Special Needs patients were ultimately housed at the J.J. Pickle Center. Some lessons learned: During Gustav we only got 65 patients in TSA-O. During that same weekend, there had also been a foot race downtown, and communication broke down between the EOC and Travis County EMS. During Hurricane Ike, there were concerns raised about being overwhelmed with only 88 special needs patients, when we could be hit with thousands in a pandemic event. In this region, we need to really look at our special needs capabilities. Other regions were taking 1000 – 1500 patients, and we were overwhelmed with far fewer.

Jay Hoffman was at the EOC in Austin. He reported that this was a non-event for HAMS: All radios, cell phones, etc worked. They have radios set up at Austin-Travis County's EOC and the DPS at the SOC. Some of the ARES people went down to Houston and Galveston to work on mobile, traveling with military. Jay reported that the Military is so dependant on satellite communications, they had to buy walkie talkies at Walmart so that could talk while on the move. The HAM was the only one could talk with the state while they were moving. Galveston had two HAMS who rode out the storm on the island.

It was suggested that a book be compiled for use at the EOC, putting one book at each seat, to act as a field guide and a resource of all the people we'll need to be in contact with during an event.

X. Location

The building owners renegotiated our lease and planned to raise the rent on our space (suite 207). As we are in need of a bigger meeting room and storage space, we opted to move to the other end of the building, suite 200. Doing this, we hope to end our use of Braker Storage for the equipment purchased with OASPR funds. The motivation to stay in the building included the ample parking and ease of reaching this location from all parts of the region.

XI. Regional Discussion / Concerns

Plan on having another RPRC meeting in two weeks. If we start breaking into committees, we may not need to meet as a group twice per month anymore. This will be addressed again next meeting.

Billy Atkins passed around the Recommended Language for 3rd Party Emergency Plans RE: City of Austin OEM. The Duty Officer phone # is 512-974-0600.

Monthly reports – Dave Reimer confirmed that we are still using the old forms until there is an opportunity to reformat them.