

Tools of Situational Awareness for Healthcare Coalitions and Public Health Emergency Preparedness Staff

Purpose and methodology

The Incident Management (IM) Workgroup, one of five workgroups in the Georgia Hurricane Response Hub, was charged with developing systems, trainings and/or materials to support jurisdictions in Georgia that endure major events like hurricanes and often need help in their immediate response. One project of the IM Workgroup was to develop statewide capabilities and capacities tools and maps to provide emergency preparedness and response leadership at the Georgia Department of Public Health and its districts, the Georgia Hospital Association, and Healthcare Coalitions (HCC) with essential information about facilities as well as real time situational awareness during a hurricane or other major event.

Modeled after previous work by the Region E Healthcare Coalition, the IM Workgroup initially set out to gather Essential Elements of Information (EEI) via Excel spreadsheets from all hospital, nursing home and public health facilities in the 14 healthcare coalition regions and 18 public health districts in Georgia. As the Region E HCC had done, the original plan also included using Tableau to develop interactive maps for every region and district and to post these maps on a site where all emergency preparedness and response staff could access them.

This project aimed to collect four types of EEI:

- Healthcare (hospital and nursing home) facility *static* EEI (i.e., standard information about the healthcare facility's capabilities and capacities)
- Healthcare (hospital and nursing home) facility *response* EEI (i.e., data collected from the healthcare facility during an event for situational awareness)
- Public health facility *static* EEI (i.e., standard information about the public health facility's capabilities and capacities)
- Public health facility *response* EEI (i.e., data collected from the public health facility during an event for situational awareness)

Several months into its work, the IM Workgroup made two simultaneous decisions:

- 1. To capitalize on a mandate from the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) that all healthcare facilities submit current EEI to meet a September 2019 deadline. Beyond the required ASPR data, the IM Workgroup identified, and decided to capture, a list of additional EEI that would be helpful for standard information sharing and situational awareness about a facility's capabilities and capacities.
- 2. To use the WebEOC emergency management software (rather than Excel and Tableau) to capture and display the EEI information in a color-coded dashboard. The use of WebEOC

would allow additional functionality as the color-coded dashboard could display EEI on all facilities in the state, be updated in real time, and quickly reveal those that were in immediate need of assistance during or immediately after an event. To implement the color-coded functionality for each EEI important for situational awareness, the IM Workgroup identified values that would trigger a display as green (normal operations), yellow (warning of a limited impact to operations), or red (critical impact to operations).

During the fall of 2019, members of the Workgroup continued to identity and classify the EEI, and work with the Region IV HHS ASPR office to develop the new WebEOC dashboards. In January 2020 however, the Workgroup learned that the development of the dashboards would be delayed because of other pressing projects beyond the control of the Workgroup members and therefore, it would be necessary to create an interim workaround.

The workaround includes the use of ReadyOp (a SaaS emergency management, command and control platform) to collect data on public health and healthcare facilities. Unlike WebEOC, which requires programming by an external partner, ReadyOp is a system that Workgroup members could customize to some extent themselves. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the use of ReadyOp has not been fully realized, but the plan calls for ReadyOp to be used to collect a.) Healthcare facility *response* EEI; b.) Public health facility *static* EEI; and c.) Public health facility *response* EEI. As a reminder, much of the healthcare facility *static* information is already collected as part of the ASPR mandate.

The required *static* and *response* data will be gathered using online forms (see Appendices 1 - 3) that can be disseminated to all healthcare facilities and public health facilities to complete. EEI data collected from these forms will then populate Excel spreadsheets that decision makers can access. Additionally, the data gathered via ReadyOp can be imported into the WebEOC system and available for viewing there (although likely not as a color-coded dashboard).

In early 2020, the Workgroup developed the online forms, began testing the utility of the new approach, and trained emergency preparedness and response leadership about the use of these tools at the February 26, 2020 Georgia ESF-8 meeting. By the end of May 2020, it was anticipated that *static* EEI information would be collected from all public health facilities in districts throughout the state and that healthcare and facility event *response* forms would be ready for implementation in the event of a hurricane or other emergency.

Status of work (as of December 2020)

Unfortunately, in early March 2020, the first cases of COVID were detected in Georgia and all of the members of the IM Workgroup were called to respond. Consequently, progress on the work has been paused. To date:

- All healthcare facilities in the state have submitted static EEI
- A Public Health Department Facility *Static* EEI Form (see Appendix 1) has been created to collect information on public health facilities in each district
- Event response EEI data collection forms have been created for both healthcare and public health facilities (see Appendices 2 & 3)

Epilogue

Although the work of the IM Workgroup was paused due to the COVID response, many of the ideas developed by the IM Workgroup related to the collection and tracking of EEI were incorporated into a WebEOC color-coded dashboard that the Georgia Department of Public Health and Georgia's 14 healthcare coalitions are using to track EEI specific to COVID-19 in acute care facilities. State and federal partners monitoring and responding to COVID throughout the state have acknowledged the COVID dashboard as a tremendous asset. The development of this COVID-related board will be the foundation of a WebEOC board that can be used during a Hurricane Event.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Public Health Department Facility Static EEI Form

Appendix 2: Healthcare Facility Event Response Form

Appendix 3: Public Health Department Facility Event Response Form

This project was developed as a part of the Georgia Hurricane Response Hub's Incident Management Workgroup. Funding for this activity has been provided to the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI) through a Cooperative Agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC – NU1ROT000004-01-00). NNPHI is collaborating with Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University and the CDC's National Center for Environmental Health on this project.



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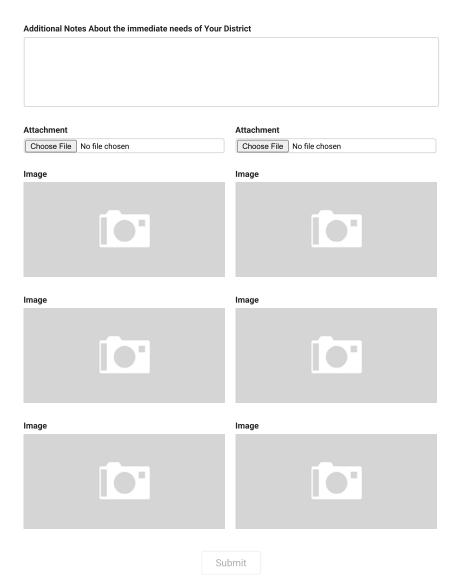
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