

Emma Paras, CEM, MPH

Emergency Manager, Denver Health and Hospital Authority

COMPETITIVE DIVISION – PRACTITIONER

All-Hazards in the Time of COVID

The COVID-19 pandemic reminded us all of the value of healthcare emergency management. This poster will showcase key tenants in building an Emergency Management (EM) program for long term sustainability in an integrated healthcare system.

Establishing organization-level preparedness should focus on an all-hazards approach. Amidst the pandemic, there were many events confounding the public health emergency such as severe weather and IT outages. Adapting principles leadership used during COVID-19 to an all-hazards strategy ensures future flexibility.

Analogized with building a home, building an EM Program is multi-staged starting with a foundation of stakeholder partnerships. Internally, with a multi-disciplinary EM Committee and Incident Command Team and externally with regional Healthcare Coalitions, we foster relationships to be leaders and partners in the field. Next is structuring the Emergency Operations Plan in an all-hazards composition while assessing specific risks in Hazard Vulnerability Analyses. Hazards with highest likelihood of occurring and impact, drive planning efforts. The all-hazards approach constructs the

framework needed in any emergency, while hazard specific planning allows delineation for nuances in varying situations. Plans must be easily operationalized, so “Front-Door Preparedness” through training/exercises is key. All-hazards training for employees helps bolster response confidence. Building on familiar tenants and using real examples to drive the all-hazards approach will form a reliable cadre of employees to respond to any emergency. Continuous improvement of EM processes aligns with home maintenance. Through after-action reports/improvement plans developed after real responses and exercises, EM will continue to improve.

The pandemic reinforced the value in EM, being proactive, nimble, and sustainable. Lessons learned and principles to build the all-hazards EM House will ensure we prepare and respond to our ever-changing world.

Presentation Theme: Building an all-hazards emergency management program in a healthcare setting to ensure high reliability, readiness, and preparedness for emergencies which do or may have an impact to clinical and business operations.

Collaborators, Advisor(s) and Department(s) that assisted with this research: William Neville, MA