Response & Exercise Programs In a Virtual World

The **Response** Group
Emergency Response | Pre-Planning & Support

Dustin White, CHLS, PCP
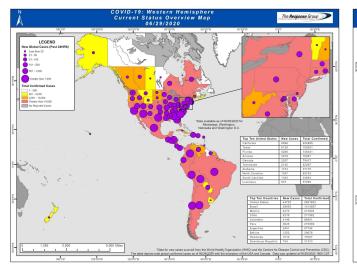Response Manager & Training Advisor
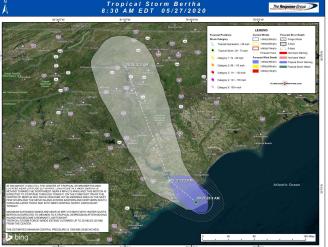The Response Group (TRG)

Where we're at:

We must be prepared for two separate, but related circumstances:

✓ Response to pandemics like COVID-19

✓ Response to other events during a pandemic

Can you manage them both in parallel with the teams you have in place?

What teams are in play?

Most operators build a single Incident Management Team (IMT) per business unit. This may be supported by additional enterprise wide teams to support the IMTs or perform corporate-driven functions such as Crisis Management Team (CMT) or Business Support Team (BST).

- What is the consist of those teams?
- What is the bench strength?
- What are we training them to/for?
  - Regulatory standard
  - Risk assessments

How does the approach of private industry affect what we're doing from a regulator perspective?

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Response Models:

There are three basic models for
response in this new world:

- Traditional, on-site response

- Totally remote response

- Blended, partially on-site

These models have to be tested
as part of any effective exercise
program.

Traditional, On-Site Response: Best Practices

- Increased size of Incident Command Post (ICP), selection of facilities
  - ✓ More square footage, more restrooms (requires more janitorial staff)
  - ✓ Review response plans and Area Contingency Plan (ACP) / Geographic Response Plans (GRPs) for new facility options
- Reduce the volume of personnel, if possible
- Dedicate health and safety personnel to logistics / facilities
  - ✓ Modular food service, designated server

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Traditional, On-Site Response: Best Practices

- Outdoor briefing areas, Public Address (PA) systems

- Robust signage

- Requires regimented responders "buying in"

- Touchless, Electronic Check-In

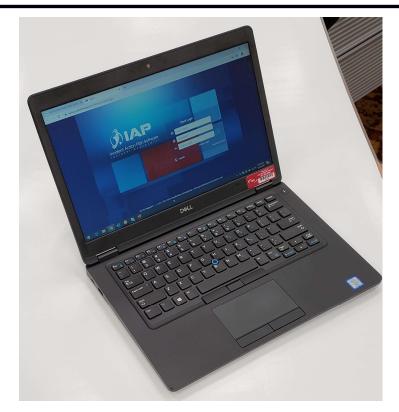- Pre-Screening personnel upon ordering through 213RR Process

Traditional, On-Site Response: Best Practices

- Sanitation across the board must be robust, but consider the non-typical locations like Documentation Boxes
- Stagger shifts and meals to reduce the volume of personnel at any one time in a common space; No buffet style meals.
- Set up Check-In stations in multiple lanes, as far outside facility as possible.
- Minimize shared equipment such as printers
- Establish common hotel accommodations. This allows you to enhance sanitation to your standards, and ensure closure of pools, gyms, etc.

Remote and Blended Response: Best Practices

- What platforms are you able to use?
  - ✓ Teams – GoTo – WebEx – Skype – Zoom
- Each presents challenges and benefits
- What is the value add to each one?
- Integration with WebIAP Software maximizes strength of each of the platforms.
  - ✓ Use of Preloads is significant advantage

Remote and Blended Response: Surprises and Lessons Learned

- Build your response as a virtual ICP
  - ✓ The Response Group (TRG) has multiple standing remote ICPs already built for exactly this purpose, waiting to be turned on in short order

- Managing meetings takes significant focus
  - ✓ Planning Section Chief (PSC) is even more critical than normal response, and MUST be filled by a highly competent team member
  - ✓ Managing the meeting attendees takes additional personnel; utilize a moderator in addition to the PSC to handle the technology

Remote and Blended Response: Surprises and Lessons Learned

- Blended response may be necessary for oil spill or other incidents, but utilize the virtual ICP structure to ensure command and control from the strategic level.
  - ✓ Field Operations will not be adequately supported without the ICP structure in place.
  - ✓ Ensure that you have health and safety experts on-site reporting back to Safety Officer, and empower them to enforce protocols

Overall COVID-19 and Pandemic Lessons Learned

- Despite training as "all hazards" teams, we still build teams focused on industrial accidents and traditional natural disasters
  - ✓ Teams lack depth in public health emergencies
  - ✓ Knowledge of certain subject matter (i.e. HIPAA, medical basics) not sufficient for personnel, especially Incident Commander (IC) and PSC. Encourage these topics as part of basic position training.
  - ✓ Train medical personnel that they do, in fact, work for the IC

Overall COVID-19 and Pandemic Lessons Learned

- Do you have medical personnel on staff?
  - ✓ When you need to contract them, so does everyone else
- You *MUST* have enforceable protocols in place for potentially infected responders
  - ✓ Template them and set them up before your response, including Legal and HR review
  - ✓ Empower Safety personnel to enforce them in a zero-tolerance capacity

Virtual Exercises: Play How You Practice

- We consistently speak to "All Hazards" in training; When was the last time you exercised it?

  ✓ More than just Business Continuity or COOP
  ✓ Test both response to pandemic and use a pandemic background for other exercises as a complicating factor

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Virtual Exercises: Play How You Practice

- All platforms can be effective, but use the one you intend to handle virtual response in.
  - ✓TRG utilizes Teams for this function internally and for clients without a predetermined platform at their disposal.
  - ✓Build exercise facilities (i.e. SimCell, Evaluator Rooms) into your virtual ICP
  - ✓Use of eVal App is significant value-add for evaluators.

Virtual Exercises: Play How You Practice

- Facilitation takes additional personnel, and they must have high level expertise in the platform you're using

- Critical to have rostering complete ahead of incident time to ensure setup is appropriate

- Insufficient administration will be glaringly apparent

- Test and train your personnel on the tool as part of your preparedness cycle, prior to the incident of exercise.

Get Response Ready Now.

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For More Information:

If you want to know more about how to work through these issues, please contact:

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