Deployment Safety and Health: Preparedness, Protection, and Recovery for Federal Responders

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Goals

- Prevent or mitigate injury and illness from environmental, occupational, and operational threats
- Integrate safety, health, and resiliency into planning and command functions
- Enable investigation of emerging concerns
  - Real-time exposure assessment and control
- Ensure resources and services are available when prevention fails
Pre-Event (Prepare)

• Criteria for Ready Responder
  – Credentials, education and training, PPE
  – Fitness for duty (medical clearance)
• Personnel tracking system
  – ID # for tracking, verified as ready
  – Interoperability for workforce reporting
• Develop S&H staffing (deploy and reach-back)
• Pre-mission briefing
  – Anticipated hazards and situation awareness
  – Infrastructure for safety, health and resiliency
    • Command, Reporting, Services
Anticipate Responder Risks

• What are the anticipated **job hazards**?
  – Role and task, organization of work
  – Work/rest (fatigue and recovery) cycles
  – Health and safety threats

• What are the **personal risk** variables?
  – Chronic disease and degree of control
  – Current injury or disability
  – Personality, stress tolerance, mental flexibility

*Reissman, SEAK 2007*
Psychologically Prepare!

- Attend to both work and family demands
- Comprehensive stress management
- Anger defusing techniques
- Team building on-the-fly
- Resources for special situations
- Enhance health and safety culture
- Address ethical dilemmas
- Self-care skills and sustainable resiliency

Reissman, Watson, Klomp, Tanielian, & Prior, JHSEM 2006
Sources of Deployment Stress

- Role ambiguity
- Mismatch of skills with assigned tasks
- Lack of team cohesion or poor leadership
- Poor health and safety culture for responders
  - Rest and recovery not built into schedule
  - Not prepared for psychological hazards
- Competing priorities and reporting chains
- Sensory overload (loss, death, destruction)
- Social disarray (equity and order)
Building Team Resiliency

- Learn about your leadership strengths and weaknesses
- Learn about rapid assessment of skills and limitations in team members
- Learn how to foster team cohesion
- Be familiar with expected roles and team functions
- Build social support systems

Reissman, Kowalski-Trakofler, 2005 CDC Public Health Emergencies Conference
Event Response: (Protect)

- Connect with infrastructure for coordinated health and safety activities
- Situational awareness and anticipate hazards
- Compliance with site-specific health and safety plan (HASP)
- Real-time exposure assessment and control
- Monitor physical and behavioral health
- Injury and illness reporting
Building Team Resiliency: During Response

- Deploy as a team or use a “buddy system”
- Ensure regular communication bi-directional (especially problem-solving)
- Clarify tasks required for mission success
- Match tasks with team member skills
- Delegate as needed to keep manageable
- Monitor occupational safety, health, and psychological well-being

Reissman, Kowalski-Trakofler, 2005 CDC Public Health Emergencies Conference
Safety, Health, and Resiliency
Command Function

INCIDENT COMMANDER

Safety, Health, Resiliency

OPERATIONS
PLANNING
LOGISTICS
FINANCE
Demobilization

- Joint verification of recorded injury/health events or potential adverse exposures while deployed by ID#
- Future contact information for responder
- Post-mission briefing
Operational Evaluation

• Review of strategies and lessons
  • Mission
  • Self-care
• Exit interviews in the field
  • Continuity for ongoing response
  • Resource for reach-back
  • Closure
Post-Event (Encourage Recovery)

- Monitor health and well-being
  - Exit interviews for closure
  - Delayed reactions with increased demand for services (onset >5 weeks)
- Give yourself time to recover
- Seek support when needed
- Create opportunities for team to reconnect

Reissman, Kowalski-Trakofler, 2005 CDC Public Health Emergencies Conference
Post-Event

- Passive and active reporting of emerging health concerns for specified time
- Information sharing about potential concerns and continuity of, or new, resources
- Tracking health concerns that trigger more formal investigation, medical monitoring and/or treatment programs
Impact of Behavioral Health

- Problems making decisions
- Less able to assess situations
- Bodily complaints
- Slow to respond
- Change in behavior

Distress

Disorders
- PTSD
- Depression

Health Risk Behaviors
- Recklessness
- Unsafe work practices
- Alcohol, drugs, tobacco
Interagency Working Group on Behavioral Health and Pandemic Influenza, 2007
Sustaining Resiliency

- Health and safety culture, policies
- Work flow adjustment and support
- Work and family/life balance
- Stress, anger, grief management
- Team building and skills training
- Situational leadership
- Address ethical dilemmas
- Teach self-care skills
Workforce Management in Times of Disaster

- Rotate people
- Reserve force
- Limit work hours
- Regional response networks
- Cross training and surge capacity
  - Across tasks, managers, locations
  - Shared leadership
- Selection/Deselection of individuals

Reissman, Watson, Klomp, Tanielian, Prior, 2006 JHSEM
What Is At Stake?

- Mission success
- Reputation
- Staff retention, recruitment, performance
  - Morale and motivation
- Health and welfare of personnel
  - Workers compensation claims
  - Disability and early retirement

Reissman, 2002 CDC/OHS Medical Board
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