



The New England Consortium's Quarterly

A Newsletter about Working with Toxic Materials, Health and Safety Training, Law and Public Policy

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Protecting Avian Influenza (AI) Responders

Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), Worker Education and Training Program (WETP) sponsored a conference focused on increasing preparedness among emergency responders for a potential outbreak of an avian influenza pandemic.

An avian influenza (AI) response could involve emergency responders, skilled support personnel, veterinarians, personnel from Federal agencies and State departments of agriculture, employees from private industry, and State and local public-health workers.

The conference brought together agencies and organizations that may be involved in an AI response to discuss, coordinate, and participate in a practice exercise for such an incident. The following issues were addressed and discussed:

- Improving incident communications among participating organizations and agencies (as it relates to health and safety) including injury and illness reporting and surveillance;
- Testing proposed health and safety plans and training programs;



- Identifying shortfalls or needs to ensure that responders are empowered through education and personal protective equipment to conduct their duties in a manner that will prevent acute and chronic injury to themselves, coworkers, and the public; and
- Identifying hazards associated with the AI response and methods to control their impact on responders.

Addressing and keeping as a priority the health and safety of responders will ensure that these possible outcomes are addressed and prevented: responder physical injury from biologic and physical hazards and mental injury from duties associated with remediation, the

public's physical and mental health; and any adverse economic impact that could result from inadvertent migration of the biologic agent from the work zone by responders.

Addressing these issues will facilitate the rapid control and remediation of the incident; increase efficient use of resources; reduce redundancy of activities; and increase public confidence while ensuring the protection of all parties involved in an AI response.

Unlike the past experience where the NIEHS Worker Education and Training Program was brought in to provide post event training in response to the terrorist attack at Ground Zero in 2001 and the Gulf Coast



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Protecting Avian Influenza (AI) Responders

hurricane and flooding in 2006 the NIEHS-WETP and USDA-APHIS are working on proactive strategies to prepare for a potential major infectious disease outbreak anywhere it may occur.

Conference participants were invited to actively take part in a three hour table top exercise. The exercise took the form of a board game. Based on a fictitious county in the United States, the board game had many local locations and events in which to challenge the participants. The participants were required to choose a variety of limited resources to deploy during an outbreak of AI in the animal population. The game moved the players through challenges they identified as the events unfold over a multi-day outbreak. The players gained enhanced awareness of the particular health and safety issues they would encounter from the perspectives of the role they would likely play during an outbreak. Worker safety and the difficulties of working in hazardous environments during extended periods of time were highlighted throughout the exercise. Worker health and safety practical lessons learned from the 9/11 attacks and Hurricane Katrina, were utilized by the team members in which to provide the safest environment for the responders and resources they were deploying during the tabletop exercise.

In addition to the mock event exercise a number of helpful presentations were conducted on the first day. Dr. Patrice Klein, Senior Staff Veterinarian and Dr. Fraser Owens, Area Emergency Coordinator went over the history

of APHIS' response to AI outbreaks including case examples from 2004, the APHIS Veterinary Service Worker Health and Safety program in the eastern and western regional office and at the National Veterinary Services Laboratory, and information on the APHIS Marketing and Regulatory Business Services. Peter Patch, Industrial Hygienist and Dr. Jonathan Zack, Director of Preparedness and Incident Coordination provided insight into USDA-APHIS' perspective as lead coordinating agency to an avian outbreak as well as a synopsis of their plan with expected sequence of events. They also covered topics of preparing participating agencies from training to medical monitoring, what's in place currently to accomplish this and an example of an AI site specific health and safety plan (HASP).

Max Kiefer, Director, Denver Regional Office, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health looked at a range of health and safety issues including how to prepare/protect workers to deal with AI (wildlife, vets, poultry workers, labs and public health. Much of Day 2 looked at state, industry, federal and international perspectives on AI response plans and training initiatives and concerns about those plans, coordination with federal, state and local responders, aspects of federal preparedness, and lessons learned from recent experiences in other countries.

Bernie Mizula, former TNEC trainer and consultant working with the National Clearinghouse for Worker Safety and Health discussed the development of NIEHS

AI tools, including a PowerPoint presentation and the booklet, *Protecting Yourself from Avian Influenza*.

Four other organizations that are part of the NIEHS WETP have been developing training material for a broad range of workers. NIEHS was able to provide some funding to the following organizations: Kirkwood Community College/Hazardous Materials Training and Research Institute (HMTRI), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), The International Association of Firefighters (IAFF), and The International Chemical Workers Union (ICWU) Center for Worker Health and Safety Education. The grants cover workers in the poultry industry, first responders, health care first receivers and providers and skilled support personnel. The IAFF and the Kirkwood Institute shared the materials that they have developed and which are already being used.

Following these presentations on day 2, attendees participated in two breakout sessions covering over sixteen different workshop topics.

The *Protecting Yourself from Avian Influenza* booklet and other Avian Influenza training materials can be accessed at: <http://tools.niehs.nih.gov/wetp>.

News from the COSH's

Join MassCOSH on November 29th for... *Celebrating the Movement*

Thursday, November 29th 6:00 - 10:00 PM
IBEW Local 103, 256 Freeport Street, Dorchester, MA

There will be dinner, dancing, entertainment and a silent auction and raffle... For tickets visit the www.masscosh.com website and order your tickets online.

RICOSH News.....

We Need Your Help!

RICOSH has an OSHA-funded project to train teen and immigrant workers on job safety, health rights and hazards. Five hundred and thirty nine workers have received training in the last two years. OSHA has decided, however, to eliminate this project. You can donate to a special resource handbook, ***Safety on the Job: Resources for Young Workers***, or directly to RICOSH through the United Way Donor Option. Contact RICOSH for more information. (p) 401.751.2015

Please Join The Western MassCOSH for Their Annual Dinner

Getting back to Basics— 1st Western MassCOSH Annual Spaghetti Dinner

Thursday, December 6th, 6:00pm

Elks Lodge No. 2174
429 Morgan Road
West Springfield, MA
Cash bar

*Individual tickets \$20.00
Table of eight \$150.00*

Mail to:
Western MassCOSH
640 Page Blvd, Suite 104
Springfield, MA 01104

ConnectiCOSH Presents:

The 1-day Workout: Strengthen Your Health & Safety Muscles in the Workplace

Connecticut Council for
Occupational Safety and
Health Annual Convention
More Info: 860.953.COSH
connecticosh@snet.net

Friday, December 14, 2007
8:30am- 4:00pm
United Auto Workers' Hall
111 South Street
Farmington, CT



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The New England Consortium's Quarterly is a publication of The New England Consortium, based at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. To receive The Quarterly at no charge, contact TNEC. Send letters to TNEC Quarterly at University of Massachusetts Lowell, One University Avenue Falmouth 202 Lowell, MA 01854. TNEC is a partnership between the University of Massachusetts Lowell and the Coalitions for Occupational Safety and Health in CT, MA, NH and RI. TNEC provides health and safety training for hazardous waste site workers and emergency response personnel under a grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

The New England Consortium's Quarterly is a publication of The New England Consortium under NIEHS Grant No. 2 U45 ES06172-15

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TNEC Receives Work Zone Safety Training Grant

The state's Secretary of Labor and Workforce development, Suzanne Bump, visited the campus of the University of Massachusetts Lowell recently to present The New England Consortium with a check for \$24,605.

The money will be used to train employees within the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority's service areas. The award comes from the newest round of OSHA grants, distributed by the state Department of Industrial Accidents. The objective of the training is to decrease the risk of worker injury and illness in and around work and construction zones through recognition, avoidance and prevention. Due to the dramatic rise in fatalities and injuries there is a drive to provide this type of training. Some municipalities may be able to receive insurance discounts by providing the training to its employees.

Along with the Secretary others who attended the press conference announcing the funding was the state Director of Labor George Noel, along with Lowell Mayor Bill Martin and other local officials.

What's New!!!

TNEC began a new training course in Work Zone Safety. The objective of the training is to decrease the risk of worker injury and illness in and around work and construction zones through hazard recognition, avoidance and prevention. Due to the dramatic rise in fatalities and injuries there is a drive to provide this type of training. Some municipalities may be able to receive insurance discounts by providing the training to its employees.



Price Changes for Refreshers

Please note that the prices for all refreshers will change beginning January 1, 2008. The pricing for Public agencies (State/federal and local) will be \$150.00. The price for Private agencies will be \$175.00.

Anyone who attended one of our refreshers in 2007 will be given a \$25.00 discount from the new pricing for attending in 2008.

The New England Consortium

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