Coast Guard Leader; Disaster Plan Needs Avian Flu Provisions

BY JONATHAN MARINO
jmarino@goveexec.com

A list of emergency responsibilities included in the federal government's recently revamped National Response Plan for responding to disasters is in need of further evaluation, the Coast Guard's new chief commented.

Commandant Admiral Thad Allen said the 17 critical "emergency support functions" outlined in the National Response Plan fail to fully cover the possibility of a pandemic flu outbreak. The Homeland Security Department updated that plan, the blueprint for how federal, state and local governments will respond to disasters, on May 25, just in time for the June 1 start of the new hurricane season.

The plan's emergency functions section delegates first aid to the American Red Cross and general medical and health issues to the Health and Human Services Department. But the section doesn't specifically address vaccination, Allen said. He made his comments in a speech at the Federal Emergency Management Agency's higher education conference in Emmitsburg, Md. "We don't need to resolve it for the next hurricane season," Allen said. "We need to resolve it for avian flu."

Robert Zitz, the Homeland Security Department's deputy undersecretary for preparedness, said in a separate speech at the TNEC Advisory Board meeting. Left to right Dick Clapp, Molly Jacobs and Polly Hoppin.

Panelists at TNEC Advisory Board meeting. Left to right Dick Clapp, Molly Jacobs and Polly Hoppin.

Continued on Page 2

Science Wars: What are the Values that Guide Research? Prevention, Precaution and Public Policy

The New England Consortium's (TNEC) Advisory Board meeting held at the University of Massachusetts Lowell this past May brought together scientists from the Lowell Center for Sustainable Productions' Environmental Health Initiative (EHI) to discuss the topic of the Science Wars.

The Panel featured Richard Clapp, Molly Jacobs and Polly Hoppin of EHI. The EHI, located at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, seeks to reduce rates of chronic illness associated with environmental factors. It promotes and facilitates collaboration among people and institutions from a range of disciplines whose decisions affect health and provides leadership, analysis and technical assistance to decision-makers committed to improving health by addressing environmental factors. One of the EHI's principal focus areas is preserving the integrity of science in the context of its increasing prominence in legal and regulatory settings, and in developing and promoting new vision for the application of science to public policy.

It is not a new topic when discussing the manipulation of science to suit economic interests. The tobacco industry did it for years; recently the threats to the integrity of science in the United States have come from both the public and private sector.

Polly Hoppin, Sc.D., the Program Director of the EHI at the University spoke to faculty,
Disaster Plans for U.S. Cities Is Deficient

The U.S. Conference of Mayors recently released a 183-City survey on the nation's disaster preparedness nearly five years after September 11 attacks and almost one year after Hurricane Katrina.

The survey results cite that eight in ten cities say their emergency responders still can't communicate with each other or area towns, 44% have not created or updated their evacuation plans, and nearly three-quarters say they're not prepared to handle a flu pandemic outbreak.

The survey includes responses from cities with populations as small at 30,000 to major cities like New York City with a population of 8 million. Among the findings are:

- Most cities have not received enough money to get police and firefighters the radios and communication equipment necessary to be able to talk with each other during a crisis.
- Cities that have not created or updated evacuation plans since last year's Gulf Coast hurricanes are 4 in 10.
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency received a mixture of reviews on how much confidence cities have that the agency would respond quickly after a major disaster. The average response on a scale of 1 to 10, the average was a 5.2

The Department of Homeland Security has given more than $18 billion in grants to communities since 2003, including more than $2 billion for improved communications. Most experts on preparedness still feel that the country is not where we need to be if a catastrophe were to strike the United States. Most cities have bought equipment but are not trained on the equipment and more emphasis needs to be on training and exercises.

(Copies of the survey are available at www.usmayors.org or you could phone The Conference on Mayors at 202.293.7330)

Coast Guard Leader; Disaster Plan Needs Avian Flu Provisions

conference that the federal government is aggressively planning to counter avian flu, should it spread in the United States.

Zitz said the government has committed “several hundred million dollars” to avian flu research and vaccines through Project BioShield, a multibillion-dollar federal initiative aimed at producing treatments for ailments stemming from disasters of natural, chemical, biological or nuclear origin.

However, according to an HHS-managed Web site dedicated to avian flu, that price tag has increased.

HHS last month announced that it had awarded more than $1 billion to five companies—Solvay Pharmaceuticals, GlaxoSmithKline, Novartis Vaccines and Diagnostics, MedImmune and Dynport Vaccine—to "accelerate development and production of new technologies for influenza vaccines."

With presidential backing, $3.3 billion has been appropriated to further the study of avian flu and for the creation of a vaccine that can be prepared for about 300 million Americans.

The World Health Organization has reported that as of May 29, there were 127 deaths in 10 countries and more than 200 cases of avian flu across the globe—but none of them in the United States.

"There is no H5N1 pandemic so it has not been possible to develop an H5N1 pandemic vaccine; however, ‘pre-pandemic vaccines’ have been created, are being refined and tested, and do have some promise both in furthering research and preparedness for a possible pandemic,” the government’s pandemic flu Web site states.

The United States is not even close to having enough vaccines to supply every American, said Richard Bissell, director of the University of Maryland-Baltimore’s emergency health services graduate program.

“If we get into a pandemic [flu outbreak in America],” he said at the conference, “it’s going to be family for family, individual for individual.”

To learn more about GovExec.com please please go to their website at: http://www.govexec.com
News from the COSHs

**RICOSH Alert: Hazards of Hot Weather**

**Heat's Hidden Hazards**

Several illnesses are related to hot weather, but one, heat stroke, is a major medical emergency. The body has its own cooling system that is tuned to maintain core body temperatures by sweating. A heat stroke results from the breakdown of the body’s cooling system. When that happens a person will usually stop sweating altogether and the core body temperature inflates. If you suspect heat stroke immediately get emergency medical attention.

**Dealing with Heat**

Staying in an air-conditioned environment is the major solution. However that is not possible for all people, especially the elderly and firemen who have to wear heavy clothing and equipment. RICOSH provides you with some tips at staying cool:

- Provide cool drinking water and cool rest areas
- Take frequent rest breaks.
- Eat smaller meals and avoid sugar, caffeinated drinks, and alcohol.
- Schedule heavy work at cooler times.
- Workers and staff should have time to adjust to hot environments.
- Shield machinery or equipment that produces heat. Metal and other materials that have been sitting in the sun can be hot enough to blister skin.
- Provide general ventilation and spot cooling in hot work areas.
- Anyone in special protective clothing (chemical suits) should be medically monitored.
- Someone who can identify heat disorders should be present on every job site where heat hazards can be a problem.

When working in the heat do not be tempted to remove clothing. Wear long sleeve shirts and full trousers to protect the skin from skin damage, some of which causes cancer. Clothing also protects against ticks and mosquitoes that cause West Nile Virus and Lyme Disease. Lightweight garments should be worn to allow for free movement of air over the body.

**NH COSH**

Of the thousands of New Hampshire workers injured on the job annually, many report problems collecting workers’ compensation. Sometimes attorneys can help with denied claims, but not enough legal assistance is available for injured workers with “medical-only” claims. NH COSH has launched an effort to get more legal help for these workers.

According to Director, Judith Elliott, “NH COSH” will work with NH Legal Assistance, the Latin American Center, and other community-based groups serving low-income and immigrant workers to attack the issue in two ways. First, propose changes to the rules and the legal referral system to give workers with “medical-only” claims better access to free legal help. Second, plan evening legal clinics to assist injured workers.”

The planning phase of this project is funded by the Endowment for Health and Union Community Fund. Stay tuned. For more information contact NH COSH at 603.228.0616.

---

**TNEC STAFF**

David Coffey
Special Project Manager
Diane Doherty
Project Administrator
Thomas Estabrook, Ph.D.
Special Projects Manager / Work Environment Educator
Charles Lemberger, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus of Work Environment
Judy Martinez
Training Administrator
Paul Morse
Project Director
Cynthia Hijazi
Marketing Manager
Richard Sadowski
Training Resources Coordinator
Wayne Sanborn
Assistant Project Director
Craig Stalas, Sc.D., MPH
Associate Professor, Department of Community Health and Sustainability
Co-Director, Center for Public Health Research and Health Promotion

ConnectiCOSH 888.953.2874
RICOSH 401.751.2015
MassCOSH 617.625.7233
NHGOSH 603.228.0516
WesternMassCOSH 413.731.6790

---

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 NEHS Grant No. 5 U45 ES06172-14.

The New England Consortium University of Massachusetts Lowell One University Avenue Falmouth 202 Lowell, MA 01854 Phone 978.934.3257, Fax 978.934.2012 Web site: www.uml.edu/TNEC e-mail: TNEC@uml.edu
Science Wars: What are the Values that Guide Research? Precaution, Prevention and Public Policy

staff and invited guests about the history, use and misuse of public health science. She spoke about the current administration's efforts to manipulate scientific research and traditional scientific review procedures. These include questioning scientists about their political leanings, the removal of long time members of review committees because of their politics, blocking research money and blackballing members of the scientific community who speak out and whose research findings go against the interests of the administration. There are always shifts in environmental regulations from time to time, but this time it is alarming that politicians have chosen to interfere into scientific debates for political gain.

Richard Clapp, Sc.D. also from the EIH addressed examples of scientific manipulation by the current and past administrations. An example is the regulation of dioxin. In 2000 industry consultants presented to a science advisory committee of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) a re-analysis of dioxin exposed workers. The re-analysis indicated that there was a safe threshold of exposure to dioxin and that it did not need to be regulated. This action delayed the committee's work for months until the findings were debated. A review of this re-analysis showed that the methods used by the industry consultants were flawed; but this information was not published until years later. The significance of this manipulation of public science for private gain is that it threatens people's health and the environment through the promotion of an overall climate of uncertainty. According to Dr. Clapp "it erodes the public's trust in scientists and governmental agencies. It has served to demoralize career employees working in these agencies. Many of the most highly qualified scientists have fled these agencies. Worst of all it erodes democracy."

Dr. Clapp reassured the group gathered that scientists are fighting back with an unprecedented response; and, he suggested that more rigorous standards must be applied. It is incumbent of scientists to be involved in public policy to inform the public accurately. Scientists would prefer to be left alone to do their work, free from interference and to not have to worry about their independence. This would be a nice situation except this thinking is not enough to ensure the continued integrity of public health science and other related fields in the United States. Clapp feels that scientists could do more to become active in creating structures and practices which protect them from financial and political influence.