Speaking to the NIEHS

In April 2004, the New England Consortium (TNEC) and Charlie Kamienski, Director of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) regional office in Western Massachusetts was invited to speak as part of a panel at a special technical workshop for the National Institute of Environmental Health Science Worker Education Training Program. Mr. Kamienski, spoke about the cooperation and accomplishments that TNEC and MDPH have achieved since being funded with supplemental funds. Below is the talk presented to the panel.

Since the founding of our Nation, Massachusetts has long been a pioneer in the field of Public Health. In 1869, Thomas Plumett of Pittsfield, at the urging of his wife, introduced a bill to establish a State Board of Health. After years of noted discrepancies between rural and urban death rates caused by communicable diseases, it was formally recognized that deaths due to diseases could be prevented through proper sanitation, at both the public and private level. Individual cities and towns would later follow through with sanitary regulations and the implementation of Boards of Health or Health Commissioners to protect the lives and safety of the residents of the Bay State. That same tradition continues today.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is a home rule state. This means that each community, be it a town of 400 or a city of 200,000, regulates itself. This situation limits the development of County wide structured government and therefore limits trained professional staff. This includes people such as health directors and agents, public health nurses, emergency medical personnel, as well as hospital staff.

Western Massachusetts is unique in many aspects. It is not only home to the third largest city in the State, but is home to many small towns with populations of less than 500 citizens. Even the geographical topography of the region works to set Western Massachusetts apart from the Eastern part of the state, whether the area is divided by the waters of the Connecticut River or the expanse of the Berkshire Hills. The area is also neighboring by the States of New York, Connecticut, and Vermont who look to our region for recreation and consequently have an impact on our seasonal population.

It had become apparent, having worked as the District Health Officer for Western Massachusetts for the past 15 years, that the Western half of the Commonwealth needed assistance from the State Department of Public Health in the development and training of individuals working in health related fields. Working closely with other agencies, the Western Massachusetts Department of Public Health has been able to bring training opportunities to the Western part of the Commonwealth.

TNEC Offers New and Updated Courses

The New England Consortium (TNEC) is offering an open-enrollment All Hazards Emergency Responder Awareness training course. This 8-hour course is offered by TNEC every other month in 2006. Trainers have designed the course to help responders deal with accidental or deliberate releases of large-scale biological or chemical agents, terrorism and large-scale natural disasters. This one-day class was developed for workers most likely to discover an emergency and addresses the appropriate steps needed to initiate a response to that emergency. As with all of TNECs training, there will be active participation from those who attend.

On another note, TNECs curriculum for both its 8-hour Site Worker and its 8-hour Emergency Responder Refresher Training Courses are revised annually. Use of the new curricula began in September 2004 and will continue through August 2005, after which it will be revised once again. As with our other courses, both Refresher courses utilize participatory education small group activity training methods and hands-on activities, an approach not offered by all training programs and a very important tool in the training of HAZMAT workers.

In the 8-hour Site Worker Refresher, students review health and safety aspects of their own work experiences for the past year including, reviewing non-chemical hazards such as noise and heat stress, their original 40-hour training (in a fun-filled and competitive game format), confined space entry and equipment use and an activity that addresses OSHA's targeted Driver Safety Program, through an interactive computer simulation in the TNEC PC lab.

In the 8-hour Emergency Responder Refresher, students participate in a Risk Mapping activity to review their emergency response experiences during the past year.
Speaking to the NIEHS

Since the tragic events of 9/11, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health has, in part, shifted its focus from the traditional trainings which focus exclusively on the development of sanitary codes and health regulations to trainings in emergency response during times of crisis or disaster. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Western Regional Department of Public Health and the Western Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Health and Safety (WMCOSH) have been working in cooperation for the past three years to develop “basic training” tools for local public health staff. With these efforts, we have been successfully able to unite representatives from WMCOSH, Fire and Hazmat Teams, Regional Ambulance services, the State Department of Environmental Health and others to work cohesively towards the common goal of public health and safety.

In 2003 we expanded our trainings to focus on Chemical and Biohazard Protection. With the help of WMCOSH we have been able to develop a one-day training introducing municipal health and safety workers to the use of protective clothing. The class started simply with introduction to the DOT manual, and proceeded to discussions and exercises as well as hands-on demonstrations of the functionality of Level A through D suits. We further allowed some of the individuals to “suit up” in order to gain hands on experience with the equipment.

During its initial development, the Chemical and Biohazard Protection training was opened for cost-free enrollment. Within the span of one week, 50 people had expressed an interest in participating in the course. It is of notable interest that more than half of the registrants were public health nurses, a professional group that is expected to respond to health emergencies in times of crisis, but traditionally has not received any formal training regarding chemical or biohazard protection.

During 24-hour training courses, representatives from local boards of health, police, and volunteers as well as organized fire departments were introduced to the necessity of informed chemical and biohazard protection in times of emergencies. In addition, the course served to introduce the WMCOSH instructors to a number of different professional working groups that were previously unfamiliar to them.

The training was videotaped for the purpose of developing a basic information database and closes with a demonstration from the City of Northampton Fire Department setting up their decontamination unit and following through with a mock emergency decontamination of a “victim”.

An interesting footnote to this is that the Eastern section of the state has become interested in these trainings. As a result, a member of WMCOSH was invited to work with the M.D.P.H. District Health Officer to put a short version together in Hyannis, Mass in the fall of 2004. This idea was well received and we look forward to going forth with the trainings and providing this service to more communities statewide.

In 2004 WMCOSH joined with TNEC and the Western Mass District Health Officer to develop a 3 day training on health and safety issues that affect state and local government officials in times of emergencies. This training was comprehensive and yet focused on individuals with little to no training in the field. The hope was to establish a deeper understanding of the topics so that these individuals would be more knowledgeable and there by better prepared.

Courses were filed with people from local health departments, EMS, Hospitals, Fire, Police and emergency managers of communities. The classes were set up in four sites in the region there by allowing individuals who are familiar with one another to attend these sessions with enhanced networking.

Given, the positive response, the Western Mass. Public Health Association has moved forward by video taping the class and is presently developing a DVD to be distributed throughout the region's 103 health departments.

In conclusion, the cooperation and expertise provided by WMCOSH and TNEC has proven that industry and government can work together for the common goals of all of us.
Firefighters Get Hands-On Rail Car Safety Training

Firefighters and HazMat (Hazardous Materials) team members from Leominster and the surrounding area took part in a three-day ammonia rail car suppression training in late August of 2004 in Leominster, MA. The workshop was coordinated by Firefighter Jimmy Smith, District 6 HazMat Training Coordinator and was hosted by The New England Consortium (TNEC).

The all day sessions introduced responders to safety procedures, inspections and basic leak repair techniques in the classroom. Donning full safety gear and armed with the right tools to make repairs on valves and pipes, local firefighters practiced skills needed to stop a simulated rail car leak.

The training was facilitated through PotashCorp Inc., the world’s largest fertilizer enterprise and leading supplier to three distinct market categories: agriculture, animal nutrition, and industrial chemicals. PotashCorp sponsors about 12 workshops for fire departments throughout the country every year.

Emergency responders from various PotashCorp sites provided hands-on safety training through the use of a custom-built rail car during this hazardous materials workshop.

Each firefighter and first responder who attended the workshop received a copy of the PCS Hazardous Material Workshop compact disc (CD).

According to the National Response Center (NRC) (the NRC is the central federal agency to which chemical companies and transporters report oil and chemical spills) accidental chemical releases are a common occurrence in the United States. Examining the ongoing impacts of these accidental chemical releases demonstrates the potential impact of an act of chemical terrorism. Each year, companies in the U.S. report more than 25,000 fires, spills, or explosions involving hazardous chemicals to the NRC. At least 1,000 of these events each year involve deaths, injuries, or evacuations.

On January 18, 2002 in Minot, S.D. a train derailed and seven tank cars ruptured, releasing anhydrous ammonia. A white toxic cloud drifted over a neighborhood and lingered for about five hours. Three-dozen residents were evacuated from their homes for at least a week, one man died from the chemical exposure and approximately 1,300 people were treated for symptoms ranging from mild irritation of the eyes, nose and throat to difficulty breathing to severe chemical burns.

District 6 Hazmat Team Members prepare to suit up for Ammonia Rail Car Training Course, held in Leominster, Mass.

District 6 Hazmat Team Members dressed in level "A" suits respond to a simulated release of ammonia from a rail car.

District 6 Hazmat Team Members use a midland kit to stop a simulated ammonia release on the rail car dome.

Continued from Page 1

TNEC Offers New and Updated Courses

Other activities include: reviewing requirements of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), participating in a hands-on Incident Command System/Radio activity, and reviewing Confined Space Rescue and equipment, and their original 24-hour training using a quiz format.

All TNEC training meets and/or exceeds the OSHA 1910.120 standards. For further information or to register for a class please contact Judy Martineau at 978.894.3257 or email at Judy_Martineau@uml.edu.
Continued from Page 4

Keene State’s OSHA Center Partners with UMass Consortium to Offer Training for Waste Site Workers and First Responders

In 2005, TNEC will deliver training for hazardous waste site workers and one course for first responders will be offered by TNEC at either the University of Massachusetts in Lowell or at the OSHA Education Center in Manchester. These courses may also be delivered on site by special arrangement, contact Dolores Price at 1-800-449-6742 or dprice1@keene.edu.

A Forty-Hour Hazardous Waste Site Worker Basic Health and Safety Training course (NCSH 430) is required for all hazardous waste site workers before entering a site. Hands-on classroom presentations, tabletop exercises, donning and doffing of level A or B suits, and live interactive drills give students practical and applicable knowledge. The five-day course will meet April 4-8, May 9-13, June 6-10, June 13-17, July 11-15, and Sept. 12-16. The tuition rate is $625 for private-sector personnel and $470 for public-sector workers.

An Eight-Hour Hazardous Waste Site Worker Refresher Training course (NCSH 437) must be completed yearly to maintain certification in Forty-Hour Hazardous Waste Site Worker Basic Health and Safety Training. This course updates workers on standards and practices and allows them to improve hazardous waste site protection methods. This one-day course is scheduled April 12, May 19, June 16, July 21, August 16, Sept. 8, and Sept. 27. Tuition is $150 for private sector personnel and $120 for public-sector employees.

A Twenty-Four-Hour Emergency Responder Basic Health and Safety Training course (NCSH 438) is required for all personnel who are expected to respond to emergencies involving hazardous materials. This program combines interactive classroom activities, dress-out in level A suits, and live emergency simulations to prepare students for a proper response. This three-day course is offered April 19-21 and June 21-23. Tuition rates are available upon request.

To register for these courses or obtain more information, please call The New England Consortium at 978-934-3257.

Continued from Page 5

Regional Partnerships Related to Homeland Security Emergency Preparedness for All Hazards Health and Safety Training

Community Level Awareness Training for All Hazards Emergency Response

TNEC has worked with JFY Networks, a Boston-based Brownfields Minority Worker Training Program that coordinates environmental technician level training to prepare inner city residents from underserved communities for careers in the environmental services field. TNEC and JFY Networks worked together to develop a basic 8-hour Community Level Awareness Training for All Hazards Emergency Response. The session was conducted as a follow-up to the organization’s participation in TNEC’s regular 40-hour Hazardous Waste Site Worker Basic Health and Safety course.

Other Partnerships in All Hazards Training

Additionally, TNEC assisted UConn in the design and delivery of two 8-hour Awareness Level sessions for members of the Connecticut Association of Health Departments in 2003.

TNEC has also partnered with the UMass Lowell Center for Security, Safety and Society on the delivery of a series of trainings for the Massachusetts Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME)

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The New England Consortium Hosts
Gerald V. Poje, Ph.D.

The New England Consortium (TNEC) and its members held their Spring Advisory Board meeting in May of 2004. As their invited guest, Dr. Gerald Poje spoke to those who gathered about the opportunities for broader partnerships with training and educational programs in preventing chemical disasters.

Dr. Poje has served as a Board Member of the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB) since its inception in November 1997. He also has been the Board's Executive/Administrator responsible for personnel administration, conduct of work, and representing the CSB before the Congress and the Executive Branch. Dr. Poje's term ended in November, 2004.

Dr. Poje was on scene at the CSB's investigations into the chemical explosion at the First Chemical Corp. manufacturing facility near Passaic, NJ, the Keltech reactive chemical explosion in Manhattan, NY that injured 32 workers, the Georgia-Pacific toxic gas incident that killed two and injured more than a dozen people near Pendleton, AL, and the Sonat Exploration explosion and fire that killed four near Pitkin, Louisiana.

Dr. Poje organized and convened safety board meetings on chemical accident, prevention research and efforts on reducing accident risks associated with Year 2000 computer problems. Recently he has participated in CSB endeavors on incident data collection, chemical security and improving the management of reactive hazards. Dr. Poje advocates for the board's safety recommendations before state and federal regulatory agencies, trade unions, trade associations, corporations, professional and public advocacy organizations.

"The past two years have witnessed the rapid rise of controversies concerning hazardous chemical facilities and their threats to workers and the community," said Dr. Poje as he spoke to the group of over forty professionals, activists and organizers who came to listen to him speak on preventing fires, explosions and toxic releases and the role of The New England Consortium. Dr. Poje went on to say, "some issues result from terrorism, while many others result from management problems within the chemical handling industry and flaws in policies regarding hazardous materials."

The presentation focused on the safety of U.S. chemical handling facilities. Using examples of recent catastrophic accidents, topics included: tracking toxic events, improving state and national regulations to manage reactive chemicals problems, fixing chemical plant vulnerability, addressing the competition between rights-to-know about hazards and security secrecy, the growing use of immigrant and contract labor in chemical facilities, and locating hazardous facilities in highly populated commercial or residential areas. The discussion also highlighted the opportunities for broader partnerships with the training community in preventing chemical disasters.

Keene State's OSHA Center Partners with UMass Consortium to Offer Training for Waste Site Workers and First Responders

KEENE, N.H. 12/07/04 - The Region I (New England) OSHA Training Institute Education Center in Manchester, administered by Keene State College, is offering safety training courses for waste site workers and first responders in partnership with The New England Consortium (TNEC) at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell.

"This collaborative relationship allows both of our organizations to reach a larger New England audience and jointly offer a wider range of services to our client companies and organizations," according to Dolores Price, manager of the OSHA Education Center, which is authorized by the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Keene State's Office of Continuing Education.
Regional Partnerships Related to Homeland Security Emergency Preparedness for All Hazards Health and Safety Training

Over the last two years the Consortium has designed and delivered all hazards training at the awareness level and advanced training sessions for workers at community health centers and community boards of health and for environmental health nurses. This training focuses on emergency response actions related to future disasters or potential terrorist attacks that involve weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Key topics covered include chemical, biological, and nuclear agents, emergency response, public health receiver and responder health and safety, incident command system, incident management, and roles and responsibilities.

While the training is intended to help prepare these public health professionals for potential mass casualty incidents, it is grounded in a practical approach for evaluating and preparing for various hazards scenarios that can come up in one's day-to-day work.

Overview

The New England Consortium is working with a network of resource organizations, governmental agencies, and quasi-public private public health organizations to design, develop, and implement emergency preparedness health and safety training related to prevention, protection and preparedness at the level of homeland security. As part of this special supplemental training project TNEC has engaged in needs assessments, consultation, curriculum development, and training delivery for several distinct work groupings.

Training consultation, design and delivery has been conducted with:

- local public health officers in Western Massachusetts and New Hampshire (statewide), and
- community health centers in five HRSA regions in the state of Massachusetts and throughout the state of Connecticut,
- environmental health nurse designees and other public health staff in Vermont,
- special worker groups and public health associations related to community-based awareness level training.

Training for Local Public Health Officers in Massachusetts and New Hampshire:

Four 24-hour Emergency Responder Health and Safety Trainings with a special focus on CBRNE agents and related incident management (IM) have already been delivered in Easthampton, Pittsfield, Palmer, and West Springfield, Massachusetts.

Three 8-hour Emergency Preparedness Awareness CBRNE and IM sessions in New Hampshire for local and regional health officers across the state.

The western Massachusetts health officer training sessions have been organized by John Thoma, the Western MassCOSH assigned TNEC trainer and Charles Kanicki, Director of the Western regional Office of MA DPH for local health officers and related personnel. Sessions have also included participation from members of the National Guard Response Team based in Natick, MA and staff from the Department of Homeland Security Federal Protective Services Division. Many of the people who are attending these trainings were involved in the drill exercise happening in Vermont last summer.

TNEC partners on these projects are:

- University of Massachusetts Lowell
- Western Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (Western MassCOSH),
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health—Western Regional Health Office,
- New Hampshire Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (NHCOSH),

Training for Community Health Centers in Connecticut and Massachusetts

As many as five regional 8-hour Emergency Preparedness Awareness level Health and Safety Courses were held in partnership with the:

- Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers
- University of Connecticut Occupational and Environmental Health Center and the Connecticut Primary Care Association

The Connecticut sessions are designed for leaders within the health centers and a series of thirteen two-hour follow-up briefings on incident management was provided to 160 staff members at centers throughout the southwestern region of the state.

Training for Environmental Health Nurse Designees

TNEC scheduled a more specialized 8-hour Emergency Preparedness Awareness Level Health and Safety Course on May 21, 2004 in partnership with the Vermont Department of Health - Division of Community Public Health. The session was designed to help prepare environmental health nurse designees and related personnel for a statewide drill held over the summer months.

Continued on Back Page