

King County Office of Emergency Management Podcasts *Disasters: Are you ready?*

How Flu Pandemic Response is different:

- Each hazard can be a bit different. While we try to use an all-hazard preparedness approach, when it comes to responding there can be differences.
- For instance, Terrorism and Earthquakes are what I call, “No notice, come as you are” events. You are either prepared or not. There isn’t a time when you can “get ready” and accomplish what was left undone—quickly.
- A flu pandemic is another case in point. There are some unique characteristics to it:
 - The pandemic means that it is world wide—and it is happening simultaneously around the world.
 - This means that no mutual aid resources are going to be available to you, and even the federal government will not be able to marshal resources to assist your jurisdiction.
 - So, it is up to you and your organization and jurisdiction to be able to respond just with the resources you have on hand and have stockpiled.
 - For many diseases there are vaccination programs that can be implemented, but not for a Flu Pandemic. It is a pandemic for the reason that there isn’t a vaccination available to administer.
 - What is also fairly significant about a pandemic is that it initially only impacts people. So there are not destroyed buildings, but later in the event you may have some infrastructure problems coming up due to people not being available to maintain and repair systems.
 - You will need to make plans to get by with up to 35-40% of your staff being absent at one time due to themselves being ill, or their being home caring for an ill family member.
 - Just in time inventory procedures will limit your abilities to have a sustained operation
 - Six week event
 - Business continuity and Continuity of Operations Planning becomes critical in these circumstances. Since you want

to only put resources towards those areas that really need them. This requires preplanning.

- Our medical system will be severely overloaded. Even today it is near the breaking point without a disaster being imminent. The level of medical care that some people have become accustomed to will not be there.
- We have had some discussions about how first responders will react to the flu pandemic. Generally these are courageous people willing to run into burning buildings—but when they do that, they are not putting their own families at risk. Will the fear of taking the disease home to their family restrict the availability of medical and other emergency responders?
- I've been a bit surprised by the number of governments and organizations who have not done anything yet to prepare for a flu pandemic. Remember, it is not a question of if, but when and how severe it will be.
- So if you have not done anything, check out our flu pandemic web page and the other links that will take you to King County public health and other national sites.