

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS STRATEGIES

General Elements of Infection Prevention Emergency Response Plans

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There are many elements that go into emergency response plans, and here we've outlined some of the main considerations of a plan as it relates to infection prevention and control and environmental services (EVS). It is EVS' responsibility to ensure that it is able to provide a safe place for patients to be treated and heal—regardless of the conditions outside of the organization's walls.

The key to any successful initiative is to garner administrative support prior to initiating the intervention. By securing commitment from your leadership team, many obstacles can be eliminated during program implementation.

It is critical to portray an accurate depiction of your plan, goals, and objectives, as well as identify resources that will be required for not only initial creation of the Infection Prevention and Environmental Services (EVS) Emergency Preparedness Program, but also for continued maintenance to ensure the any interventions made are sustainable. Emergencies are most often unexpected, and having a comprehensive plan in place will prepare EVS leaders for any contingency.

Assembling an Emergency Response Team

The key to a compliance with infection prevention and control policies is staff involvement and accountability. When creating the initial program, securing the support of not only senior leadership within the facility, but also the bedside clinicians and support staff, is critical to success. By creating a sense of personal accountability through the inclusion process, a 360-degree approach to infection prevention and emergency preparedness is created.

Communicable Disease Reporting

With the recent outbreak of Ebola, SARS, enterovirus, and H1N1, the immediate reporting of certain communicable diseases is more important than ever. Most states within the U.S. have extensive public reporting laws and regulations governing which illnesses and in what timeframe they must be reported to the appropriate public health authorities.

It is recommended that the EVS professional establish a relationship with the respective public health authorities so that any possible signs of significant communicable illness or outbreak can be promptly reported. Public health personnel also serve as a valuable resource for pandemic preparedness and analysis of disease outbreaks.

Outbreak Investigations

While true outbreaks of infectious agents are not continuously widespread in advanced health care systems, there is always the risk for this type of situation. Therefore, the EVS professional should



“The appropriate supplies (i.e., gloves, mask, and gowns) should be available if listed as required items within any policies.”

SOURCE: FEMA, Flood Warning Sign in Flooded Georgia Area, by George Armstrong. FEMA Photo Library. Licensed under Public domain via Wikimedia Commons.

work with the infection preventionist (IP) to have a written plan for initiating an outbreak investigation, as well as the respective roles of all clinical providers and administrative staff.

Policy and Procedure Development

To ensure consistent compliance with established guidelines, thorough written policies should be in place to guide staff members in handling all infection prevention and control matters. Policies should reflect the most current recommendations and guidelines from experts such as CDC. Policies should be concise and provide clear direction to staff, as well as cite the standard and/or guideline that are the basis for the recommendation.

Policies and procedures should be reviewed at least on an annual basis. Feedback from staff should also be solicited and utilized during

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the updates to ensure the policies are not only evidence-based, but also practical for staff members to adhere to.

The appropriate supplies (i.e., gloves, mask, and gowns) should be available if listed as required items within any policies. Concise policies, access to the appropriate equipment required in the policy, and routine updates to the documents will ensure compliance from staff members. It is also important for EVS leaders to proactively work with materials management and vendor partners to ensure a continuity of supply chain items such as PPE.

EVS leaders should also be familiar with emergency management principles. The CDC’s website has countless free resources on emergency management. These resources can be accessed at www.cdc.gov/phpr/healthcare/hospitals.htm. ●



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linen delivery, and must be regularly sanitized with a disinfectant cleaner. Each cart or container must be covered with a physical barrier. If the cart has an open bottom shelf, it must be lined with a barrier that prevents

external contamination from getting on the clean linen items. All cart covers and liners must be cleaned regularly with a disinfectant cleaner. Clean linen must never be transported in the same vehicle as soiled linen. If soiled linen is used in the same vehicle, the

interior transport holding area of the vehicle must be cleaned with a disinfectant product.

If a laundry employee is known to be ill with a contact or airborne illness, they should not be engaged in any clean linen process where they could potentially contaminate clean linen products.

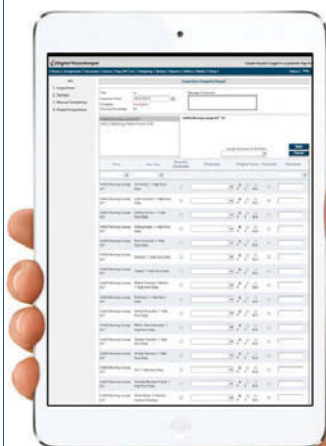
Processing and handling of linen products used in a health care setting is a vital service provided, as well as an important link in the infection prevention chain. Understanding these key processes not only allow for a patients comfort but a safe environment to heal. ●

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has been accountable and responsible for the seven management plans and programs associated with the Environment of Care and correlated JCAHO regulations.

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