



THE PREPAREDNESS REPORT

IN THIS ISSUE

Pertussis Health Alert	1
Beefy Burrito Blunder	2
Shot Clinic in Parker County	3
Sunset Review of DSHS	4
DSHS & DDC Disaster Drill	5
Mass Fatality Training	6
Community Preparedness Contact Info	7



Cover your cough as a prevention and control measure against Pertussis

Pertussis Prompts Health Alert

With Texas on track to have more pertussis cases than any year since the 1950s, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has issued a pertussis health alert and encourages people to get vaccinated. DSHS recommends pregnant women get a dose of pertussis-containing vaccine during every pregnancy to help protect the baby before he or she can be vaccinated. Vaccination is especially important for people around newborns because babies are at greater risk of serious complications if they are infected.

DSHS is reporting 2,652 pertussis cases this year as of Oct 7.

Full news release and health alert can be accessed here:
<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/news/releases/20130830.aspx>



Beefy Burrito Blunder

Kay Sanyal

In late August 2013, several children and staff members at a large day camp experienced moderate to severe vomiting, requiring several people to leave the camp due to illness. The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) health Service Region 2/3 Epidemiology branch was notified of the illness cluster the following day by camp administration and an investigation was conducted. Investigation revealed that of 61 children and staff members, 14 became ill from three separate camp locations in Kaufman, Dallas and Collins Counties. Two children were taken to the emergency room, but no lab testing to identify the causative agent of the illness was performed. The only symptom reported was vomiting which occurred within 1-2 hours of consumption. Illness resolved within 8 hours and no other members in the contacts' households became ill.

Interviews conducted of 12 ill persons found all had eaten a beef burrito provided at the camp. Ill children and camp staff members had been provided lunch by an outside facility (facility A) and consisted of a beef burrito (flour tortilla, cheese, and beef), a plum/apricot fruit, chips, milk or juice. Upon inspection by City of Dallas sanitarians it was discovered that the meal was not prepared at facility A, but assembled from food prepared by other food providers. In addition, it was found that facility A was not a licensed food provider and numerous violations had been noted previously.

In conjunction with Dallas County Health and Human Services, DSHS Region 2/3 staff provided written recommendations to the day camp on disease reporting, compliance with food licensing and safety requirements, as well as precautionary control measures.

Preparedness Points:

- A short duration of illness may be observed upon infection with one of several bacterial agents or toxins and hence often the causative agent is not determined.
- Maintaining established relationships is key for timely response in multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency investigations.
- Unified recommendations convey preparedness and provide strong public health assurance to the public.



Sunset Review of DSHS

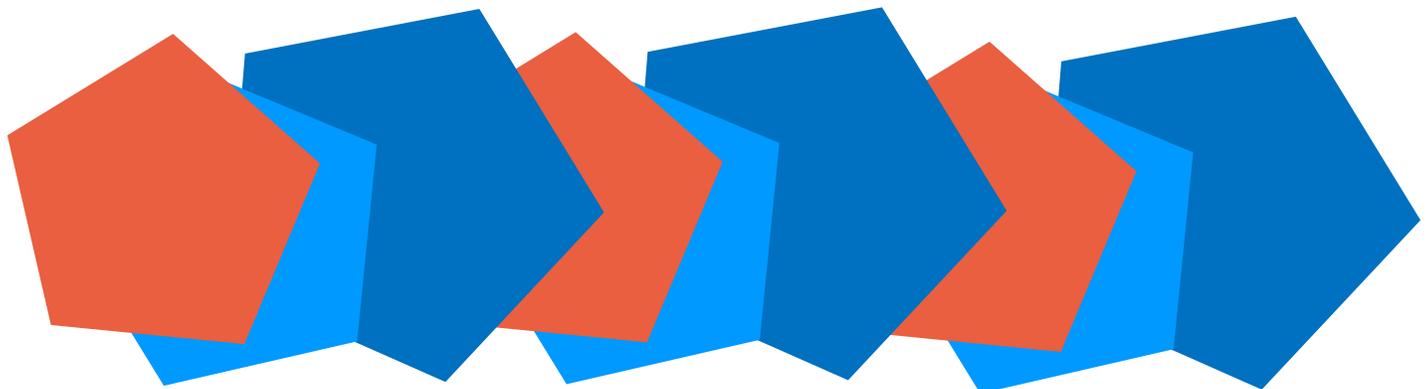
The mission and performance of the Texas Department of State Health Services are under review by the Legislature as required under the Texas Sunset Act. The Act provides that the Sunset Commission, composed of legislators and public members, periodically evaluate a state agency to determine if the agency is still needed and to explore ways to ensure that the agency's funds are well spent. Based on the recommendations of the Sunset Commission, the Texas Legislature ultimately decides whether an agency continues to operate into the future.

The Sunset review involves three steps. First, Sunset Commission staff will evaluate the Department of State Health Services and issue a report in May 2014 recommending solutions to problems found. A month or so later, the Sunset Commission will meet to hear public testimony on the Department and the recommendations of the Sunset staff. Based on public input and the Sunset staff report, the Sunset Commission will adopt recommendations for the full Legislature to consider when it convenes in January 2015. Please refer to the Sunset Commission website or call the office for updated information on specific dates for these meetings.

Through the Sunset review, every Texan has the opportunity to suggest ways in which the mission and operations of the Department of State Health Services can be strengthened. If you would like to share your ideas about the Department, please send an email to the address below, use the comment form on the Sunset Commission website, or contact Katharine Teleki of the Sunset staff. Suggestions are preferred by December 16, 2013, so they can be fully considered by the Commission staff.

Sunset Advisory Commission
P.O. Box 13066
Austin, Texas 78711
512/463-1300
Fax: 512/463-0705
Email: sunset@sunset.state.tx.us

Information about the Sunset process, Sunset Commission meetings, and how to receive Sunset Commission email updates is available at: www.sunset.state.tx.us.



DSHS & DDC Disaster Drill

David Post

On July 31, 2013, a nuclear power plant disaster drill was held at the Joint Operation Center, Fort Worth, Texas. The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Region 2/3 was represented at the exercise by: Andrew Cargile, Shawn Wheat, and David Post, from EMS Compliance and Sabra Schray from Radiation Control. The drill helped personnel from various agencies to work with new equipment and to improve communications with other agencies.

Other groups were involved such as the Texas Department of Public Safety, the District Disaster Committees (DDCs) in Garland and Sherman, U. S. Military staff, American Red Cross, Texas Forest Service, Texas Department of Corrections, Fort Worth Fire Department, various agencies within the City of Fort Worth, Texas Wildlife Commission, Salvation Army, the North Central Texas Trauma Regional Advisory Council and other agencies. The drill focused on what might happen if damage occurred at a nuclear power plant and surrounding areas. After the drill was terminated, an after-action review took place, where participants shared lessons learned and changes to be made to local plans.

UPCOMING TRAININGS

- TRAINING12/1/13
LOCATION, DETAILS, ETC.

All DSHS HSR 2/3 Newsletter Editions can be found here:
<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/region2-3/programs/commprep/epirptarchive.shtm>



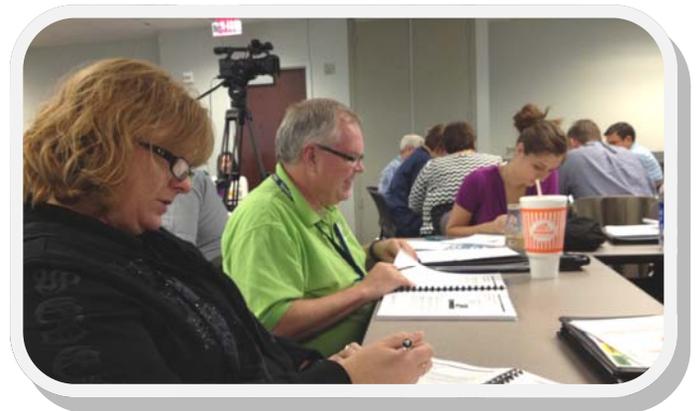
Mass Fatality Training

Brenda Hart

As unfortunate as it is, part of disaster planning involves managing fatalities related to the event and it is critical that families be cared for during such a devastating time. DSHS Health Service Region 2/3 staff recently attended regional mass fatality training hosted by the Southwestern Institute of Forensic Sciences in Dallas. Response to a mass fatality incident (MFI) requires coordination with a broad range of agencies. to locate, recover, identify, and return decedents to their families. This training provided an opportunity for regional planning partners to collaborate and assign specific roles and responsibilities during a mass fatality incident.

MFIs can quickly overwhelm a jurisdiction's ability to respond effectively. Planning with partners prior to an event allows us to identify available federal, state, and local resources, discuss family needs, recover and identify human remains.

Participants included response partners from federal, state, and local levels. Multiple organizations including the FBI, Red Cross, FEMA, and TDEM explained their roles during MFIs. The class also included a tour of the Dallas County morgue and crime lab.



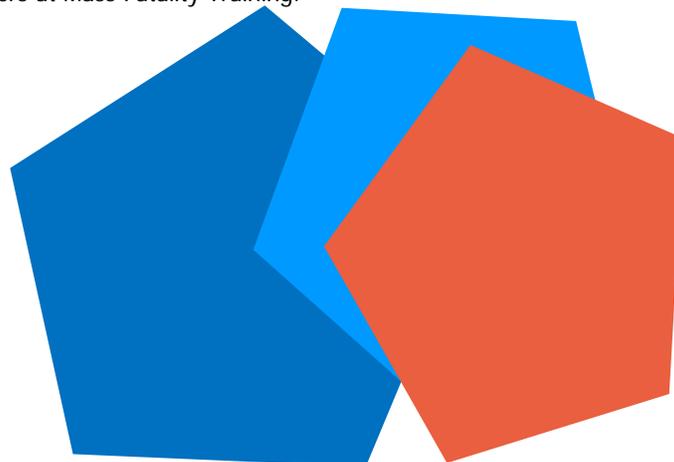
Attendees take note of MFI procedures.



Participants listen-in to speakers at Mass Fatality Training.

Next steps:

DSHS Central Office will be working on using existing Medical Examiner resources to address gaps in rural mass fatality planning, DSHS HSR 2/3 will host a planning workshop along with other regional partners such as North Central Texas Council of Governments and North Central Texas Trauma Region Advisory Council, look for details in upcoming issue.



Community Preparedness
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Protecting, Promoting and Responding for the Health of the Region

DSHS Region 2/3

