

Public Health Agency of Canada

Overview of Emergency Preparedness and Response



Protecting the Health and Safety of Canadians



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada

Canada

Our mission is to promote and protect the
health of Canadians through leadership, partnership,
innovation and action in public health.

Public Health Agency of Canada

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Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response

About This Guide

In today's unpredictable public health environment, emergency preparedness and response (EPR) professionals must be prepared for all kinds of public health emergencies – from floods and fires to acts of terrorism and infectious disease outbreaks.

Helping emergency players respond quickly and effectively is the role of the Public Health Agency of Canada's Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response (CEPR), the federal government's coordinating centre for public health emergency management.

The Centre's team of dedicated EPR experts offers a broad range of information, advice, coordination and support to emergency players at all levels. This guide provides clients, partners and stakeholders with an easy-to-use reference to the CEPR's products and services, as well as an overview of activities related to the Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC) mission of promoting and protecting the health of Canadians through partnership, innovation and action in public health.

Mandate and Activities

The CEPR's mandate is to help maintain the safety and health security of Canadians. Since its inception in 2000, the Centre has carried out this mandate by collaborating closely with national, international, provincial, territorial and local partners in the four phases of emergency preparedness and response: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. More specifically, the CEPR acts as PHAC's lead unit in preparing for, and responding to, the health consequences of natural and human-caused emergencies both domestically and internationally. It also serves as the federal health portfolio (i.e. Health Canada and associated agencies) lead on counter-terrorism matters and manages issues that could lead to emergencies if not addressed properly, including laboratory safety, quarantine services and potential health risks to Canadian travellers.

Legislative, Regulatory and Policy Bases

The CEPR takes on a range of roles set out in law, regulations, policies and operations, including:

- A Federal Policy for Emergencies;
- Canada Labour Code;
- Department of Health Act;
- Emergencies Act;
- Emergency Preparedness Act;
- Human Pathogens Importation Regulations;
- Nuclear Safety and Control Act;
- Quarantine Act (2005);
- Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act, 1992;
- WHO International Health Regulations; and
- Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System base documents.

CEPR Preparedness Activities

The Centre's preparedness activities are designed to assist provincial, territorial and local authorities – including police, fire, emergency and health services – to prepare for and deal with public health emergencies. These activities include:

- developing national health emergency response plans;
- supporting broader contingency planning;
- testing and validating emergency arrangements;
- developing and delivering emergency training;
- assessing health risks and coordinating emergency services;
- developing domestic health safety regulations; and
- providing medical intelligence and carrying on surveillance to identify and track possible threats to public health.

CEPR Response Activities

When a health emergency occurs, CEPR response activities include:

- advising and consulting with local, provincial and territorial partners;
- coordinating responses to natural or human-caused disasters, including terrorism-related incidents and dangerous health threats requiring quarantine measures and/or travel restrictions;
- providing federal emergency medical supplies and equipment; and
- providing emergency health and social services.

Office of the Director General

The Office of the Director General (ODG) is responsible for the leadership and overall strategic direction of the CEPR, including business and strategic planning and performance measurement. The ODG also acts as a link to other units within the Public Health Agency of Canada and to other federal agencies, the provinces and the territories.

Public Health Security Partnerships

Through outreach and coordination initiatives involving the entire federal government, the CEPR has built strong relationships with strategic public health security partners, including the Department of National Defence, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, Transport Canada, the Canada Border Services Agency, Foreign Affairs Canada, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Strategic relationship-building allows the CEPR to pro actively inform the federal emergency response community of the health implications of natural or human-caused disasters, and to ensure that public health is viewed as a top priority in disaster response activities at the federal level.

Public Health and National Security

Canada's National Security Policy, entitled *Securing an Open Society*, identifies public health emergencies as one of six national priority areas. The other priority areas are intelligence, emergency planning and management, transportation security, border security, and international security. The Policy calls for increased intersectoral collaboration to protect the safety and security of Canadians. To that effect, the CEPR has established an official executive liaison post linking it with Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada.

Liaison and Collaboration

Ongoing liaison activities are an essential element of developing intersectoral linkages to address natural and human-caused threats across the entire spectrum of emergency preparedness and response activities – from prevention, mitigation, preparedness and detection through to response, recovery and post-situational review. The CEPR's consultative approach reflects its conviction that no one jurisdiction or level of government can succeed alone in preparing for and responding to national public health emergencies. Collaboration is the key to successful outcomes. National, provincial, territorial and regional governments all have a role to play.

GPHIN – A Critical Tool in Global Public Health Surveillance

One of the most important services is the Global Public Health Intelligence Network (GPHIN), a one-of-a-kind, Internet-based early warning system that monitors global media sources to spot potential public health threats – from infectious disease outbreaks to bioterrorism situations – and disseminates preliminary reports around the world almost instantly, day and night, seven days a week.

Since it was developed in 1997 by the Government of Canada in collaboration with WHO, GPHIN has proven to be an invaluable tool for public health authorities in their efforts to investigate, verify and mitigate public health threats around the globe.

GPHIN's international health risk tracking is complemented domestically by a Counter-terrorism Coordination Network. Network staff oversee a state-of-the-art geospatial imagery mapping system used by the CEPR and other units of the Public Health Agency of Canada when responding to all types of public health emergencies. This powerful tool helps CEPR clients and stakeholders identify threats (natural or man-made), obtain the best data, mitigate adverse conditions and make the best possible decisions during the response and recovery phases.

Did you know? GPHIN

GPHIN scans over 15,000 media sources daily, looking around the world for signs of outbreaks of infectious diseases (e.g. SARS and avian influenza in Asia, or Ebola in Africa) as well as other significant health threats (e.g. chemical spills and radiological/nuclear accidents). If something ominous is spotted, GPHIN sends an immediate alert to WHO and other users. In addition, each of GPHIN's seven language analysts reviews hundreds of news reports daily in his or her specialty language, looking for possible reporting trends and assessing their potential health implications.

Counter-terrorism Coordination and CBRN Response

Another important responsibility is the coordination of Health Canada's counter-terrorism preparations for responding to suspected terrorism-related incidents or accidents involving chemical, biological or radiological/nuclear (CBRN) substances. This role includes providing expert advice and information to any Canadian level of government faced with a possible CBRN incident, whether intentional or accidental. It also shares intelligence on CBRN incidents and provides steps that can be taken to reduce or deal with threats to public health – with officials in other countries and with international health agencies.

Key Elements of a National Health Emergency Management System

Extensive consultation among EPR stakeholders has helped the CEPR to identify the following as key elements of a solid national health emergency management system:

1. adequate, sustainable resources and careful, coordinated planning;
2. sustained commitment and leadership from senior management at all levels of government;
3. clear lines of communication, command, and control across jurisdictions;
4. well-integrated contingency planning;
5. development of a single communications mechanism for various disciplines;
6. advanced planning to clarify roles, responsibilities and lines of authority; and
7. regular exercises involving all disciplines and jurisdictions.

Management and Administrative Services

Office of Management of Administrative Services

Negotiating the choppy waters of emergency preparedness and response is not an easy task, especially when the CEPR is responding to a public health emergency. When an emergency does occur, it relies on the Office of Management and Administrative Services (OMAS) to keep it on course by ensuring that its human, financial and material resources are expertly coordinated for the task at hand.

Emergency Response Coordination

The OMAS coordinates emergency response by overseeing the pool of volunteers who help out the CEPR's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in such circumstances. The Director of OMAS, acting as the EOC senior operational team leader, brings together experts from the CEPR, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and Health Canada to help assess the situation and assist in emergency response coordination.

Maintaining Response Capacity

When not in emergency response mode, the OMAS helps maintain the CEPR's emergency preparedness and response capacity by looking after every aspect of its day-to-day operations – from administration and human resources to information holdings, information management, information technology and budget management. The OMAS's effective coordination of administrative and support functions for the Centre's various offices contributes significantly to the latter's ability to ensure the health security of Canadians.

Finance, Administration and Human Resources

The OMAS's Finance, Administration and Human Resources unit provides a wide range of support services to CEPR offices in a challenging and fluid emergency operations environment. The services include those of a dedicated officer for emergency situations. On the fiscal side, OMAS finance staff map out budget parameters for the various CEPR offices and set spending curves to provide office directors with accurate, easily comprehensible breakdowns of their respective budgets.

Staffing is another priority area for this unit. Since its creation in 2000, the CEPR has expanded its employee base from 55 positions to more than 200 to meet growing client demand.

Business Planning

The ODG runs a fully integrated business planning model for the CEPR through key performance measurement and risk management strategies in CEPR program areas. The strategies take into account every aspect of CEPR operations, from the definition of mandates and the identification of roles and responsibilities to up-to-date environmental scanning and the development of program indicators and outcomes. This business planning model allows the CEPR to anticipate emerging national and international health security issues and to respond to them in the most rapid and effective manner possible.

Information Management

The OMAS's Information Management unit maintains a centralized records office for the CEPR, which includes a permanent records work station in the Emergency Operations Centre. This allows for quick access to records during emergency situations and EOC training exercises.

Emergency Operations Centre

The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is the central nervous system for emergency response from the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada. It provides a facility and expertise for the control and coordination of federal disaster response.

The EOC is maintained in a constant state of readiness to deal with public health emergencies. It supports training and communications exercises coordinated by the Global Health Security Action Group (GHSAG), an international ministerial group dedicated to health security and bioterrorism issues. The EOC acts as the main communications hub for GHSAG in emergencies, initiating contact and collaboration among member countries (the G7 countries, the World Health Organization, Japan, Mexico and the European Commission).

Quarantine Services

Office of Quarantine Services

The office of Quarantine Services (OQS) is responsible for the implementation and enforcement of the Quarantine Act, which aims at reducing the probability of transmission of new and emerging diseases such as SARS and tuberculosis into Canada. It maintains quarantine stations, staffed by Quarantine Officers, at Canada's six major international airports – which account for approximately 94 percent of travel to and from Canada – and at the country's maritime ports of entry. The office is also responsible for designating Quarantine Officers and for developing and implementing a training curriculum for Quarantine Officers, Screening Officers and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and other key partners.

Did you know? Bill C-42 Quarantine Act

The new Quarantine Act was brought into force - December, 12, 2006. Under Bill C-42, operators of commercial carriers in the air, marine and land sector have an obligation to notify a Quarantine Officer if they have grounds to suspect that a traveller, cargo, or any thing on board may cause the spreading of a communicable disease, or if a death has occurred en route. A report must be made, as soon as possible, in advance of the conveyance's arrival in Canada. Advance notification of a potential threat to public health will allow Quarantine Officers on the front lines to coordinate an appropriate response at the receiving point of entry that will likely involve other key partners, including custom officials, ambulance services, and provincial and local health authorities.

Laboratory Security

Office of Laboratory Security

Whether located in universities, hospitals, government departments or industrial settings, laboratories may deal with agents or organisms that, if not handled properly, could present hazards to people, animals or plants. Canada's national centre of expertise on biosafety, biocontainment, the transportation of infectious substances and the importation of human pathogens, the CEPR's Office of Laboratory Security (OLS), ensures that those risks are managed effectively.

Biosafety Issues and Practices

The OLS is responsible for inspecting and certifying high-containment (Levels 3 and 4) facilities. It issues the permits that laboratories are required to receive before importing human pathogens (micro-organisms or parasites that cause disease in humans) into Canada.

Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines

The OLS Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines provide essential technical guidance for anyone who designs, operates or works in a laboratory in which human pathogens are manipulated for diagnostic, research or development purposes. The Guidelines reflect currently applied biosafety and biocontainment principles, confirm best practices in laboratory biosafety and assist end-users in identifying new biosafety priorities.

In recent years, the OLS has worked hard to transform the Guidelines into a practical set of risk assessment tools to help biosafety professionals make informed decisions on emerging issues.

The Guidelines cover:

- biohazard containment safety practices;
- regulations governing the importation and transportation of human pathogens;
- risk classification of biological agents;
- the determination of physical and operational containment levels according to risk classification;
- the large-scale production of micro-organisms;
- laboratory design; and
- safety equipment and biological safety cabinets.

Consultative Services and Resources

In support of its biosafety mandate, the OLS delivers consultative services to laboratory managers, ranging from advice on the design of new laboratories to the resolution of specific safety issues. It also offers clients access to its extensive resources on biosafety, including training courses, videos and CD-ROMs, up-to-date bibliographic references and material safety data sheets.

Emergency Planning and Response

The OLS is the national coordinator of Canada's Emergency Response Assistance Plan (ERAP), which deals with national transportation emergencies involving extremely dangerous pathogens. The OLS also facilitates the training of 15 ERAP teams across the country in the spill containment and decontamination procedures required to respond to accidents involving dangerous pathogens.

Suspicious Packages and CBRN Response

The OLS has the expertise, equipment and containment facilities to handle and examine suspicious packages and other bioterrorism threats. It works closely with the National Capital Region's first-responder community to provide 24/7 response capabilities for suspicious packages and other bioterrorism events. In addition, the OLS is a member of PHAC's mobile response unit, which is a partner in Canada's National Joint Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Response Team. This team, which also comprises members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Department of National Defence, is trained and equipped to respond on the scene of CBRN-related emergencies.

Applied Biosafety Research

The OLS's applied biosafety research initiatives help establish research projects to improve evidence-based biosafety and biocontainment strategies applying to issues such as the disinfection of surfaces contaminated with micro-organisms.

Promoting Safety in PHAC and Health Canada Laboratories

In addition to providing services to the Canadian laboratory community and to Canadians who expect those facilities to operate in a safe, responsible manner, the OLS also oversees the overall safety of Health Canada's and PHAC's laboratories, as well as the department's handling of radioactive and dangerous goods and its management of laboratory waste.

Biosafety Training for National and International Clients

The OLS conducts regular training courses on the design and operation of Level 3 containment facilities. Intended for biosafety professionals and Level 3 facility users, managers, engineers and architects, these courses cover areas such as architectural design and facility design, construction, mechanical design, the commissioning of architectural or mechanical drawings, and the operation of Level 3 containment facilities (including laboratories, small animal facilities and large animal facilities).

Workshops on the Transportation of Dangerous Goods

The OLS works with partners such as Transport Canada to develop workshops on the transportation of dangerous goods, with a focus on regulations and operational considerations affecting the international transportation of those goods, particularly by air.

Collaboration on Global Biosecurity

The Government of Canada recognizes that global biosecurity is enhanced by Canada's participation in important international public health security initiatives. This participation is overseen by a senior OLS biosafety advisor who works jointly for PHAC and Foreign Affairs Canada. The sharing of this resource facilitates the integration and coordination of federal global biosafety and biosecurity objectives.

Leadership in Biosafety

The OLS's extensive biosafety expertise has earned it the status of World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Biosafety and Biocontainment Technology. As part of this program, the OLS provides guidance to WHO and to microbiology laboratories around the world.

Serving a multidisciplinary clientele

In Canada, more than 5,000 Level 2, 3 and 4 Canadian laboratories make use of the OLS's information and expertise. In a typical year, they provide advice on the construction and renovation of over 50 Level 3 and 4 domestic containment facilities. Similar advice is also provided to operators of foreign facilities.

Program and Business Coordination

Office of Program and Business Coordination

The Office of Program and Business Coordination (OPBC) assist with the development of policy and program development by providing supportive functions and assuming a leadership role while taking into consideration the Centre's best interests. The OPBC is able to help Offices identify opportunities as well as avoid a duplication of efforts by offering advice and guidance for new initiatives.

From a supportive perspective, the OPBC provides support to technical/program areas, assisting them in aligning their programs with Agency priorities, helping to guide initiatives through the government bureaucracy and ensuring that all necessary consultations have occurred before initiatives are implemented. OPBC is also the home for the Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response's (CEPR) legislative/regulatory and Federal/Provincial/Territorial management groups, which absorb considerable work with stakeholders and partners outside of the Agency.

From the leadership perspective, the office ensures that programs are aware of opportunities and direction Agency wide. This is accomplished by OPBC's role in representing the Centre on various policy and informational committees, by maintaining awareness of other Agencies and government projects, and through the development of networks of contacts.

Toward a National Health Emergency Management System

The primary strategic objective is to help build a fully integrated pan-Canadian health emergency management system. To this end, the office coordinates the highly influential National Forum on Emergency Preparedness and Response. This annual meeting brings together federal, provincial and territorial emergency management professionals, public health and emergency social services professionals and public health and safety stakeholders to identify management challenges and work toward collaborative solutions.

Preparedness Assistance

While responding to crises is a clear priority, much of the ESS unit's ongoing work aims to mitigate the effects of future crises by promoting strong emergency preparedness. The unit develops and updates standard procedures for dealing with many aspects of disasters. Its technical expertise is also used to assist in the training of emergency officials at all levels of government.

Legislative and Regulatory Affairs

Legal preparedness is an essential component of public health risk management in Canada. The office's Legislative and Regulatory Affairs unit focusses on updating and strengthening legal tools to help prevent the introduction and spread of communicable diseases in this country. These tools include the recently modernized Quarantine Act, which gives Quarantine Officers more authority to respond rapidly to evolving health threats. In addition, the enhanced Human Pathogens Importation Regulations provide a comprehensive biosafety framework on the possession of human pathogens, including related biosecurity aspects and domestic controls.

EPR Regional Coordinators

Emergency preparedness and response coordination at the regional level is crucial to protecting the health security of Canadians. The CEPR's Regional Coordinators, posted in PHAC regional offices across the country, are responsible for coordinating, analyzing and delivering integrated multi-partner regional emergency response plans, programs, services and related training. Their tasks include: establishing and maintaining their regional emergency coordination centre's capabilities; developing regional emergency preparedness policies, plans and protocols; establishing and chairing regional portfolio emergency coordinating committees; providing training to federal portfolio staff emergency management, Emergency Operations Centre, use of the Incident Command System, pandemic influenza planning); and providing support and guidance to federal Health portfolio executives on issues related to emergency planning and response.

Disaster Recovery – Emergency Social Services

The office's Emergency Social Services (ESS) unit is responsible for assisting people in their recovery from a disaster or national emergency through an ESS preparedness, response and recovery program for Canada. The unit focusses on responding to those people's physical, emotional and social needs by providing emergency clothing, lodging, food and personal psychological services, along with registration, inquiry and reception services. It also supports provincial, territorial and municipal governments in the planning and development of their own ESS programs.

Executive Services

As the coordination point for a broad range of emergency response programs and services, the Executive Services unit is the CEPR's link to the Minister of Health's Office, the Deputy Minister of Health's Office and the offices of the Chief Public Health Officer and the Deputy Chief Public Health Officer. Executive Services also coordinates CEPR collaboration with other units within the federal Health portfolio, other federal departments, provincial and territorial governments and non-governmental organizations.

High-Volume Service and High-Quality Products

Executive Services combines high-volume service with high-quality information products, which allows the CEPR to enhance its visibility and reputation for excellence among key national and international emergency preparedness and response stakeholders.

Emergency Response

Office of Emergency Response Services

The office of Emergency Response Services (OERS) is responsible for CEPR front-line services, including the National Emergency Stockpile System, the Quarantine Office and the National Office of Health Emergency Response Teams.

National Office of Health Emergency Response Teams

The goal of the National Office of Health Emergency Response Teams (NOHERT) is to improve Canada's readiness to deal with public health emergencies. The Health Emergency Response Teams (HERTs) will be composed of medical, health and other professionals such as epidemiologists, physicians, nurses and experts in psycho-social services. The teams will be located strategically across the country so that they can be deployed on a 24-hour basis (at the request of provincial, territorial or local authorities) to assist authorities in providing emergency medical care during a major disaster. The teams' all-hazards training will allow them to respond to both natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes, avalanches, hurricanes, wildfires, ice storms and floods) and human-caused disasters, both intentional and accidental (e.g. terrorist attacks and chemical, biological or radiological/nuclear incidents).

Did you know? NOHERT surge capacity

As a national "all-hazards" 24-hour medical response program, NOHERT acts on its goal of providing flexible, sustainable and extremely cost-effective emergency surge capacity to assist provincial, territorial and local authorities in their efforts to help Canadians affected by natural or human-caused disasters.

National Emergency Stockpile System

The National Emergency Stockpile System (NESS) maintains a national 24-hour response capacity to assist local, provincial and territorial authorities in dealing with public health emergencies. The stockpile is designed to help respond to all types of hazards – from CBRN incidents to a broad range of natural disasters. NESS stockpiles a wide spectrum of pharmaceuticals, medical supplies and emergency response equipment. This material is housed at a central federal depot in Ottawa, eight federal warehouses strategically located across Canada and approximately 1,300 pre-positioned supply centres under the combined management of the provinces, territories and federal government.

Did you know? Emergency medical response

NESS contains supplies for treatment centres ranging in size from small field medical units right up to large hospitals – including beds and blankets, pharmaceuticals and a range of antibiotics. The emergency stockpile includes 165 emergency mobile hospitals, each containing 19 tons of supplies (including 200 cots). These hospitals, which require up to 30,000 square feet each for set-up, are designed to be placed in existing buildings such as schools and community centres. Stored in strategic locations across the country, the hospitals can be deployed on short notice (within 24 hours). One Hercules aircraft can transport a complete 200-bed emergency hospital.

Emergency Preparedness

Office of Emergency Preparedness

Planning, training and simulation exercises are the cornerstones of effective emergency preparedness. The planning function sets out and documents the emergency response procedures so that they are easy to follow during an emergency. The training function develops the skills and competencies necessary to respond, while exercises provide the validation and tests necessary to determine the appropriateness and effectiveness of training and planning function activities.

Emergency Planning

The first priority of the Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) is to manage and support the development and maintenance of health-related emergency response plans for natural and human-caused disasters. The Office works closely with partners from the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada, other federal departments, and provinces and territories to identify planning priorities and develop the plans necessary to respond to their respective mandates.

The OEP has developed a number of key health-based emergency plans and is participating in the development and implementation of several others. These plans include:

- The PHAC/Health Canada Emergency Response plan, an “all-hazards” plan which define the scope and framework within which both entities operate to ensure an appropriate response to an emergency;
- the National Smallpox Contingency Plan;
- the Canadian Pandemic Influenza Plan; and
- the national Health Incident Management System, based on a new concept, which aims to enhance the health community’s capacity to coordinate, communicate and manage its activities during health emergencies - including CBRN events - through a comprehensive health emergency management policy and an integrated operational structure that clearly defined cross-jurisdictional linkages.

The Office of Emergency Preparedness is also collaborating with Public Safety Canada in the development and implementation of the National Emergency Response System (NERS), a generic response framework designed to ensure the strategic coordination of federal mandates into a common Government of Canada emergency response. In addition, it participates in the development of a number of specific contingency plans in support of the system.

Emergency Training

Another priority for the OEP is emergency training. The Office specializes in course design, adult education and course delivery as means of developing the training necessary to respond to emergency situations.

Emergency Exercises

No emergency response plan is of value unless the personnel it affects have been pre-designated and trained to exercise their roles and responsibilities within the response structure. Exercises are a cost-effective, ideal means of providing both individual and team training for system improvement. They also validate existing emergency plans, or aid in the development of new plans by identifying gaps in existing systems and areas where a specific procedure needs to be developed to deal with a specific type of emergency.

Since its inception in 2000, the OEP has developed and conducted a number of emergency exercises, including: Global Mercury, a major international exercise aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of communications protocols among participating countries, the World Health Organization and the European Commission in the event of an outbreak of an infectious disease; Vigilant Courier, a federal-provincial exercise to practice selected aspects of the National Smallpox Contingency Plan; and various internal and federal-provincial/territorial exercises involving an influenza pandemic scenario.

The OEP is also participating in the development, conduct and evaluation of a number of other major and smaller, national- or international-level exercises in which PHAC and Health Canada are actively participating, including the TOPOFF and the Ardent Sentry series.

Training Partnerships

The OEP collaborates on the development and delivery of training courses with:

- Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (developing courses for first response terrorism incidents);
- the provinces and territories (providing courses to meet general emergency response needs); and
- federal departments, non-governmental organizations and professional associations (addressing health emergency preparedness needs).

Training Initiatives: Emergency Operations Centre Volunteer Training

OEP staff conduct ongoing training to prepare volunteers to staff the CEPR's Emergency Operations Centre during exercises and emergencies. With this training, volunteers from throughout the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada are prepared to seamlessly assume EOC line positions in the event of an emergency.

CBRN Training

The OEP, in partnership with Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (PSEPC) and five other federal departments, is developing a comprehensive training program for a broad range of first responders (including health services first responders) involved in chemical, biological and radiological/nuclear emergency events. Courses include:

- two Web-based training programs: CBRN Awareness Training, for a general audience; and Basic level Training, for first responders, including those in the medical and public health communities who might be first on the scene of an event; and
- a number of CBRN intermediate level training courses and workshops for medical and public health first responders (see example below).

The following is an example of an intermediate level course:

The OEP offers the Tier 1 Laboratory Bioterrorism Recognition Course for Tier 1 laboratories, which enables the staff of these laboratories to better recognize bacterial and viral agents of terrorism in a laboratory setting. Offered in collaboration with the Canadian Public Health Laboratories Network, this Web-based course is available to laboratory personnel across Canada.

Additional OEP Training Courses

Here is a list of some of the diverse EPR courses offered by the Office of Emergency Preparedness:

- Hospital Surge Capacity Workshop;
- Casualty Simulation “Train-the-Trainer” Instructor Course;
- Orientation of National Emergency Stockpile System (NESS) 200 Bed Emergency Hospital Set-up Training;
- Psycho-social Emergency Preparedness and Response Program;
- Laboratory Security Training (Containment Level 3 Facilities: (Operation and Design Course);
- Basic courses in emergency health services and emergency social services; and
- Health Emergency Response Team (HERT) Emergency Epidemiologist Training.

E Team Emergency Management Software

The Public Health Agency of Canada, the CEPR and the EOC are implementing a comprehensive Incident Command Structure that will establish an Agency program to drive, automate and, in some cases, update or replace dated processes in accordance with industry best practices.

This project is under the direction of a steering committee that oversees both the implementation and start-up of its E Team software suite and the development of the operational organization required to support it.

An Incident Command Structure (ICS) compliant, modular E Team software suite supports the management of emergency events by allowing users to record information on key events. It is also a useful tool for CEPR units such as the Office of Laboratory Security, the Office of Quarantine Services and the Travel Medicine Program to record day-to-day incidents and actions that could escalate to warrant “event” status. The software allows the emergency management team to assign tasks to users and to develop and distribute action plans and supporting reference documents.

The E Team software also makes it easier for users to review the history, location and status of any incident, to share data with related groups, to communicate among themselves and with partner agencies, and to record event details for future review.

Acronyms

CBRN – Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear
CEPR – Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response
EOC – Emergency Operations Centre
EPR – Emergency preparedness and response
ERAP – Emergency Response Assistance Plan
ESS – Emergency Social Services
GHSAG – Global Health Security Action Group
GPHIN – Global Public Health Intelligence Network
ODG – Office of the Director General
OEP – Office of Emergency Preparedness
OERS – Office of Emergency Response Services
OQS – Office of Quarantine Services
OLS – Office of Laboratory Security
OMAS – Office of Management and Administrative Services
OPBC – Office of Program and Business Coordination
PHAC – Public Health Agency of Canada
WHO – World Health Organization

Public Health Agency of Canada

Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response

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