

Cumberland County Public Health Emergency Preparedness Exercise

**Sponsored by the Cumberland County
Emergency Management Agency and
the Bureau of Health's Office of Public
Health Emergency Preparedness**

October 28, 2004

Exercise Design

Created by the Cumberland County Public
Health Exercise Design Team

Facilitated by Diane Friese, USM Muskie School of Public Service and Dr. Jo Linder , Regional
Medical Officer, Health and Human Services Department, Division of Public Health, City
of Portland

Primary Exercise Participants

- Bridgton Hospital
- Cumberland County EMA Office
- Maine Medical Center
- Maine Bureau of Health
- Mercy Hospital
- Midcoast Hospital
- Parkview Hospital
- Portland Health & Human Services Department



Auxiliary Exercise Participants

- Portland EOC
- Portland and MidCoast Chapters of the Red Cross
- State Environmental Testing Laboratory
- MEMA
- REMIS
- Southern Regional Resource Center
- Southern Maine EMS
- Martins Point
- Portland School Dept.
- Southern Maine Medical Center
- Northern New England Poison Center
- Portland Water District
- Portland Fire Dept.
- Portland Police Dept.
- Nordex Laboratories
- S. Portland Police Dept.
- Maine Animal Response Team
- York County EMA Office
- Spring Harbor
- Community Health Services
- Sagadahoc EMA Office

Exercise Purpose

This is a learning opportunity to assess the Cumberland County's public health, medical and public safety communities' abilities to respond collaboratively to a large-scale public health event.

This exercise was designed to provoke honest thinking about strengths, gaps and vulnerabilities and was not intended to reflect negatively or positively on how a particular person, department or agency may or may not respond during an actual large-scale public health emergency.

Definitions

EOC - emergency operations center

ICS - incident command system, an established protocol for how decisions are made and who the lead is when responding to an emergency

Exercise Objectives

1. Test the ability of participants to operate their individual EOCs and ICS systems
2. Test the ability of participants to establish a coordinated unified command response to a large-scale public health emergency in Cumberland County
3. Test the ability of Cumberland County hospitals to manage significant patient overload
4. Test the ability of existing communication systems in Cumberland County to respond to a large-scale public health emergency

Exercise Organization & Logistics

This is a functional tabletop exercise that will be played out simultaneously in eight locations. It builds upon a successful Cumberland County public health tabletop exercise held in May 2003 and a communication drill held in Sept. 2004.

Each participating site will have a facilitator with this Power-Point Presentation who will control the flow of the exercise messages and facilitate discussion. In addition, each site will have a silent evaluator who will watch and record all activities in that location. Some locations may have additional observers who will just watch the exercise.

All evaluations will be compiled into a post-exercise action report that will be distributed to all participants.

Exercise Time Line

- Introduction and overview : 15 minutes
(8:45-9AM)
 - Part A of scenario: 30 minutes
 - Discussion Session #1: 15 minutes
 - Part B of scenario: 30 minutes
 - Discussion Session #2 15 minutes
 - Part C of scenario 30 minutes
 - Discussion Session #3 15 minutes
 - Debriefing: 15 minutes
- Completed by 11:30 –11:45 am

General Instructions

- It is important that at the beginning and ending of any phone call during the exercise you say: Your name and this is an Cumberland County public health exercise
- Respond as a group as the information arises.
- Maintain your hospital or agency role throughout the exercise
- Lack of active participation does not mean a lack of learning

End of Introduction

Section A

Exercise Narrative

It is a sunny late October Wednesday with a temperature of 55 degrees and a 10 mph offshore wind in greater Portland, Maine. Since Tuesday, the Maine Bureau of Health has been receiving notification from most hospitals and several medical offices and family physicians in Cumberland County that they are seeing an increasing number of patients who are complaining of severe diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever and vomiting. As a result, hospitals in Cumberland County are approaching maximum bed capacity.

This morning several stool samples were sent by Maine Medical Center and Mercy Hospital to Nordex Lab for identification. At this time there is no confirmed determination of what organism or substance is causing this mass illness.

Message 1

Time: Wednesday 7am

Hospital emergency departments and ambulance staff across Cumberland County are notifying their supervisors that they continue to be unusually busy with transporting and receiving people of all ages with severe diarrhea and gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms.

Message 2

Time: Wednesday 8 am

20% of hospital employees in Cumberland County are calling in sick with GI symptoms similar to incoming emergency cases.

20% of ambulance staff in Cumberland County are calling in sick with GI symptoms similar to people they have been transporting.

Message 3

Time: Wednesday 9 am

CNN is reporting that the Centers for Disease Control has just announced evidence of the beginning of an early flu outbreak across the U.S. including the Northeast.

Message 4

Time: Wednesday 10 am

Hospital and other pharmacists across Southern Maine are reporting that anti-diarrhea medication is in high demand.

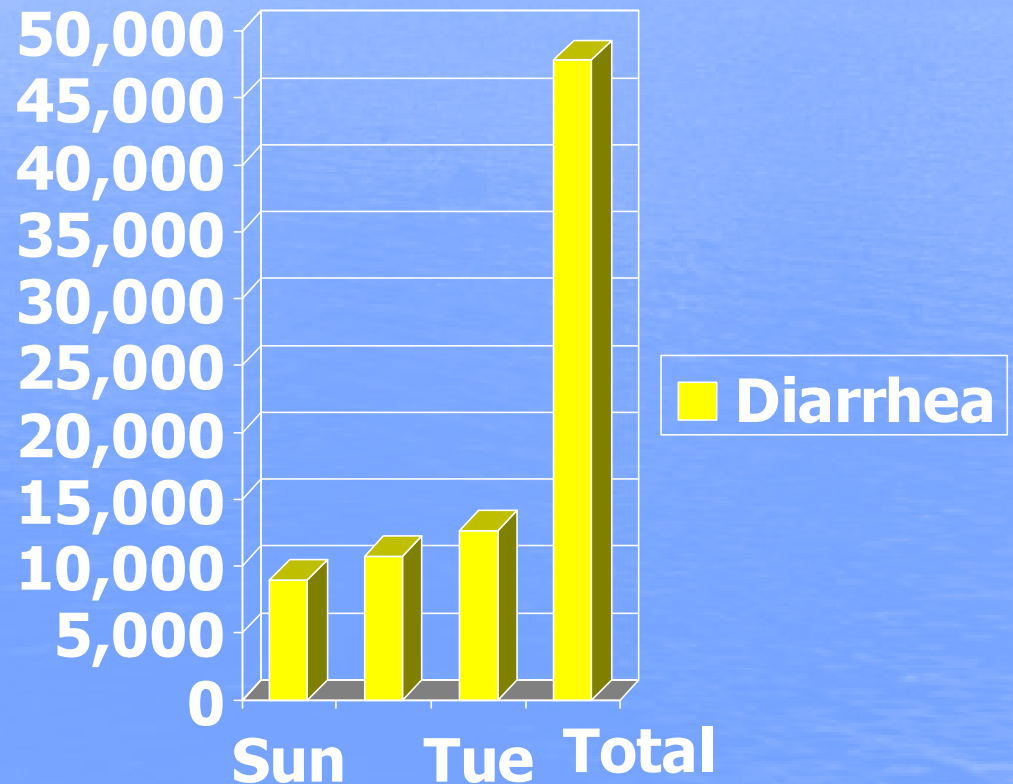
Message 5

Time: Wednesday 11 am

Cumberland County Sheriffs Dept. reports to Portland Public Health that 20% of its inmates and 20% of its staff are sick with severe diarrhea.

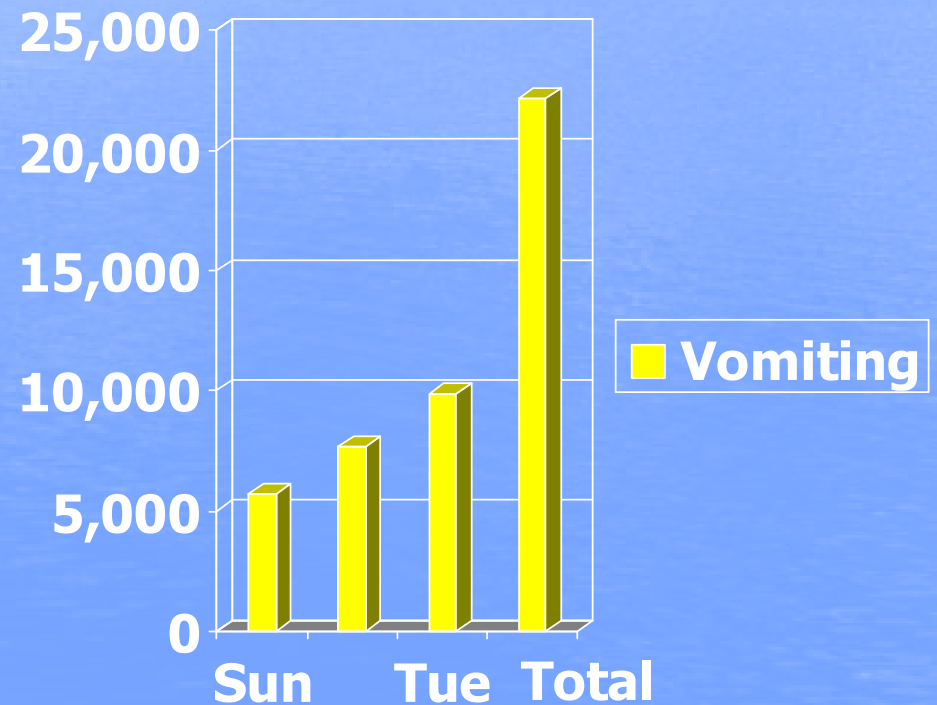
Reported Diarrhea Cases Sunday through Tuesday

- Reported Diarrheal cases from all Cumberland Health Facilities



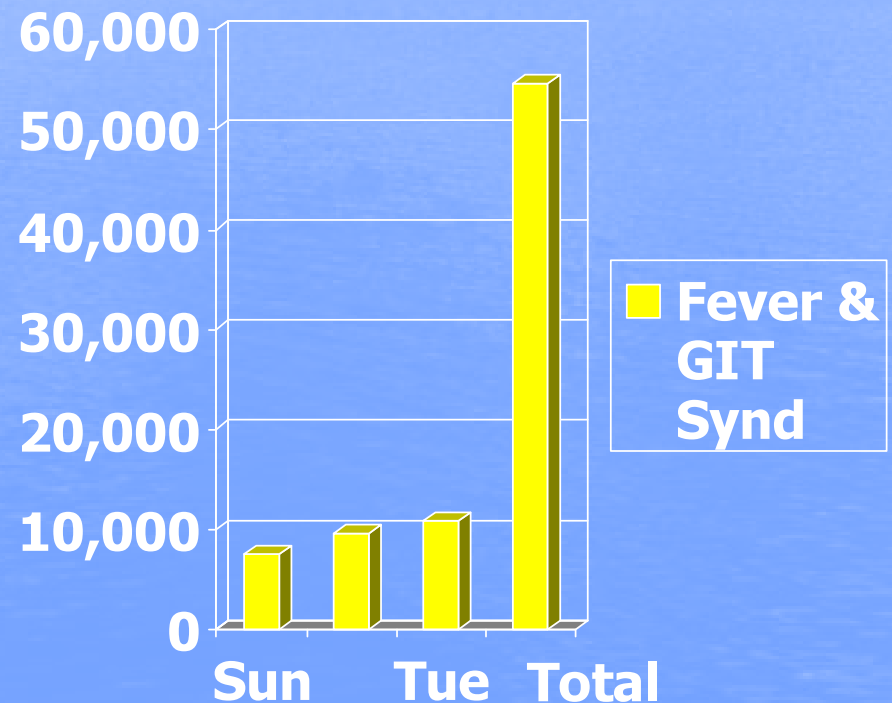
Reported Vomiting Cases Sunday through Tuesday

- Reported Vomiting cases from all Cumberland County Health Facilities



Reported Fever Cases Sunday through Tuesday

- Reported Fever cases linked to GI Syndrome from all Cumberland County Health Facilities



Question Set #1

Questions to consider?

1. What triggers would create the awareness within your facility and the health community that something unusual is happening?
2. What is the protocol for patient surge capacity at your hospital and where are patients diverted? What is the protocol for patient surge capacity involving multiple hospitals in the same region?

Questions (continued)

3. What is the protocol for 20% sick out by staff at your hospital or agency during a large-scale public health emergency?
4. How do you obtain and distribute a large quantity of medication in a timely manner during a large-scale public health emergency in your community?

Section B

Message 6

Time: Wednesday 11:30 am

The U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security has just increased the terror threat level to orange for the entire Northeast with no specified warning as to what areas or facilities are in increased danger.

Message 7

Time: Wednesday Noon

Greater Portland television stations are announcing on their noontime reports that it appears that the Portland area is experiencing a flu epidemic. They interview several people with sick family members. The media is requesting information and comments from any hospital, public health or any medical person they can find to talk with.

Message 8

Time: Wednesday Noon

Over 1000 children have reported being sick with GI (gastrointestinal) symptoms within the Greater Portland school system. The Portland School Superintendent announces closing of all Portland schools. In addition, schools in Bridgton, Brunswick and South Portland are also reporting large numbers of sick students and are getting ready to close their schools.

Message 9

Time: Wednesday 2pm

There is an increase in the number of psychosomatic patients (worried well) appearing at hospitals and physician offices across southern Maine. Panic is spreading across communities in Cumberland County.

Message 10

Time: Wednesday 2 pm

Portland shelters have notified Portland Public Health that they have 400 people with GI symptoms and want to know what they should do.

Question Set #2

Questions to Consider

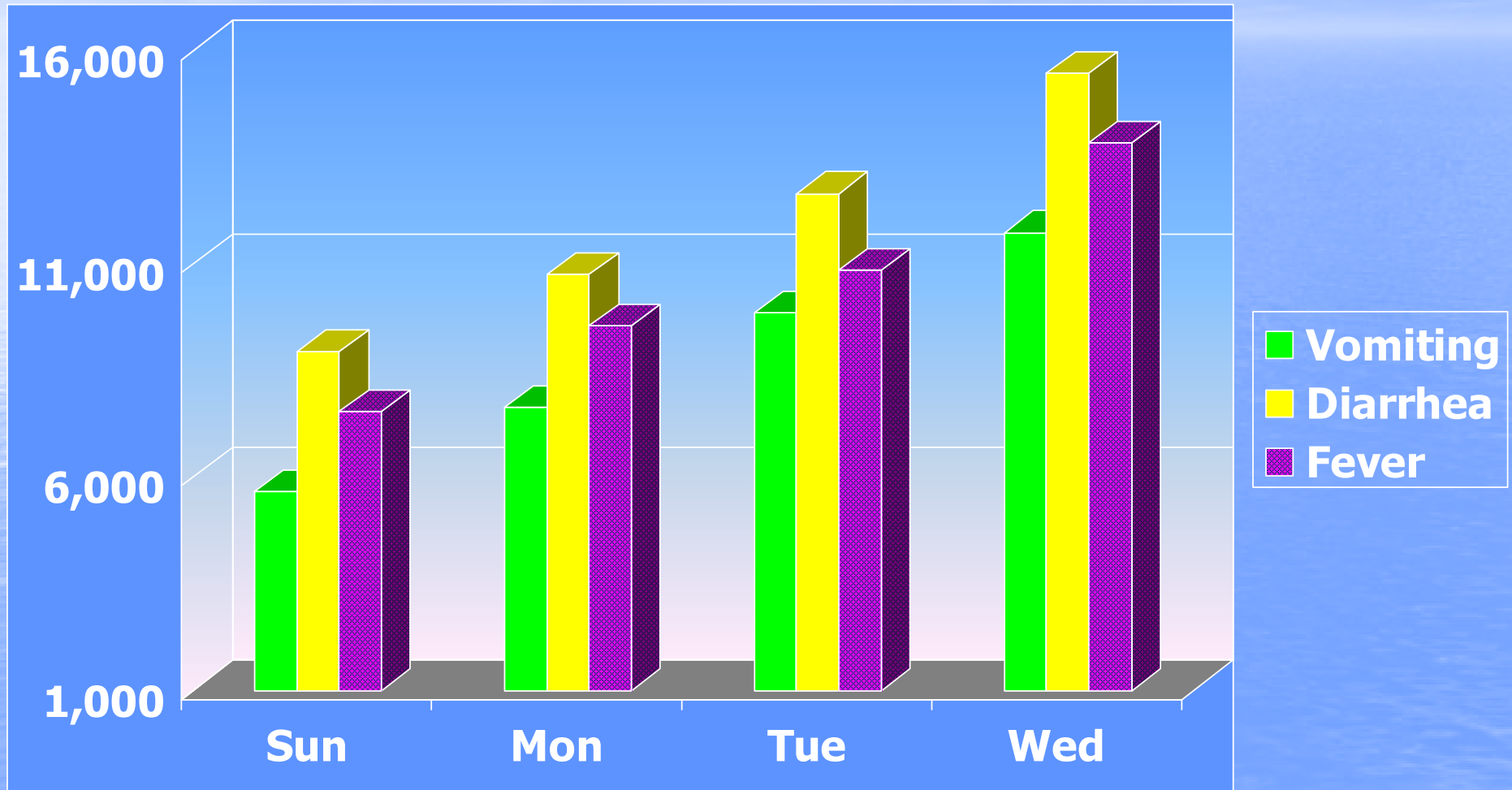
1. How do you share information and communicate with other hospitals, health agencies, police, fire, county EMA offices, EMS, county sheriff, MEMA and vice-versa during a large-scale public health emergency?
 - Who would coordinate public information and media inquiries during a large-scale public health emergency in Cumberland County?
 - How is public information and media requests within Cumberland County coordinated with the State Bureau of Health?

Questions (continued)

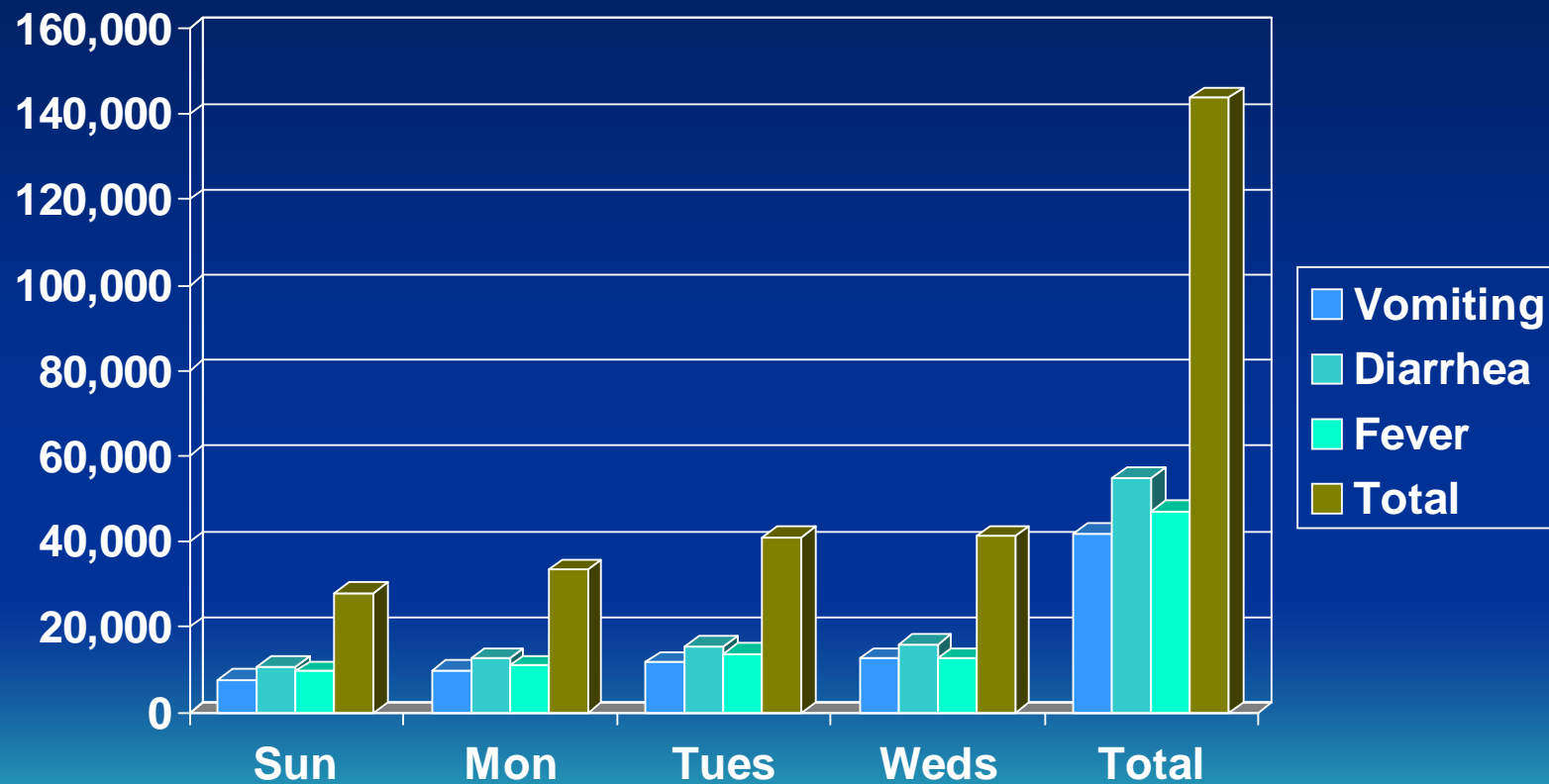
2. What is the protocol for dealing with mental health issues such as panic and psychosomatic symptoms during a large-scale public health emergency at your hospital and across your community?

Section C

Reported Cases of GI Illness in Day #4 Sunday - Wednesday



Total Number of Cases in Day # 4 Sunday - Wednesday



Message 11

Time: Thursday 7 am

NORDEX lab has reported back to several hospitals that preliminary tests show that the stool samples tested positive for cryptosporidium.

Message 12

Time: Thursday 7:30 am

The Portland Water District puts out a boil water order for everyone within the Portland Water District.

Message 13

Time: Thursday 9 am

CNN and national news is in Portland talking with whomever they can, fueling the rumor that the mass illness is a possible terrorist act by a political action group.

Message 14

Time: Thursday 10 am

The State Bureau of Health reports that only hospitals and medical facilities in southern Maine are reporting large numbers of patients with GI symptoms.

Question Set #3

Questions to Consider

1. Who will lead a unified command during a large-scale public health event in Cumberland County?
 - Where is the best location for a unified command center?
 - How does this unified command interface with the State Bureau of Health and the State EOC?
 - What is the easiest way for your hospital to interface with the unified command?

Questions (continued)

2. What is your protocol for contacting the Portland Water District during an emerging public health emergency?
3. What mobile or alternate medical units and staffing are available during a large-scale public health emergency to deal with the homeless shelters, elderly housing complexes, or the jail in Cumberland County?

Hot wash Questions

Immediate Hot wash of Exercise

- What worked best for you during this exercise?
- What was the most difficult challenge or particular event during the exercise that prevented a timely response?

Thank you for participating in this exercise!

- Please turn in your participant evaluation form before you leave today.
- Please sign up for the post-exercise evaluation discussion luncheon at the Nixon Conference Center located at 225 Douglas St. in Portland at the Portland Water District Offices from 9:30 –12:30 on November 10.
- Make sure you signed the attendance sheet with your email address in order to receive the final evaluation report.