



Crisis Response

Objective:

Decrease damage or harm in the event of a regional crisis

Strategy:

Coordinate and provide direct response to crises such as communicable disease outbreaks, floods, earthquakes, severe weather events, and homeland security threats

Why is this strategy important?

King County faces periodic river valley and urban flooding events, earthquakes, severe weather, hazardous materials releases, and transportation accidents, and it has the potential to be affected by volcanic and terrorist activity. These emergencies cross the boundaries of our 39 cities, 2 tribes, and more than 120 taxing districts (fire, school, water/sewer, etc.) over 2,134 square miles of diverse terrain. King County must provide both coordination as well as direct emergency services in order to ensure the safety of King County residents.

How is our performance?

King County's Office of Emergency Management operates the Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) to coordinate a direct response in the event of an emergency. In the event of a disaster, the ECC will activate, and ask the County Executive to proclaim an emergency if appropriate. The ECC is a central location from which to coordinate activities during an emergency. During a crisis, information is a key factor in our ability to support governments and residents, this facility serves as the hub of our communications and coordination efforts.

In order to quickly detect a potential disaster, King County Office of Emergency Management employs warning systems and protocol to follow. They are also a tertiary warning center able to broadcast an Emergency Alert Message (EAS) across television and radio channels. Prior to December, 2012, the warning system could not detect a lahar flow that may affect our residents from Mount Rainier all of the way to the city of Auburn.

In another area of improved crisis response capability, King County recently signed a statewide agreement that provides for mass dispensing of antiviral or antibiotics through private pharmacy chains. This is a tremendous increase in capability to push "pills" to people in the event of an immediate need such as an Anthrax attack against our population by opening hundreds of dispensing points under the cooperation and direction of local health officers and the State Department of Health. This new statewide agreement between public and private entities is the first of its kind in the nation. Resources that are committed to disaster response operations will be under the immediate direction of the on-scene command structure, which may be led by a single agency, or unified command. In 2011, 100 percent of ECC responses during training events included a unified command response structure. This structure ensures that resources are

deployed efficiently and effectively.

When an emergency is declared, King County organizations and other jurisdictions give "status of critical functions" report within the first operational period (12 hours) of a crisis. This information is critical for the ECC in order to continue to deploy resources as safely and as quickly as possible.

Public Health-Seattle & King County has developed plans and community sites across the county for the distribution of medicine and medical supplies to everyone who needs them during disasters. Beginning with no sites identified in 2002, Public Health now has multiple sites and dispensing partners identified throughout the county. This includes:

- 16 points of dispensing (PODS) that will be utilized by Public Health staff and volunteers with current memoranda of understanding (MOU) documents for all 16.
- 42 clinics and treatment facilities, each of which is covered under the Regional Disaster Plan.
- MOU agreements with 72 pharmacy stores to dispense medications on behalf of Public Health.

Large-scale incidents and disasters may generate casualties in numbers that exceed the capacity of local hospitals. During these types of emergency events, healthcare systems must quickly convert from the existing treatment and management systems to surge capacity, a significant increase beyond usual capacity, to rapidly respond to the needs of affected individuals. Public Health has planned for such incidents and built the capability to establish and operate an alternate care facility during disasters. An alternate care facility relieves pressure on local healthcare systems by serving as triage stations, urgent care centers, or inpatient facilities when local healthcare infrastructure is damaged or overwhelmed.

- There are currently 8 alternate care facility sites identified in King County with a goal of two locations in each emergency response zone.
- Of these sites, memoranda of understanding have been put in place for 5, and site plans, including security plans, have been established for 4 sites.

What can you do?

Join the Emergency Coordination Center Support Team, a non-profit, all volunteer community service organization providing vital emergency operations support to the community during a disaster or emergency situation.

Join the Public Health Medical Reserve Corps, a volunteer service that employs medical and non-medical professionals to respond to a health need or impacts on the healthcare system.

Moving forward

Public Health will continue to build, test and exercise the capability to provide medications and medical care during a large-scale disaster. We will continue to identify sites and develop plans for alternate care facility and medication dispensing locations throughout the county.

In addition to the site planning, Public Health will continue to identify and train medical and non-medical staff to support health and medical response operations. Logistical and medical supplies will continue to be stockpiled and ready for deployment by Public Health to support the medication dispensing sites and alternate care facilities.

Related Links

[King County Office of Emergency Management](#)

[Public Health-Seattle & King County](#)