

2015

Year in Review

While we can't prevent disasters from happening, we can prepare for them. As collaborative partners, the Northwest Healthcare Response Network, together with healthcare organizations, state and local public health departments, emergency response agencies and others, has taken important steps forward in the past year to build the systems that enhance our response capabilities.

Developing Plans & Enhancing Coordination

The Northwest Healthcare Response Network facilitates innovative regional planning with healthcare and other emergency response partners to establish relationships, leverage expertise, and develop the plans and tools that will allow our healthcare community to effectively respond and recover in an emergency or disaster. In 2015:

- ▶ The Network continued our **planning and preparedness efforts for acute infectious diseases**, such as Ebola, by working with healthcare on their internal readiness and coordinating the development of the first Regional Acute Infectious Disease Response Plan in collaboration with healthcare organizations, local public health and emergency medical services.
- ▶ Clinical and administrative leaders from healthcare organizations continued to engage with public health through our **Disaster Clinical Advisory Committee** and the **Healthcare Executive Response Committee**. During 2015, these committees explored issues related to decision-making regarding altering the community standards of care, managing scarce resources and strategies for community medical surge.
- ▶ The Network also launched a project to engage supply chain leaders from healthcare facilities and vendors to develop strategies to ensure that healthcare organizations have the **critical supplies they need to continue to provide services** during and after a disaster.
- ▶ Russell Phillips & Associates worked with the Network to **provide surge capacity and transportation evacuation planning services at 33 hospital facilities** in King and Pierce counties, drilling down into short- and long-term capabilities to expand bed capacity along with staffing, equipment and other resources needed to accommodate a surge. Hospital members received facility-specific reports with critical information for their evacuation and transportation planning.

Coordinating the Healthcare System's Response to the Aurora Bridge Crash

When a Ride the Ducks tour vehicle collided with a charter bus from North Seattle Community College on the Aurora Bridge in September 2015, the Northwest Healthcare Response Network played a critical role in the emergency response.

Five students were killed in the crash and more than 50 others, from 14 countries, were transported to local hospitals with injuries. This was the largest influx of patients from a single incident that our region has seen in recent history. Within an hour of the incident, the Network activated its Healthcare Emergency Coordination Center (HECC), to assist during the response and its aftermath.

Based on early reports of a high number of casualties, the Network activated the regional patient tracking plan and used the WATrac patient tracking system to track the location of injured patients so that this critical information was available for key response agencies and healthcare partners. This was the first ever use of this system in a mass casualty incident in Washington State.

At the request of the City of Seattle Emergency Operations Center (EOC), a Network representative was assigned as a liaison for healthcare organizations during the response. Within approximately an hour of the crash, the Network liaison was in place in the EOC, coordinating closely with the Seattle Police Department, the Seattle Office of Intergovernmental Relations, Public Health – Seattle & King County and Seattle Human Services supporting family reunification. The Network served as a “one-stop-shop” for coordination and information sharing between healthcare and other critical stakeholders such as National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), case management agencies and other organizations. In addition, the Network kept our members and partners up-to-date with the latest situational information.

The Network's ability to rapidly identify problems and solutions, and keep our partners informed throughout this tragic event, was the result of ten years of planning and coordination in our community to ensure our healthcare system is ready to respond to any emergency we may encounter.

- ▶ In support of the Washington State Department of Health, the Network led three innovative projects that will provide additional regional and statewide capabilities. These included: developing a plan for the first statewide Disaster Medical Control Center model to **assist the state with patient movement in a large-scale disaster**; launching plans for the first **State Disaster Medical Advisory Committee** to advise the Secretary of Health and State Health Officer during disasters; and, conducting the first-of-its-kind assessment to develop regional and statewide **indicators and triggers for situational awareness to help improve decision-making** in disasters.
- ▶ The Network **activated the Healthcare Emergency Coordination Center** in response to **seven incidents** ranging from the Aurora Bridge crash to protests to severe weather.

Building Capabilities through Workshops and Trainings

The Network provides a wide variety of training opportunities tailored to the unique needs of our healthcare community. In 2015:

- ▶ The Network hosted workshops across the state to train non-pediatric providers to **treat children during a disaster**.
- ▶ Sixteen organizations participated in our workshops on the fundamentals of **business continuity and resilience**, learning the tools to stay open—or reopen quickly—following a disaster so the community can continue to receive the care it needs.
- ▶ Healthcare and policy leaders convened in Olympia for our **Crisis Standards of Care workshop**, hosted in partnership with the Washington State Department of Health, to take our state’s planning for patient care during major disasters to the next level.
- ▶ Our healthcare partners and others received **training to build skills and expertise** on topics ranging from cybersecurity to planning for acute infectious diseases at our Capabilities and Planning sessions.
- ▶ Nearly 150 people attended trainings to better understand how hospitals, clinics and other clinical sites can better prepare for the **mental health impacts of a disaster** for their patients and staff.

In addition to trainings and workshops, the Network also organized exercises and drills to test, evaluate and improve our region’s ability to respond emergencies and disasters.

Preparing for The Really Big One

In July 2015, the Puget Sound region—and much of the Northwest—was captivated by an article in *The New Yorker* on “The Really Big One,” an 8.7 to 9.2 magnitude earthquake that could potentially strike the Pacific Northwest and unleash unthinkable destruction on our communities.

At the Northwest Healthcare Response Network, we know that among the most important resources our community will need in the aftermath of a major earthquake like the one described in *The New Yorker* is a functioning healthcare system that can provide treatment for the injured and ensure survivors have a means to manage their existing health conditions, as well as new ones that may emerge.

That’s why we have been working with healthcare providers across the Puget Sound region, along with public health and emergency management partners, for the past 10 years to build a disaster-resilient healthcare system—developing plans, trainings, exercises, relationships and policy solutions that are essential to helping our community respond to and recover from a disaster like a major earthquake.

In June 2016, the Network, with our healthcare, public health and other emergency response partners at the local, state and federal levels will test these plans by participating in a National Level Exercise, “Cascadia Rising”, to test our response to a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, like the one described in *The New Yorker*. Our team has been hard at work planning with these partners to prepare for this multi-day exercise.

Our work in 2015 was made possible through the financial support of our sustaining members and partners including:

UW Medicine

