NORTHWEST HEALTHCARE Response Network®

Partnerships and Coordination Save Lives During a Long-Term Care Evacuation

Challenge: Relocating 77 vulnerable residents from a skilled nursing facility in rural Washington during a fire evacuation emergency.

Montesano, Washington is a town of under 5,000 residents on the coast of western Washington. Montesano is home to a handful of long-term care facilities, but only **one** skilled nursing facility (SNF). On September 14, 2022, at 5:30 PM, a fire broke out in the only SNF in the town, Montesano Health and Rehabilitation Center (MHRC). Within an hour, an administrator from MHRC called the Northwest Healthcare Response Network (the Network) Duty Officer to advise of the situation, alerting to a full evacuation, and requesting support for patient relocation and logistics for supplies.

IMPACT FOCUS

Multi-Agency Response Coordination

KEY IMPACT AREAS

Partnership: leveraging existing relationships with needed expertise.

Leadership: The Network led the healthcare coordination of a multi-agency response.

Patient tracking: The Network coordinated the placement and tracking of 77 residents through WATrac.

The Response

The Network connected with the Washington Health Care Association (WHCA) and Leading Age for support in finding new locations for impacted residents. Through WHCA and Leading Age an 'all call' went out to the SNFs in neighboring communities requesting support. The local Disaster Medical Coordination Center (DMCC) at Providence St. Peter's Hospital in Lacey, WA was alerted to help support if any of the residents needed hospital level care.

To support the response activities, the Network hosted a virtual meeting room, to allow for the team of responders (emergency management, EMS, healthcare, long-term care agencies and other support organizations) to maintain constant communication and for the Network to be able to facilitate the coordination between EMS and long-term care. Over the course of the evening, beds were identified, and residents were matched due to their needs. EMS coordinated resident movement and in order to make sure the residents were tracked to their new location; the Network was able to input patient data and transportation information into WATrac.

This was the first time WATrac was used for a long-term care evacuation/relocation/patient tracking incident. Utilizing WATrac was key for all the agencies involved in patient movement and care. Many of the fire departments and long-term care facilities involved were not previously familiar with the platform, so it took some additional time and manpower from the Network to ensure that it could be beneficial in family reunification and coordination with receiving partners and the command post on site.

Full details, including an additional panel interview and timeline of the event can be found here.

The Outcome

In total, there were 77 displaced patients requiring various levels of care, all of which were successfully transferred to appropriate facilities and/or discharged home where possible.

Eleven (11) long-term care facilities supported relocation and numerous response partners rapidly came to the aid of this facility and community by offering resources, staff, supplies and expertise.

The response to the Montesano evacuation was unique as it was a full evacuation, in a rural community, necessitating resident relocation across a broad geography, with very few [thankfully] needing emergency treatment. Although we plan for such events, we rarely see the combination of impacts specific to this response. The Network's Mariah Pede was serving as Duty Officer on the night of the Montesano fire. She shared, "The overall response that evening was a true testament of partners helping partners. What an incredible team to work alongside with the common goal of life safety."

The Network Duty Officer is available 24/7 for emergencies.

"*To look back at the end of the day and know that all the residents were safely placed and feel that things went smoothly, was extremely comforting and rewarding. The role the Network played in coordinating agencies and connecting the pieces was critical in this response.*"

Elena Madrid
Executive Vice President for Regulatory Affairs, Washington Health Care Association

PARTNERS IN RESPONSE

This response would not have been possible without our partners from:

- Montesano Health and Rehab
- McLane Black Lake Fire Department
- Washington Health Care Association
- Grays Harbor County Emergency Management
- Leading Age
- Hoquiam Fire Department
- Lacey Fire Department
- St. Peter's Hospital

When asked to recount the events related to the Montesano fire, Laura Hoffman, Director of Clinical and Nursing Facility Regulatory Services at Leading Age Washington commented, "The residents and staff of Montesano Health and Rehab faced a crisis on the evening of September 14 as a fire threatened their life and safety. It is with our deepest gratitude that we recognize and thank the Network for their immediate and expert response in coordinating the successful evacuation of 77 residents on this unforgettable evening. The team at the Network quickly rallied the necessary partners and turned panic into action. The relationships garnered during the last three years of COVID will have lasting impacts on al of healthcare, including long-term care, who is now recognized and valued as an integral part of the healthcare continuum."

Partnership is core to the mission of the Network, and this response was an excellent example of living that mission. This response highlighted significant collaboration between agencies that plan together frequently, but rarely are called to respond to this type of event. The partnership with Leading Age and WHCA was critical in finding facilities in the area who were willing to take patients. In need of beds for 77 residents, partners came together to provide over 100 beds if needed. Without each one being willing to say 'yes' when they received the request, the evacuation and relocation of patients would not have gone nearly as well as it did. The relationships formed during the activation of the Network and long-term care agencies during the June 2021 heat dome event was of utmost importance in the ability to collaborate in a timely manner during this response.

"The Northwest Healthcare Response Network was an essential component to the successful outcome of relocating the over 70 patients from the Montensano Health and Rehabilitation Center fire. The support that team brought to the incident far exceeded our expectations." - *Chief Leonard Johnson, McLane Black Lake Fire Department*