


**Lesson 4**

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**Community Health Emergency Operations and Response**



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**Learning Objectives**

- Discuss function of public health system and infrastructure in community preparedness, response, and recovery
- Summarize key health components and functions of a Health Emergency Operations Center (HEOC)
- Describe purpose of public health surveillance in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters

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**Learning Objectives**

- Discuss issues and challenges in communicating health risks to all affected ages and populations
- Discuss public health interventions for prevention and management of injuries, illnesses, and disabilities in disaster
- Describe the role of mass fatality management in disaster event or public health emergency

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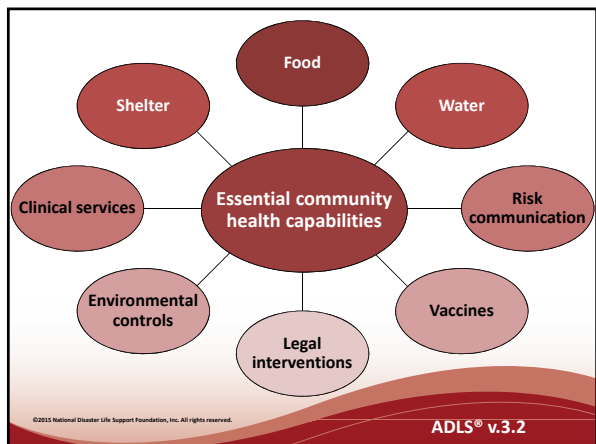
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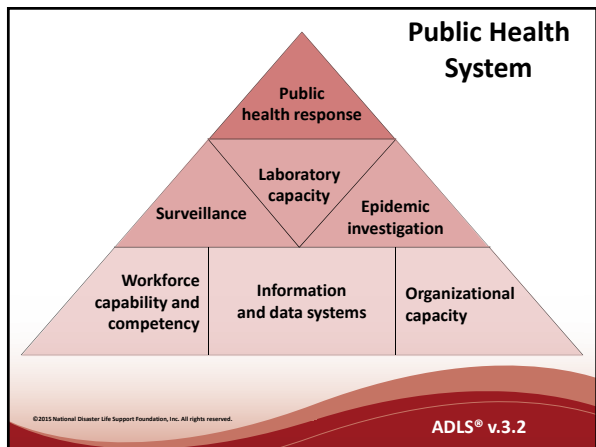
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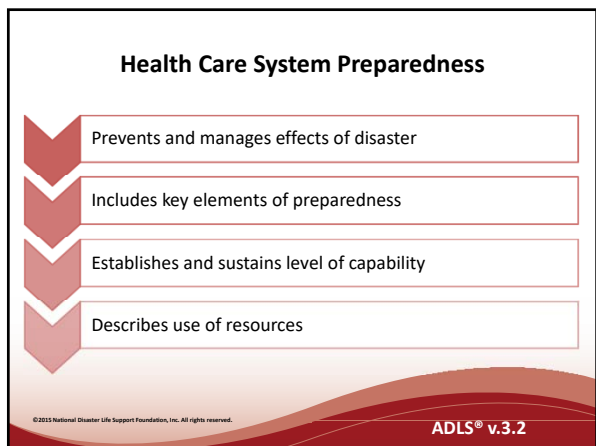
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**Health Emergency Operations Center (HEOC)**

Local public health agencies	Local health care coalitions
American Red Cross	Medical Reserve Corps
State partners	Federal partners
Legal and ethics experts	



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**Main functions of HEOC**

- Situational awareness and surveillance
- Population-based triage decisions
- Risk communication
- Health resource allocation and coordination
- Volunteer mobilization
- Health recovery system monitoring

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**Effectiveness of HEOC**

- May increase timeliness and accuracy of mobilized health information system
- May decrease mortality and morbidity in affected jurisdictions
- May improve surge capacity distribution for population requiring care

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### Activating Local Medical Assets

**Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)**

- Grassroots initiative to enhance citizen preparedness
- Composed of medical and public health volunteers

**Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)**

- Administered by FEMA
- Prepares people to help in disaster

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### Role of Red Cross



- Sheltering of displaced people
- Organizing feeding
- Providing emergency first aid
- Informing families
- Coordinating relief supply distribution

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### State and Interstate Aid

- Disasters exceeding regional capacity may require state and federal response assistance
- Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC): state-to-state mechanism to provide medical and public health surge capacity

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### Federal Assistance

#### National Disaster Medical System (NDMS)

Federal response system supplementing emergency resources in disaster (Disaster Medical Assistance Teams, National Pharmacy Response Teams, National Veterinary Response Teams)

#### Public Health Services Commission Corps (PHSCC)

Improves federal response operations and deployment process

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### Key Public Health Roles in a Disaster

- Surveillance
- Risk Communication
- Environmental Health
- Medical Treatment and Prophylaxis
- Mental Health Services
- Identification and Tracking

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### Public Health Surveillance Response

- Reduces injury, illness, and death from event
- Identifies exposure-related illnesses and injuries
- Monitors long-term medical and mental health
- Determines when safe to return to affected area
- Documents exposure to illness

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**Effective Emergency Risk Communication**

- Provides accurate information quickly
- Reaches broad audience to announce threats
- Publicizes evacuation and travel routes
- Reassures public of competency in response
- Recognizes variety of information sources

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**Redundant Communication System**

- Toll-free information telephone lines
- Electronic information services
- Media (radio, television, newspaper, internet)
- Briefings and press conferences
- Public meetings

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**Risk Communication Barriers**

- Lack of access to communication vehicles
- Cognitive or physical impairments
- Language or linguistic barriers
- Pre-existing psychological issues
- Pre-existing political and/or legal conditions
- Cultural or religious beliefs and customs

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### Environmental Health Services

- Monitoring and surveillance
- Basic sanitation
- Food water and drug inspection
- Adequate shelter
- Vector control
- Remediation of contamination

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### Laboratory testing and analysis

- BSL-1** Agents not known to consistently cause disease  
Pose minimal potential hazard
- BSL-2** Agents posing danger if inhaled, swallowed, exposed  
Diseases treated and/or prevented with antibiotics
- BSL-3** Agents potentially lethal through air transmission  
Testing in airtight enclosures
- BSL-4** Agents posing high risk of life-threatening disease  
Personnel wear full-body, air-supplied suits

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### Medical Prophylaxis and Treatment

- Provides disease-specific information to health care community
- Issues guidance for clinical management of ill and exposed individuals
- Distributes medications to population, including locations and logistics

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### Strategic National Stockpile (SNS)

- Maintained and distributed by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Manages procurement, storage, and delivery of medical countermeasures and equipment
- Supports local and state public health agencies in receipt and distribution of resources

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### Mental Health Services

- Helps community psychosocial functioning
- Reduces occurrence of adverse mental health outcomes
- Ensures availability of mental health services
- Assists with risk communication efforts
- Develops public information strategies

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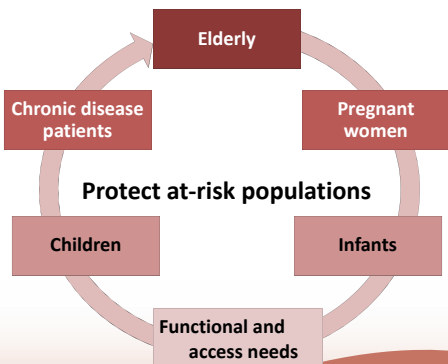
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### Protection of Pediatric Populations

- Children cannot self-identify
- Children cannot effectively communicate symptoms
- Children may be afraid of strangers wearing PPE
- Children may be unable to participate in decontamination
- Children may be afterthought in disaster planning

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### Identification and Tracking

- No standard casualty evacuation template
- Need to consider tracking throughout event
- Standardized triage tags can be used to initiate tracking
- Identification information should improve as the patient moves through the continuum of care
  - Electronic health information systems can facilitate

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### Mass Fatality Federal Assistance Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Teams

- Part of NDMS
- Support local MEC
- Require presidential disaster declaration
- National Foundation of Mortuary Care
- Office of Armed Forces Medical Examiner

DMORTS
Forensic scientists
Funeral directors
Embalmers
Medicolegal investigators
Medical records technicians

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**Mass Fatality Events  
Considerations**

- Communication from authorities to dispel fear
- Cultural and religious preferences honored
- Early notification to survivors
- Care and support for survivors
- Final arrangements for remains

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**Family Assistance Centers (FACs)**

- Supports families of fatalities and those injured
- Location away from scene
- Secure area, protected from media, and limited to family members of deceased
- Regular briefings by medical examiner/coroner
- Onsite family resources (eg, American Red Cross)

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**What is the main function of a Health  
Emergency Operations Center?**

- a) Health care delivery
- b) Health resource coordination
- c) Mass casualty triage
- d) Mental health screening

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**Which of the following is characteristic of effective risk communication in disaster?**

- a) Indirect answers
- b) Reassuring exaggeration
- c) Relevant information
- d) Single source of broadcast

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**Who would assist a family member searching for their missing relative?**

- a) Disaster Medical Assistance Team
- b) Family Assistance Center
- c) Search and Rescue
- d) Strategic National Stockpile

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**Summary**

- Effective public health systems prevent and manage population effects of disasters
- Health EOC coordinates health resource allocation and distribution across affected communities
- Public health surveillance identifies emerging health issues in communities
- Effective risk communication provides accurate information quickly
- Public health services includes environmental, mental health, and medical prophylaxis interventions
- Effective mass fatality management includes search and recovery, morgue operation, family assistance, and federal assistance

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