Evaluation of Emergency Management System Developed for Georgia Division of Public Health

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ICF Consulting Group’s Emergency Management Practice
Case Study: Georgia DPH

- Tropical Storm Alberto (1994) overwhelmed Georgia public health professionals
- Health of tens of thousands of Georgians were affected by the storm and subsequent flooding
- Hired consulting team to develop incident management system
State Public Health Disaster Issues

Maintain protective public health operations under abnormal and stressful circumstances

- Damaged infrastructure, communications
- Water and wastewater contamination
- Injuries, disease
- Distribution problems with pharmaceuticals
- Evacuation/sheltering

ICF Consulting Group’s Emergency Management Practice
Planning Process

- Research Phase: Analyzed existing conditions
- Procedures Development: Emergency SOPs at 3 levels – state, district, & county
- Implementation: Exercises, statewide trainings
- Post-implementation evaluation of new system
Results: Research Phase

- Many different procedures and methods existed around the state

- Public health staff were not active participants in emergency planning, preparedness, and response in the state

- Exceptions in EMS, hurricane-prone coastal areas
Methods: Procedures Development

- Incorporated research phase findings
- Determined likely disaster scenarios

- Established:
  - Management structure
  - Functional positions
  - EOC procedures
  - Coordination mechanisms
Incident Management System

[Diagram showing the structure of incident management, including roles such as Public Health Officer, DPH Emergency Coordinator, Health Command Center Duty Officer, EMS FDO, Medical Services FDO, Environmental Health FDO, Epidemiology Representative, Administrative Support FDO, Affected District Environmental Health FDO, and Affected Counties.]

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Methods: Implementation

- **Summer 1996**: Initial testing during Summer Olympics hosted in Atlanta, GA

- **Spring 1997**: Full roll out of system; trained 600 public health employees and two one-day tabletop exercises

- **Spring 1998**: Recently analyzed real-time activations of system during floods and tornadoes
Conclusion: Lessons Learned

- Make system easy to use
  - Use terms familiar to public health staff
  - Identify and build on existing mechanisms

- Emphasize coordination and maintenance
  - Coordinate with external emergency response partners
  - Test, exercise, and utilize real emergencies to introduce and maintain the system