

Chapter 3: State of Brunei Darussalam

Public Health Emergency Operation Plan (PHEOP)

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1. Introduction

Public health emergencies, including those related to outbreaks of infectious diseases, continue to spark interest all around the world due to their unpredictable nature and effect on human lives. Preparedness has thus been recognized as a crucial step to reduce the impact of these public health emergencies. Furthermore, preparedness will allow for better coordination of operations during a response to such events.

The Public Health Emergency Operation Plan has been developed as part of this recognition of the need for preparedness. It is intended primarily to guide public health personnel within the Department of Health Services in the Ministry of Health in planning, mitigating and responding to a public health emergency, as a result of a natural or technological disaster or outbreaks of infectious diseases in Brunei Darussalam. This will be achieved according to the current best practices and by taking into consideration the constraints within the Department of Health Services, especially human resource capacity and capability which has been recognized as a challenge when dealing with outbreaks in Brunei Darussalam.

The Plan is intended to be used by all public health staff in carrying out duties and responsibilities during a Public Health Emergency Response Operation. It is also intended to guide staff on duty in the Public Health Command Centre (PHCC) or deployed as part of the Public Health Emergency (PHE) Response Teams so as to ensure that all actions are streamlined and standardized.

2. The Good Practice

In the event of an outbreak of an emerging infectious disease, the Department of Health Services has emergency functions to perform, in addition to normal duties. Responsibilities of the Department of Health Services can be divided according to preparedness before the incident and response during the incident.

2.1 Responsibilities on Preparedness before the Incident

- (1) Establish appropriate level of operational readiness.
- (2) Maintain a 24-hour response team capability in the Department.



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- (3) Develop and maintain internal notification/recall rosters and communication systems.
- (4) Maintain capability for emergency procurement of public health supplies and equipment and not otherwise available.
- (5) Initiate any and all other actions deemed necessary for effective implementation of disaster management.
- (6) Maintain, update and distribute all changes to this plan, with periodic review.
- (7) Develop and maintain a list of public health Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- (8) Appoint a Department of Health Services "Public Health Emergency Operational Coordinator" to prepare and maintain current assigned operational annexes of this plan and to assure the development of operating procedures and manuals appropriate to the public health functions in coordination with the functions of the Ministry of Health.
- (9) Appoint a "Public Health Emergency Logistics Coordinator" to prepare and maintain logistics requirements of public health emergencies.
- (10) Appoint a "Public Health Emergency Information Officer" to collect relevant information pertaining to the incident and to assist the Commander of the PHCC in preparing regular reports to the Ministry of Health Command Centre as well as preparing information for media releases.
- (11) Assign appropriate personnel to succeed the "decision-making authority".
- (12) Identify a number of staff to be trained as counselors/para-counselors who will assist in the management of stress/possible psychological effects of PHE operations.
- (13) Form a PHE Response Training Team to oversee the training needs and requirements for the implementation of the PHE Operation Plan.
- (14) Inform and brief all staff involved of the Public Health Emergency Operation Plan and their assigned tasks during a PHE Response Operation.
- (15) Provide trainings (workshops) and carry out drills and exercises to familiarize staff to their assigned tasks.

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- (16) Provide training as appropriate to personnel assigned to execute respective emergency functions in this plan.
- (17) Provide for periodic exercises to test and evaluate Department of Health Services Emergency Operations Plans to maintain a high standard of preparedness.
- (18) Participate in tests and exercises to evaluate this plan.
- (19) Review and make appropriate amendments to relevant public health policies, legislations and regulations.
- (20) Aligning Public Health Emergency response activities with the revised International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005 and other related documentations.

2.2 Responsibilities on Response during the Incident

- (1) Advise the Minister of Health of the severity and magnitude of the public health aspects of the emergency/disaster situations.
- (2) Deploy allocated and available resources to meet public health emergency or disaster requirements.
- (3) Maintain surveillance of the outbreak event and direct appropriate warning and preparedness actions.
- (4) Coordination and execution of the public health functions of disaster management with the emergency activities of other government and relevant agencies.
- (5) Provide public health related advisories, technical and planning assistance to government agencies upon request.
- (6) Communicate and liaise with regional and international agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO), Association of SouthEast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Brunei Darussalam's immediate neighbors.

2.3 The Public Health Emergency (PHE) Response Team

In response to a public health emergency/disaster, a Public Health Command Centre (PHCC) situated at the Department of Health Services will be activated. The PHCC will in turn activate and deploy a Public Health Emergency (PHE) Response Team to the affected site for relevant operational duties.

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A PHE Response Team will be deployed if the Disease Control Division/Environmental Health Division or District Health Offices requires support in responding to a public health emergency/disaster; and in the event of a large scale public health emergency/disaster or a public health emergency/disaster posing a threat to national security. In this second scenario, the Ministry of Health will be alerted by the National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC). The Ministry of Health Command Centre will then alert the Health Emergency Committee (HEC) of the Department of Health Services for the Public Health Command Centre (PHCC) to be activated. The PHE Response Team being deployed will then be a part of a larger national response operation. The Team Leader of the PHE Response Team will report to the Site Incident Commander of the whole operation, who will be NDMC appointed, at the site of the operation.

If the PHE Response Team is being deployed to an incident in one of the districts (Belait, Tutong, Temburong), the PHE Response Team will report to the operation room at the District Health Office under the command of Medical Officer of Health for the District. This District Operation Room (DOR) will in turn communicate with the PHCC.

A PHE Response Team being deployed for any disaster response operation will:

- Perform routine public health functions and measures during disaster response operations. The acute management of patients and casualties will be handled by the emergency and medical services.
- Be managed by a command/operation system derived from the Incident Command System (ICS). ICS is a method for dealing with disasters when the situation requires coordination of all public health activities through a command post.
- Have four functions in disaster response operations: team leader, logistics, safety and field operations.
- Thus have at least 5 members: one Team Leader, one Logistics, one Safety Officer, and at least two Field Operators. It should be noted that all members of the Response Team may be performing a Field Operator's task.

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Specific job tasks during a PHE Response Operation have been outlined in the Public Health Emergency Operation Plan. In addition, staff of the Environmental Health Services and District Health Offices has been assigned to these specific tasks. This is to allow for familiarity to the tasks and for the purpose of training. The task allocation lists are kept at the PHCC and District Operations Room. The list is updated every 6 months and each staff has been advised to check the list periodically.

Public health responsibilities during a Public Health Emergency due to an outbreak of an emerging infectious diseases include dealing with deaths, injury prevention and control, dealing with environmental issues, isolation and quarantine, personal safety issues for emergency responders, contact tracing, disease surveillance and dealing with disruption and loss and/or damage of health care system.

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and the operation checklists are also kept at the PHCC and District Operation Rooms. Staffs are also supposed to be familiar with these. The Public Health Emergency Operation Plan also outlines the action procedure in a PHE Response Operations, the appropriate chain of communications and also has a list of important contact persons.

3. Benefits and Outcomes

The Public Health Emergency Operation Plan was part of the efforts towards strengthening the capacity and capability of the Department of Health Services in executing its scope of work in particular relating to public health emergencies including outbreaks of emerging infectious diseases.

4. Insights and Lessons

In developing this Public Health Emergency Operation Plan, experiences gained through managing various small scale outbreaks and public health threats as well as in the routine day to day activities which were taken into consideration. In addition, current best practices and guidelines available regionally and internationally had also been reviewed, adapted and adopted as and where appropriate.

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Following the development of the Plan, with the aim of increasing understanding, fostering confidence as well as assessing its appropriateness, the Department of Health Services had conducted training sessions together with other relevant government agencies, including disaster management, fire and rescues services and defence. These sessions had in turn provided the opportunity to identify gaps and allowed us to improve the Plan further.

5. Recommendations for Adaptation

This Department of Health Services will need to continue to review this Plan from time to time, test it periodically and update it accordingly in line with current developments in the areas of public health emergency management, particularly in relation to outbreaks of emerging infectious diseases. In addition, it also needs to take into consideration the constraints within the Department of Health Services and the roles of other government agencies, non-government agencies and the private sectors.



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