

New Web-Based LTC Facility Assessment Tool Available for Help in Emergencies

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The KY Cabinet for Health and Family Services', Department for Public Health's (KDPH), Preparedness Branch, is planning to launch a new, free Web-Based Facility Assessment program within WebEOC to help Long Term Care (LTC) Facilities coordinate response efforts during emergencies. WebEOC is an incident management software system that is used by many agencies within KY and this new assessment tool will enhance the ability of LTC facilities to share information for available beds and to notify local, regional and state level responders of facility and resident needs during emergency situations. The new LTC Facility Assessment is based on a similar program used by KDPH, hospitals, and emergency managers to share local, regional and state level information in emergencies.

Background. Two years ago, a partnership between KDPH and Universities of Kentucky and Louisville was established to bring the LTC community more into the preparedness mindset and to increase participation of LTC in regional Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP) Committees. This partnership was the impetus for an expanded collaboration of the LTC Associations, Office of Inspector General (OIG) and other health care providers who assisted in the creation of the *KY All Hazards LTC Planning and Resource Manual*. In 2011, communication gaps identified during the National Level Earthquake Exercise resulted in the creation of the LTC Facility Disaster Assessment Form. Tina Massengill, KDPH/HPP Region 1 Preparedness Coordinator, and Jim House, KDPH ESF 8 Planning Coordinator, led the development of this form, which provides LTC Facilities the ability to conduct a quick assessment of immediate needs within a LTC Facility including communications, security, structural/HVAC, electrical, water/sewer, food service, and bed census/health care.

The form was reviewed and modified by LTC providers and then tested in a Fall 2011 full-scale exercise in Healthcare Planning Coalition Regions (HPC) 1 and 2 in Western KY. The purpose of this exercise was to test the ability of participating agencies to conduct damage assessments using the newly developed Facility Damage Assessment Forms and to disseminate this information to the Kentucky Department of Public Health via redundant communication systems immediately following a catastrophic earthquake within the New Madrid Seismic Zone (NMSZ). Participants had the choice of sending it to KDPH via fax, E-mail, or by calling it in using satellite radio systems. The exercise demonstrated that it was very challenging to assess the facility, complete the form, and respond in a timely manner. As a result, KDPH decided to automate the form for inclusion into WebEOC, a web-based incident management system that provides secure, real-time information sharing during emergencies.

Pilot Training and Drill. To test the new WebEOC for LTC systems, a pilot group was assembled of 30 LTC Facilities, 15 from the eastern half of KY and 15 from the western half of KY, with representation from each of the HPP regions. Drew Chandler, KDPH Information/Communications Manager, conducted eight virtual trainings on WebEOC for LTC facilities. Pilot facilities were asked to participate in at least one of the sessions which were offered during spring 2012. The trainings included an introduction to the need for WebEOC for LTC Facilities as a vital communication and information sharing tool for emergencies, the history of how the LTC Facility Disaster Assessment Form was developed, specific instructions for accessing WebEOC, and a walk through for navigating the assessment form and other features of the site. The Drill for the 30 facilities was set for Monday, July 2, between 10:00 AM and 1:00

PM Eastern Time. Technical support was available by phone and email to provide assistance during those times. Representatives from the 30 pilot LTC facilities were asked to log into the system and to update their LTC Facility Assessment Form.

Results: Twelve LTC facilities participated, representing nine HPP regions. Additional facilities would have participated, however real world issues took priority during the reporting window. The pilot group was very enthusiastic and their comments indicated that they saw WebEOC for LTC as a great resource for identifying and responding to the needs of other facilities in the areas, for efficiently disseminating information to others during a disaster, for quickly identifying the location of critical supplies and/or bed availability, and for helping to alleviate hospital surge in the event of a mass-causality event. Over the course of the pilot project, a few items were identified as needing improvement, and KDPH has issued a change order for elements of the board before the statewide rollout to all LTC facilities this summer.

Next Steps: Once the changes are completed and tested, KDPH will network with the universities and the KY LTC Associations to offer face-to-face and virtual trainings across the HPP Regions. All LTC facilities will be invited to participate in the trainings and encouraged to actively utilize the WebEOC for LTC. Participants will receive log-in information for their facility computers and will be able to access the program from the facility or remote locations. This new resource will enable fast, accurate communication during emergencies and will enhance the ability of LTC facilities to request help or to offer help to others in need.