

Northeast Florida Healthcare Coalition

Communications Plan



Northeast Florida
Healthcare
C O A L I T I O N
For Disaster Preparedness

*Achieve a health and medical system that
is efficient and resilient in an emergency.*

September 2015

I. Purpose

The Northeast Florida Healthcare Coalition (NEFLHCC) Communications Plan outlines the processes and procedures for providing alerts and notifications across the six county region of Baker, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau and St. Johns counties. This plan also details the information sharing role of the Coalition.

II. Scope

This plan applies to the member agencies of the Northeast Florida Healthcare Coalition, as notified during a public health event or other emergency, threat, or impact to the health and medical system in the NEFLHCC region.

III. Authority

Legal authority for various aspects of this plan is found in the following:

1. Chapter 252 Florida Statutes: Emergency Management Act: Allows the Governor to declare a state of emergency. Gives the Governor and the Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management control of emergency management and authorizes cooperation with Federal Government and other states for mutual aid. Allows the Governor and Director to delegate authority to carry out critical emergency functions involving the peace, health, safety and property of the people of Florida. Authorizes the establishment of local (county) emergency management agencies charged with the responsibility to prepare for, respond to, recovery from and mitigate against threats, emergencies, or disasters from any hazard.
2. Chapter 381 Florida Statutes, Section 381.0011 deals with Communicable Diseases and Quarantine and Section 381.00315 deals with Public Health Emergencies and Advisories: Applicable to the Department of Health authorizes the department to administer and enforces laws and rules relating to the control of communicable disease. Authorizes the department to declare, enforce, modify and abolish quarantine of persons, animals and premises. Authorizes the department to specify the conditions and procedures for imposing and releasing quarantine. Authorizes the State Health Officer to declare public health emergencies and issue public health advisories.

IV. Situation & Assumptions

A. Situation

The Northeast Florida Healthcare Coalition is a coordination entity, with no response roles or authorities. Additionally, NEFLHCC has no authority to create warnings or advisories to the public. The role of the NEFLHCC is to:

1. Conduct multijurisdictional, multidisciplinary exchange of public health and medical related information and situational awareness between NEFLHCC member organizations.
2. Re-broadcast alerts and notifications and pertinent advisory information with NEFLHCC member organizations.

Types of information that may be sent out by the NEFLHCC includes, but is not limited to:

- Healthcare Situation Reports,
- Bed Counts,
- Weather information, including tropical advisories and warnings,
- Health Alert Network (HAN) reports,
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports,
- Florida Department of Health (FDOH) issued statements, and
- Resource coordination information.

B. Assumptions

- The Coalition will work to provide updated information to member organizations as needed throughout an incident in order to provide situation awareness.
- The NEFLHCC will coordinate with the Regional Emergency Response Advisor on all regional communication efforts.
- The primary communication system of the NEFLHCC is the Everbridge notification system also known as States Emergency Responders & Volunteers of Florida (SERVFL).
- The secondary communication system of the NEFLHCC is email distribution.
- The NEFLHCC will not assume the authorities or responsibilities of county Emergency Support Function 8 – Health and Medical, as defined by existing health and medical plans developed and implemented by Coalition member organizations.
- Protocols to provide information to and from the NEFLHCC should be timely, relevant, and actionable information that can be used to:
 - Assist with creation of an incident common operating picture related to healthcare organizations
 - Inform other relevant response partners about healthcare organization resource needs to assist in decisions regarding resource allocation
 - Inform healthcare organizations with relevant incident information and status of healthcare delivery operations

V. Roles and Responsibilities

The NEFLHCC is represented by a ten (10) member Board of Directors. Of the ten members, there is one representative from each County (six members in total) and a representative from each of the following disciplines: Emergency Management, Public Health, Hospitals and Emergency Medical Services. Each agency has individual communication plans with assigned roles and responsibilities during blue skies (normal operations) and gray skies (response operations).

Public Health

It is the role of the local health department to effectively communicate with the residents, community partners, media and local officials of their county, routinely as well as in times of disaster. County-level alerts, messages and press releases are approved, in advance of release, by the Florida Department of Health. In public health events, they are the lead agency in the creation of alerts, advisories and warnings. Each County-level Health Department maintains a Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Plan that provides a comprehensive methodology for internal (agency-specific) and external (agency stakeholders, other entities and the public) communications.

Communication methods used:

ESF 8 Dashboard – A site that contains links to all ESF 8 systems, contacts, tools and web links. Most of the systems below can be accessed through this site. <http://esf8-dashboard.com/>

EM Constellation – Resource request and information program utilized by Department of Emergency Management.

Everbridge/SERVFL – The Florida health alert system.

EMResource – Status reporting program utilized by the Agency for Health Care Administration. Licensed health facilities are to report information pre and post disaster.

WebEOC – Emergency management communication system

Inventory Management Resource System (IRMS) – inventory system used by DOH to monitor inventory of equipment and supplies. Also used for Strategic National Stockpile operations.

Region 3 RDSTF Share Point Site – a share point site for information, events, plans and documents utilized by the preparedness staff

Standard Communication systems: Phone, text, email, fax

Emergency Management

Each County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) in Florida has developed and maintains a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, based on criteria established by Chapter 27P-2, Florida Administrative Code, which addresses communication and information sharing. With an activated Emergency Operations Center, ESF-8 is responsible to collect, validate and disseminate appropriate information to partners, as well as disaster related public information released in coordination with Emergency Management (and designated Public Information Officer or ESF 14).

Communications methods used:

Code Red/Reverse 911: an emergency notification system that will call/text residents in the event of a potential or pending emergency.

EM Net: a 24-hour state communication satellite system linking SEOC with all Florida counties

ARES (Amateur Emergency Radio Service)

Radios : UHF/VHF and 800 MHz

Standard Communication systems: Phone, text, email, fax

Hospitals

Each hospital has developed and maintains a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan based on criteria established by Chapter 59A-3, Florida Administrative Code. Coordinate and communicate with Public Health and Emergency Management in the creation and release of alerts and notifications. Hospitals can issue alerts, warnings and advisories affecting their own facilities and/or services. This coordination is facilitated by ESF-8.

Communications methods used:

EM Systems

EM Resource

ARES (Amateur Emergency Radio Service)

Standard Communication systems: Phone, text, email, fax

Emergency Medical Services

Each County and Emergency Medical Services and private ambulance agency has developed and maintains accepted procedures/protocols for communication and information sharing. Currently, in use is the Florida Emergency Medical Services Communications Plan, completed in 2013 by the Florida Department of Management Services. It was developed as an operational field manual to be carried as standard equipment on all transport permitted vehicles in the State. EMS also coordinates and communicates with Public Health and Emergency Management in the creation and release of alerts and notifications.

Communications methods used:

Radios: UHF/VHF and 800 MHz

Emergency Support Function 8

The purpose of Emergency Support Function 8 (ESF 8) is to coordinate the public health and medical resources, capabilities and capacities in an all-hazards emergency or disaster event. To accomplish this goal, ESF 8 oversees the emergency management functions of preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation with all agencies and organizations that carry out public health or medical services.

ESF 8 provides the means for a public health and medical response, triage, treatment and transportation of survivors/vulnerable populations of a disaster or catastrophic incident; assistance in the evacuation of survivors/vulnerable populations out of the disaster area before, during and after the event; immediate support to public health and medical systems; provision of emergency behavioral health crisis counseling; special needs sheltering and care; develop, disseminate, and coordinate accurate and timely public health and medical information; and the re-establishment of all public health and medical systems.

Therefore, the priority communications and coordination during a response between Emergency Management, Public Health, Hospitals and EMS will take place through ESF 8, at the County and State level.

VI. Concept of Operations

A. Preparedness

As part of its information sharing role, the Northeast Florida Healthcare Coalition communicates with its members on a regular basis through email distribution of relevant training, meetings and events. Surveys, assessments and planning issues are shared via email. Relevant information on public health events and emergent health information is disseminated as needed, through both email and the Everbridge system. Communications drills are conducted once per quarter, using the Everbridge system, of which the Northeast Florida Healthcare Coalition is a group manager. Communication and information sharing is also tested through periodic tabletop, functional or full-scale exercises with healthcare system partners.

B. Response

During an event, the Coalition would work with the RERA to communicate the relevant disaster information in an effective and efficient manner. As stated, the Coalition would only re-broadcast information to its membership and would *not* communicate with the public. The Coalition will assist the RERA in communication efforts, including the ability to combine County situation reports into a regional situational report. This report would then be verified by the RERA and distributed to Coalition members.

Members of the Coalition can request information be disseminated by the Coalition during an event. The members must follow the message clearance process, as detailed below.

Message Clearance Process

- *Request for message to Coalition Chair received from coalition member with instructions on who needs to receive the information.*
- *Coalition Chair/designee assures all information per communications request form (see Appendix) is included.*
- *Coalition Chair sends to Coalition Executive Officers and the RERA for verification.*
- *Coalition Chair obtains more information from requestor, if needed and distributes to Executive officers and RERA.*
- *After approval from a total of 2 members of the Executive Board, the Coalition Chair will assign the administrator or designee to send the message.*

C. Recovery

The Northeast Florida Healthcare Coalition will return to pre-event communication procedures and resume its role of information sharing.

D. Mitigation

The NEFLHCC will continue to coordinate ongoing communications with its member organizations to maintain emergency preparedness readiness, develop and maintain community relationships and produce preparedness material.

VII. Plan Development and Maintenance

This Communications Plan will be developed and maintained by the Northeast Florida Healthcare Coalition. The plan will be approved by the NEFLHCC Executive Board. It will be reviewed and updated annually and as necessary. The effectiveness of the Communications Plan will be evaluated after an incident. The evaluation will include the identification of both successful operational procedures and needed improvements. Corrective actions will be implemented.

APPENIDX: Information Reporting Guidelines

Examples of types of information to consider when defining reportable elements can include:

- Facility operating status
- Facility structural integrity
- The status of evacuations/shelter in-place operations
- Critical medical services (e.g., trauma, critical care)
- Critical service status (e.g., electric, water, sanitation, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning)
- Critical healthcare delivery status (e.g., surge status, bed status, deaths, medical and pharmaceutical supplies, and medical equipment)
- Staffing status
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) status involving patient transport, tracking, and availability
- Other information as applicable or determined through coordination

THE FOLLOWING RESTRICTIONS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN REPORTING OR RELEASING ANY INFORMATION:

- Data Protection
- Legal, statutory and privacy restrictions, including the Health Insurance Portability Act (HIPPA)
- Information system security
- Types of information that can be shared
- Participants authorized to receive information
- Data use and re-release parameters

Communications Request Form

Northeast Florida Healthcare Coalition
Communication Request

Requestor (name/title): _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Contact Info:

Organization: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Message Status:

Requestor Agency Approval (name/title): _____

Priority (check one): Low: ___ Medium: ___ High: ___

Communication Status: (check one)

Information only ___ Action Required ___ Up-date ___

Message:

Subject: _____

What?

Where?

When?

Current situation:

Action to be taken:

Who needs to take action?

Attachments: Yes ___ No ___

For further information, go to: _____

Approval

NEFLHCC Approval: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____ By Who? _____

Assigned for Distribution to: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Follow up questions should be directed to?
