

Communications Checklist*

Communications typically is recognized as the most common area of failure in emergency planning and response. By its nature, an emergency typically requires the participation of many different agencies and entities, each of which may have a different goal which drives its particular response. Through careful planning before an emergency, communications challenges can be minimized. The following list are critical questions organizations should be thinking about.

- ✓ Has the organization established multiple lines of communication with other response agencies?
- ✓ Has the organization worked with other response agencies to: clarify the relative roles of the responding agencies; specify the relative priorities of the response effort; and exercise use of different communications methods, given that failures of primary communications realistically could occur?
- ✓ Has the organization established alternative means of communicating with staff, including non-technical means of communication?
- ✓ Has the organization established a website page dedicated to providing information regarding emergency response efforts to its community?
- ✓ Has the organization established a location on its intranet that is available to employees and will provide information to employees regarding emergency response efforts?
- ✓ Has the organization worked with other response agencies to identify a Public Information Officer (PIO)? If so, has the PIO established a strong working relationship with the media, and have health care providers and administrators been trained to refer all media questions to the PIO?
- ✓ Has the organization established videoconferencing or similar capabilities to permit patients and family to remain in contact without the need for in-person visits?
- ✓ Has the organization prepared guidance regarding release of patient information?
- ✓ Has the organization worked with industry groups to develop websites and other resources for “best practices” in pandemic planning and response?
- ✓ Does the organization’s communications plan reflect the challenges of accurately communicating complex information to highly stressed audiences? For instance, are messages pre-planned, using short, simple sentences and available in the languages present in the community?

*Adapted from the *Community Pan-Flu Preparedness: A Checklist of Key Legal Issues for Health Care Providers* (2015). © 2020 American Health Lawyers Association. All rights reserved.