

February 11, 2010

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Ever have a bad day, a *really* bad day?

Well, our Hospital Emergency Response Team (“HERT”) had one last Friday. Fortunately, this was only a simulation, organized by **Scott Wiley**, Director of Respiratory Care, who leads this new volunteer team composed of nursing, ancillary professional services, engineering, environmental services, security, plant operations, and administration.

Here’s how the morning played out. Please remember: ***This was only a test and, thankfully, not the real thing.***

- 9:00 AM: Our disaster planning consultant **Ralph Butcher** announces that we are under a tornado watch. Incident commander COO **Phil Dutcher** decides to activate our Incident Command Center, a windowless bunker-like conference room deep in the back of the downtown campus, equipped with satellite phones, walkie talkies, multiple computer stations, TV screens, flip charts, maps, and lists of key phone numbers.

We secured our buildings, checked our generators which can keep both hospital campuses fully powered and independently operating for more than a week, and ensured we were fully stocked with medical supplies and food for at least a week. (In real hurricanes, we are like *Noah’s Ark* with two full sets of everything and everybody.) So far, so good.

- 9:35 AM: We receive a report of a minivan full of children being “T-Boned” by a tractor trailer truck loaded with six one-ton canisters of liquid chlorine. One canister was leaking, so survivors would need to be decontaminated. Our incident command center, now manned by Logistics Chief **Brian Settle** (Chief of Human Resources), Operations Chief RN **Becky Eliassen** (Manager of Nursing Operations), Public Information Officer **Debbie Curry** (Director of Marketing), Facilities Chiefs **Gene Galsterer** and **Walt Tester**, and Public Safety Officer **Gerald Mahnke**, activate our *Code Green* mass casualty response.
- 9:43 AM: Now we activate our *Code Orange* HAZMAT team for hazardous material decontamination. The HAZMAT team dons protective “space suits,” hooking up fire hoses to a nearby hydrant and inflating a decontamination tent for “victims.” Observers include Naples Police Community Policing Sergeant **David Sugrue**, City of Naples Fire expert on hazardous materials **Jerry Pecar**, and Collier County Director of Homeland Security **Joe Frazier**, as EMS vehicles deliver “victims” who are some of our wonderful hospital volunteers. All the while our North Naples team of **Renee Thigpen** (Director of HR), **Maryann Cashin** (Associate CNO), **Lynn Olsen** (Director of Brookdale), **Pat Read** (Administrative Director) and RN **Gina Teegarden** (Med Surg Director at North Naples) which was activated at 9:02 AM, now prepare to receive contaminated patients.
- 9:46 AM: The bad news keeps on coming: An elderly claustrophobic visitor gets trapped between floors in an elevator; the elevator repairman gets crushed trying to rescue him; the water pressure at North Naples drops for unknown reasons; federal bureaucrats show up for an unscheduled facilities inspection; and our operations chief suffers chest pains, is rushed to the ER, and is replaced by Associate CNO **Laurie Zone-Smith**.

What a morning! But we made it through with flying colors, and the candid post-mortem critique will help make us even more ready next time—whether it’s for another pretend exercise or the real thing.

Respectfully,



Allen S. Weiss, M.D., President and CEO

P.S. Feel free to share *Straight Talk* and ask anyone to email me at allen.weiss@nchmd.org to be added.