



IDENTIFYING AND NOTIFYING MISSION-CRITICAL STAFF

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IDENTIFYING AND NOTIFYING MISSION-CRITICAL STAFF



Description: This tool provides resources to help your local health department (LHD):

1. Identify essential staff members –those without whom your agency could not deliver mission-critical services (termed in this toolkit mission-critical staff).
2. Communicate to these members their continuity roles.
3. Provide these members support to enable them to perform their continuity roles in the event of an emergency.

If done properly, completion of this tool should result in:

- An internal campaign to communicate with and educate mission-critical staff of their continuity roles and requirements.
- Mission-critical staff who are informed about and prepared for the continuity roles they need to perform in the event of an emergency.

What You Need Before Starting This Work:

- A list of your agency's mission-critical services (You created this in Prioritizing Services).
- A list of all agency personnel. (You should be able to get this list from Human Resources.)
- A framework for matching personnel to the priority 1 through priority 4 services.

Steps to Completion:

1. The issues involved with this planning (categorizing certain staff as critical, setting performance expectations, providing training) are probably impacted by your agency's human resources policies. Work with your human resources department to identify these issues and work together to find the best solutions. (See Mission-Critical Staff Policy Issues)
2. Identify and make note of the staff members who directly and indirectly provide and support your priority 1 and priority 2 services. These staff members can be identified as mission-critical staff. Use the mission-critical employee list template if it's helpful.
3. Outline the requirements of these mission-critical staff members. The outline should emphasize how management's expectations of these key staff members' differ from the expectations of those staff members who support lower priority functions. See the examples listed in the Public Health - Seattle & King County's mission-critical staff notification letter.
4. Share your list of mission-critical staff members and your performance requirements with your Human Resources department. Discuss the best way to notify and communicate with mission-critical staff what is expected of their role. Refer to PHSKC's notification process as an example.
5. Let all union representatives and managers throughout your organization know that you will be discussing continuity of operations issues with employees and that you will be covering how working conditions and performance assessment/discipline procedures will be impacted if and when the continuity of operations plan is activated.
6. Draft a letter to mission-critical staff (whom you identified above), outlining what you are expecting of them and how you will support them in meeting those expectations. For example, you may provide staff with resources or training to help them meet expectations.
7. Prior to, or immediately after, sending your letters, visit each mission-critical staff site and work with this group to talk about what it means to be a mission-critical staff member. Have staff tell you what they need from the agency in order to perform their required duties. Then, fulfill as many of these requests as possible.

8. Coordinate the distribution of “expectations” letters and staff briefing with an education and communications campaign for mission-critical staff. The goal should be to educate staff about the unique roles and responsibilities they have as emergency responders. Keep awareness of these issues alive through communication forums like employee newsletters.
9. Determine a system to permanently track positions that have been flagged mission-critical. This way, if there is a turnover in a mission-critical position, the next incumbent is also notified and familiarized with the requirements of their role.
10. Incorporate staff expectations for mission-critical roles into any future job postings for these positions.
11. Incorporate these continuity role duties in performance appraisals and discipline procedures (but make sure to keep them within the employee relations parameters established by your agency).

If You Have Just a Little Time to Spend: This step is a foundational element that forms the basis of critical continuity of operations capabilities. For this reason, it is recommended you take the time to complete each of the action steps listed below. If your staff doesn’t show up ready to work during an emergency, it will be impossible to maintain the continuity of your operations. **By notifying your mission-critical staff of their continuity roles and providing them support and resources they need to perform those roles, you are increasing the probability of having the human capital to sustain the continuity of your critical functions during emergencies.**

If You Have More Time to Spend:

Extra time can be used to further enhance your staff’s ability to perform their continuity roles by promoting personal preparedness planning among staff or expanding telework options like Virtual Private Network (VPN), which can be of use in the event staff can’t make it into the office.

Where This Leads You:

Now that you have identified and notified your mission-critical staff, you can:

- Develop a workforce deployment system. Structure this system to leave your mission-critical staff in place to sustain critical services while redeploying your lower-priority staff to support **emergency response operations** www.phworkforceactivation.com
- Improve your ability to decide whether to redeploy staff to emergency response operations or leave them to support critical services. (See Resource Management for more.)
- Enhance your ability to communicate with mission-critical staff during emergencies. Try enrolling them in a department-managed text messaging service or obtaining Government Emergency Telecommunications (GETS) cards.

Pitfalls to Avoid:

- Don’t be too broad when targeting your mission-critical staff communications and education campaign. **While every person in your organization is essential to your services and will have a role to fill in an emergency, some roles are more critical than others.** Before you default to an organization-wide emergency responder awareness campaign, figure out which staff roles management has unique expectations of. For example, you may have different expectations of how an administrative support person in your HIV program will perform in an emergency than you do of your Medical Director. Target your emergency responder awareness campaign at those staff members of whom you have unique expectations first (roles like your Medical Director) before expanding the campaign to all staff (that is, if resources allow).

Some organizations are hesitant to initiate conversations about priority levels with staff because of discomfort that may be caused with saying one person's role is more critical to continuity of operations than another's, but this is the reality and those that hold the critical roles need to be those that are the most prepared.

- Don't over-count your mission-critical staff. Make sure your list of staff for your priority 1 and 2 services represents an appropriate proportion of your total workforce. So, if you have five mission-critical services and 15 non-critical services and you end up identifying 75% of your workforce as mission-critical, you've got too many people as mission-critical staff and should take another look at your list.

How You Know You Got it Right:

- Unions, management and staff work together to ensure this crucial step towards sustaining critical services during emergencies is accomplished correctly.
- Staff voice their appreciation of the clarity regarding your expectations of them.
- During a disaster, a higher rate of mission-critical staff remain at or report to work.

Considerations for Rural Health Departments:

- You will need to integrate your continuity staffing with your **public health surge plans** www.workforceactivation.com since both your day to day functions and emergency functions are staffed from the same pool.
- **The methods described in this tool work best for departments where positions are dedicated to a single function.** Since staff in rural health departments tend to fill multiple roles, you may be dealing with a fraction of someone's time being dedicated to a mission-critical function with the rest dedicated to lower priority functions. If this is the case, this tool may not represent an optimum approach for your agency.
- Consider using the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers as an additional resource to sustain critical services.

TOOLS, SAMPLES AND RESOURCES:

- Mission-Critical Staff Policy Issues
- Mission Critical Employees List - Template
- Mission Critical Employees List - Sample
- Sample Notification Process
- Sample Notification Letter
- Sample Expectations of Mission-Critical Staff
- Sample Talking Points for Supervisors
- **FEMA Continuity Evaluation Tool, "Human Capital," pages 33-35**
www.fema.gov/pdf/government/coop/cet.pdf

Mission-Critical Staff Policy Issues

Policy Issues Surrounding Identification & Notification of Mission-Critical Staff: consider discussing with managers prior to beginning this project.

- Can/should we have different expectations of mission-critical staff than of staff overall?
- Can these expectations be added to job descriptions of existing staff?
- Can/should we evaluate staff (as part of regular performance appraisals, discipline processes, etc.) on their ability to perform their emergency roles?
- Can/should we identify roles as mission-critical when positions are advertised, and educate applicants on what this means?
- How do our union agreements bear on this process? What aspects need to be bargained?
- How can we support staff in meeting our emergency expectations? What forms of training and other support can we provide?
- Can we take on the risk of organizing staff carpools, to help people get to work during inclement weather and other emergencies?
- Can/should we have ability to change work schedules, require overtime, assign different job duties or job sites, direct or revoke telecommuting agreements, rescind approved leave, for mission-critical staff with minimal notice?
- How can this process (identifying, notifying, training mission-critical staff) be sustained?

Mission Critical EMPLOYEES LIST- SAMPLE

Updated [Date]

Work Status	Seq #	Last Name	First Name	Job Title	Div	BBLO	Project	Job Class	FT E	Mission-Critical Service/Function/ Program	Union	Supervisor	Date of Notification Letter
Short Term	4315	Askerov	Peter	Pharmacy Tech	8001	8011	H00013	8341	100	Fill & dispense new prescriptions	Local 17		9/1/2009
Career Service	0126	Bautista	Caresse	Program Manager	8001	8011	H00013	8341	100	communication & coordination with agencies for the homeless	Nonrep		9/1/2009
Career Service	2018	Bautista	Jose	Educator Consultant III	8001	8011	H00310	8338	100	Public Information Officer	Local 17		9/1/2009
Career Service	2910	Buenafe	Selena	Nurse Practitioner	8001	8011	H00047	8576	100	MSS/MCM Home Visits - Urgent	WSNA		9/1/2009
Career Service	0823	Cassidy	Mary	Senior Staff Physician	8001	8011	H00027	8359	100	Priority 1 medical clinic visits (incl OB, GYN)	Nonrep		9/1/2009
Career Service	2098	Collins	Pamela	Confidential Secretary	8001	8011	H00013	8387	100	MSS/MCM assessments	Local 17		9/1/2009
Career Service	0909	Diaz	Esther	Disease Control Officer	8001	8011	H00052	8353	100	Department line of succession	Nonrep	Ian Rowe	9/1/2009
Career Service	0258	Drake	Dawn	Administrative Staff Assistant	8001	8011	H00642	8038	100	Disease intervention	Nonrep		9/1/2009
Career Service	0180	Fredrickson	Sharon	Disease Intervention Specialist	8001	8011	H00027	8288	100	Phone Triage / Consultation	Nonrep		9/1/2009
Term Limited	0247	French	Tara	Regional Health Administrator	8001	8011	H00630	8245	100	Disease case investigation	Local 21	Dawn Drake	9/1/2009
Career Service	4061	Gonzales	Angela	Medical Services Officer	8001	8011	H00631	8314	100	Emergency operations	Nonrep	Dorothy Thompson	9/1/2009
Career Service	0127	Hartman	Yu Jeong	IT Service Delivery Mgr. II	8001	8011	H00059	8039	100	Emergency Medical Services	Nonrep		9/1/2009
Career Service	0552	Hillman	Joan	Program Manager	8001	8011	H00032	8733	100	Maintain data management systems to support delivery of critical services	Nonrep	Kathie Hughes	9/1/2009
Career Service	2930	Hines	William	Chief of Staff	8001	8011	H00048	8387	100	Vital Statistics	Nonrep		9/1/2009
Career Service	0155	Hughes	Kathie	Microbiologist, Sr	8001	8011	H00007	3132	100	Department line of succession	Nonrep		9/1/2009
Career Service	0210	Matharu	Yousif	HE Investigator IV	8001	8011	H00027	8399	100	Conduct lab tests for public health purposes / Critical patient labs	Local 17		9/1/2009
Career Service	0826	Ng	Linda	Epidemiologist II	8001	8011	H00310	8353	100	EH incident response	Nonrep		9/1/2009
Career Service	1993	O' Leary	Paulina	Epidemiologist II	8001	8011	H00641	8245	100	Community health assessment	Local 21	Dorothy Thompson	9/1/2009
Career Service	0821	Patterson	Patricia	Health Services Administrator I	8001	8011	H00022	8387	100	Medical Examiner's Office	Nonrep	Mai Tran	9/1/2009
Career Service	4004	Phillips	Enrique	Public Health Nurse	8001	8011	H00160	8341	100	Priority 1 medical clinic visits (incl OB, GYN)	Nonrep		9/1/2009
Career Service	0908	Rowe	Ian	Director, Public Health	8001	8011	H00001	8836	100	Department line of succession	Nonrep		9/1/2009
Term Limited	9513	Sanders	Linda	Medical Interpreter/Translator	8001	8011	H00013	8243	100	Interpretation	Local 17		9/1/2009
Career Service	4305	Sanusi	Susanna	Public Health Nurse	8001	8011	H00052	8553	100	TB Control	WSNA		9/1/2009
Career Service	0825	So	Alicia	Desktop Support Specialist - Senior	8001	8011	H00641	8338	100	Maintain data management systems to support delivery of critical services	Local 17	Mai Tran	9/1/2009
Career Service	0829	Sohlberg	Marilyn	Personal Health Services Supervisor	8001	8011	H00014	8339	100	Primary care - managed care clients	WSNA	Mai Tran	9/1/2009
Career Service	0828	Thompson	Dorothy	Chief Operating Officer	8001	8011	H00028	8839	100	Department line of succession	Nonrep	Ian Rowe	9/1/2009
Career Service	0815	Tran	Mai	Div Dir, Comm Hlth Svcs	8001	8011	H00630	8387	100	Department line of succession	Nonrep	Dorothy Thompson	9/1/2009
Career Service	0820	vacant		Human Resources Service Delivery Manager	8001	8011	H00034	8202	100	Assessing personnel needs/availability / labor issues	Local 21	Dorothy Thompson	9/1/2009
Career Service	0182	Veenstra	Peg	Disease Intervention Specialist	8001	8011	H00602	8039	100	Disease intervention		Dawn Drake	9/1/2009

Non-represented staff

Process

1. Notification letter and supervisor talking points finalized.
2. Division business continuity leads provide list to preparedness of nonrep employees that support Priority 1 functions.
3. Preparedness evaluates & approves division lists of mission-critical employees.
4. Divisions distribute letters face to face with an opportunity for employee to ask questions. Process will vary by division.
5. Letters will be distributed as mission-critical positions are identified by divisions and approved by preparedness. Divisions should strive to notify nonreps in a supporting the same critical function within a short timeframe of each other.
6. Letters are cc'ed to Business Continuity Manager and Personnel File.
7. Preparedness will provide the Workforce Administrator a list of mission-critical sequences to flag in workforce. Updates to the list will be provided to Sue once a month until all divisions have completed the notification process.
8. Divisions are asked to record & share themes of employee questions/concerns with Business Continuity Manager, to improve the content of the Supervisor Talking Points.
9. Job postings for mission-critical positions will make mention of these responsibilities. New hires into mission-critical sequences will receive the notification letter along with other new hire paperwork.

Represented staff

Process

1. Preparedness informs Union Reps at a meeting in mid-April of intent to send notification letters to their members.
2. Otherwise, process expected to mirror that for non-represented staff.

Date

Dear [non-rep employee]:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that your position has been identified as “mission critical.” This means that the job functions that you perform have been determined to be essential to be maintained during normal conditions as well as during emergencies and disasters

Mission critical services are defined as those which must be maintained under all circumstances to protect the public from immediate life safety threats and to preserve the department’s decision making capacity.

Our agency’s mission-critical services are:

- *Insert list of your agency’s Priority 1 & 2 services here*

As you know, our region is vulnerable to a variety of threats, each of which presents different challenges for maintaining PHSKC operations. Recent examples include weather such as heavy snow and windstorms, and the H1N1 flu outbreak. When a disaster hits, every Public Health employee will have a role to play either maintaining day-to-day operations or supporting a regional emergency response. However, our agency has specific expectations of you as a mission-critical employee which are to:

At work

- Make every effort to remain at work, or to report to work during normal conditions as well as during emergencies and disasters.
- Work with your supervisor to determine whether your job functions can be managed remotely in an emergency. If so, have telecommuting arrangements in place and practice telecommuting at least once every six months. (Visit Public Health Human Resources’ public folders for more information on telecommuting.)
- Ensure PHSKC has your up-to-date home contact information. (Use the “Edit my person information” function in the Workforce Tracking application on your desktop.)
- Be prepared to adapt to changes in your work schedule, work location, or mandatory overtime during emergencies, with minimal notice.
- Take steps to ensure your work can continue in the event you are unable to report to work: document critical processes and procedures, train a backup, forward your phone/email, etc.
- Be familiar with and follow your division’s protocols for sustaining your program/service in challenging circumstances.

At home

- If an emergency strikes while you are not at work, immediately determine whether you are needed at work. Call your supervisor, listen to TV/radio broadcasts for instructions, call the employee information line, or check public health’s website.
- Make sure you and your family are prepared at home so you can remain at work and report to work knowing your family is all right. Store emergency supplies at home (visit www.seattlredcross.org/show.aspx?mi=4170 for tips on creating home emergency kits)
- Create and practice a family preparedness plan (visit www.govlink.org/3days3ways/makeaplan.html for assistance).

- Have a plan for getting to work during inclement weather. If this plan relies on public transportation, have a backup plan such as carpooling.
- Have backup childcare arrangements in place in the event your child's school or daycare is closed.

To support you in your role as a mission-critical employee, PHSKC commits to:

- Collaborate with you to develop strategies for carrying out your job functions during challenging circumstances (i.e. when phones are down or transportation systems disrupted).
- Offer emergency preparedness and business continuity training opportunities.
- Provide technological solutions that support your ability to work during emergencies, as we are able. For example, if you need SSL-VPN to telecommute, please talk with your supervisor about requesting approval. Telecommuting may be authorized for emergency responses only if it is not possible to approve it for regular work activities.
- Share educational materials and resources related to personal preparedness and recovery from emergencies and disasters.
- Maintain communication with you during emergencies so you know what to expect.
- Work with your division to ensure your regular body of work is covered during emergencies before redeploying you to response operations.

You and your colleagues have consistently demonstrated the desire and ability to continue the work of public health during difficult conditions, such last winter's storms. The responsibilities stated in this letter reflect those you have carried out in past disasters. We thank you for the work you do every day in support of Public Health's mission-critical services.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our division's Business Continuity lead, [name], or me.

Warm regards,

Division Manager
Cc Ali Jaffe-Doty, Business Continuity Manager
Personnel File

At work

Make every effort to remain at work, or to report to work during normal conditions as well as during emergencies and disasters.

Work with your supervisor to determine whether your job functions can be managed remotely in an emergency. If so, have telecommuting arrangements in place and practice telecommuting at least once every six months.

Ensure your employer has your up-to-date home contact information.

Be prepared to adapt to changes in your work schedule, work location, or mandatory overtime during emergencies, with minimal notice.

Take steps to ensure your work can continue in the event you are unable to report to work: document critical processes and procedures, train a backup, forward your phone/email, etc.

Be familiar with and follow protocols for sustaining your program/service during a continuity event.

At home

If an emergency strikes while you are not at work, immediately determine whether you are needed at work. Call your supervisor, listen to TV/radio broadcasts for instructions, call the employee information line, or check the website.

Make sure you and your family are prepared at home so you can remain at work and report to work knowing your family is all right. Store emergency supplies at home.

Create and practice a family preparedness plan.

Have a plan for getting to work during inclement weather. If this plan relies on public transportation, have a backup plan such as carpooling.

Have backup childcare arrangements in place in the event your child's school or daycare is closed.

Sample Talking Points for Supervisors: Mission-critical employee notification

- Mission-critical functions (also called Priority 1 functions) are those which must be maintained under all circumstances to protect the public from immediate life safety threats and preserve the department's decision making capacity. This definition was established by the county as part of their pandemic flu planning process.
- County policies (such as King County Human Resources Bulletin 05-LER-01 and the Tier 4 Pandemic Influenza Response Plan) have required since 2005 that departments identify and notify mission-critical staff of their status. Public Health is now coming into compliance with that requirement.
- The department's Executive Team approved the list of the agency's priority 1 functions in February 2009. Once these mission-critical functions were formalized, it created a framework for us to be able to identify and notify mission critical staff of their status.
- King County policy divides KC employees into three categories. You fall into the middle tier.
 - **First responders:** those employees who protect lives, property, evidence and provide for the restoration of order. Examples of first responder personnel are Paramedics and Deputy Sheriffs.
 - **Mission critical personnel:** those employees who provide for and maintain the mission critical functions of county services. Examples of mission critical personnel are Wastewater Treatment Operators.
 - **All other personnel.**
- This designation is based on your role and job functions, not your individual skills and proficiencies (e.g. certifications or language proficiency).
- We want to partner with you to support your ability to keep critical functions running during emergencies.
- Divisions and programs are notifying mission-critical staff of their status at different times, depending on their business continuity planning processes. Just because a colleague has not yet received this notification, does not mean she is not also mission critical. All mission-critical staff will be notified by the end of 2009.
- Every employee in public health has a role in emergency response and is expected to report to work in an emergency. Those employees whose everyday roles support lower priority functions may be redeployed to response operations, depending on the specifics of the event.