

Shelter surveillance and local public health

Amber Erickson, MPH

North Central Health District, Georgia Department of Public Health

Corresponding author: Amber Erickson • North Central Health District, Georgia Department of Public Health • 201 Second St., Ste 1100, Macon, GA 31201 • 478-751-6034 • Amber.erickson@dph.ga.gov

Background: One of the core responsibilities of the Epidemiology Program at the Georgia Department of Public Health is to detect and respond to population health events through traditional and novel surveillance. One type of event that we have planned for over the years has been conducting disease surveillance during a mass sheltering event.

Methods: Mid-day on October 5, 2016, the North Central Health District (NCHD) Emergency Preparedness Program notified the District Health Emergency Alert and Response Team that we would be receiving evacuees from the coast of Georgia and Florida due to Hurricane Matthew and that our District Operations Center (DOC) would be staffed 24/7 for the remainder of the event. The District Epidemiology Program's responsibility during this event was shelter surveillance and although planning had been done for this type of surveillance it was unclear as to what exactly that would look like during a real event.

Results: The NCHD had 6 American Red Cross (ARC), and a few Good Samaritan shelters open during the Hurricane Matthew evacuation and shelter event. The ARC shelters housed >550 evacuees and all hotels were occupied. The district had ~130 district and county staff (~40% of total district/county staff) work the event and had assistance from the state and other districts. The DOC was staffed 24 hours per day continuously from October 5-11. However, pre- and post-planning occurred before and after those dates.

Conclusions: This presentation will provide an overview of the importance of shelter surveillance during a mass sheltering event, review the NCHD DOC Shelter Surveillance Protocols developed by the NCHD District Epidemiologist, and examine the lessons learned from this event from a local epidemiology perspective.

Key words: epidemiology, shelter, surveillance, emergency, hurricane

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