

Annex I: Emerging Infectious Disease/Pandemic Considerations

Nature of the Hazard

Generally speaking, South Portland will follow current CDC recommendations. The City of South Portland is subject to large outbreaks of disease, as is the rest of the country. Included in this hazard is the possibility for worldwide epidemics and pandemics (e.g. worldwide outbreak of the Avian Flu) as well as exposure to widespread disease spread by weapons of mass destruction.

There are five (5) levels of preparedness for the Avian Flu pandemic, if it occurs, according to the State of Maine draft “Pandemic Influenza Plan”, dated 7/22/05:

- Level I – Human infection with a new virus, but no human-to-human spread.
- Level II – Small clusters, but limited human-to-human spread.
- Level III – Large clusters, but human-to-human spread is still localized.
- Level IV – Pandemic Phase – worldwide human-to-human spread.
- Level V – Post Pandemic Phase – when flu levels return to normal.

If a pandemic does occur and affects Maine, the Centers for Disease Control estimates there will be an additional outpatient visits to hospitals and doctors’ offices, increase in hospital admissions, and a rise in pandemic related deaths.

Once a new strain has been identified, vaccinations can be developed. It is estimated that mass production and distribution of a new will occur months after the pandemic strikes.

The Maine Pandemic Vaccination Plan lists the following priorities for vaccinations:

- a. Governor and senior state officials
- b. Healthcare workers, first responders, National Guard, fuel and food suppliers.
- c. Transportation workers, UPS, bus drivers, Red Cross, Corrections staff.
- d. Immediate family members of groups A and B above.
- e. Day care workers, teachers, clergy.
- f. Public at high risk.
- g. People providing care to members of the high risk public.

Risk Area

The entire city is subject to the possible effects of disease outbreak, either initiated within the city (e.g. by the crew of an oil tanker in port) or initiated externally, such as a major outbreak of Avian Flu. South Portland has a large population of elderly residents, many living in common buildings, making the spread of diseases easier to propagate among the elderly.

Direction and Control

If disease outbreak occurs, it is likely going to be a citywide and regional issue, and therefore a scene specific Incident Commander is not anticipated. The Emergency Operations Center should be activated to manage emergency response actions.

The emergency Management Director (City Manager) may designate a senior department head or the EMA Director to manage EOC operations in response to disease outbreak conditions.

State health officials will normally direct and control actions, under emergency state law designed to prevent epidemics and disease outbreaks from spreading. The Southern Maine Regional Resource Center (SMRRC) located at Maine Medical Center, may take a leading role in coordinating health services, medicine stockpiling and distribution and other health related emergency services.

Communications

Normal city communications channels will be used to manage response to disease outbreak conditions. Such events are not likely to overload telephone, cell phone and two-way radio systems.

Warning

Outbreaks of disease will most likely be noticed first within the medical community. By the time an outbreak or an epidemic is identified, warning times for the rest of the public are probably minimal at best. In contrast, warning times for worldwide or countrywide epidemics, such as the flu or other similar disease outbreaks may be known weeks in advance, allowing advance planning and advance public warnings to occur.

Emergency Public Information

Emergency Public Information (EPI) will be issued as necessary by the EOC staff, through the Public Information Officer (PIO). Methods of EPI dissemination include using the TV camera mounted in the Joint Information Center (JIC). This JIC camera is connected to the SPC TV broadcast studio at City Hall, allowing emergency instructions to be broadcast through SPC TV to about 12,000 households in South Portland and Cape Elizabeth.

News releases will be developed as needed by the PIO, approved by the EOC Manager, and then disseminated to the public through Portland area radio, TV and print media outlets as well as city website and social media sites.

News releases must be coordinated with public health officials to ensure consistency of the message to the public.

Evacuation

Evacuation of the public is not a likely protective action for disease outbreaks and epidemic conditions.

Mass Care

EOC staff will, in concert with state and local public health officials, determine if mass care facilities should be opened and manned. The primary mass care facility in South Portland is the Community Center on Nelson Street, behind the South Portland High School. Approximately 500 evacuees can be processed in this mass care facility. Other city facilities, including the High School, and both Middle Schools can be used as mass care shelters.

Other facilities where critical emergency care of patients and patient isolation can occur. Such facilities will be identified by state public health officials (in accordance with existing surge capacity plans) and staffed by public health officials. Local officials may be asked to provide support (traffic control, security, etc) at these surge facilities.

Health and Medical Concerns

Local health and medical resources are not adequate to deal with large disease outbreaks and epidemics. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) will most likely be contacted by state health officials to help with medical treatment protocols, providing additional medical supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), providing additional medical personnel and equipment and other needs.

Local officials may be asked to provide support through decontaminating patients and medical staff, providing logistical support, providing security for the SNS if requested and deployed in Maine, and providing other help as needed to the medical community.

The State Bureau of Health (Maine Center for Disease Control) will determine vaccine Points of Distribution Centers (PODS) in affected communities, once the flu pandemic strikes.

Per Maine law (LD 1405) the state government can compel quarantine and isolation of affected individuals and groups (e.g. entire day care centers).

The State can also require other measures be taken, such as wearing masks while riding on public transportation, fever screening before students enter schools, etc.

The State may designate and order quarantine in the following locations:

- a. order home quarantine
- b. order work quarantine (can go to work and home only)
- c. designated facility quarantine.

The State may seize or negotiate with hotel and motel owners to turn entire hotels into quarantine facilities, if deemed necessary.

Resource Management

Local resources are considered inadequate to deal with disease outbreak and epidemic events. If additional resources are needed, Cumberland County Office of Emergency Management will be contacted by the South Portland EOC and requested to facilitate the procurement of additional needed resources. As noted above, public health officials will generally determine what resources are available, how those resources will be allocated, and determine what additional resources are going to be needed.

Specific Actions for Disease Outbreak Events

Fire Department Actions

- Implement Mass Casualty Incident plans as needed.
- Ensure firefighters and paramedics are protected against the disease and are equipped and trained with appropriate protective measures (e.g. universal precautions, full PCs, patient isolation methods, etc).
- Respond as requested by the EOC.

Police Department Actions

- Ensure police officers and dispatchers are protected against the disease and are equipped and trained with appropriate protective measures (e.g. universal precautions, wearing masks while greeting the public in the public safety lobby, etc).
- Respond as requested by the EOC.

Public Works Actions

- Respond as requested by the EOC

EOC Actions

- Work closely with CCEMA, MEMA and public health officials to determine the extent of the outbreak in South Portland and what countermeasures are required.
- Implement countermeasures to protect city public safety and other staff who may come in contact with the public (e.g. masks for city clerk's office staff, masks for dispatch staff, etc). Ensure key first responders receive vaccinations as soon as a supply becomes available.
- Continue to keep the public informed about the nature of the problem and what actions the public can take.
- Open satellite health clinics around the city as needed and as medical staff is available.
- Coordinate implementation of protective actions as requested/mandated by public health officials.

Specific actions that were put in place for COVID:

- Plexiglass barriers have been installed at all locations where city staff will be interacting with the public on a regular basis.
- Buildings and Grounds crews are well trained in the proper use of disinfectants and the steps needed to be taken in the event of an exposure.
- The infection control officer in conjunction with HR and the city manager is in charge of disseminating the information provided by the CDC.
- The city manager will make the final call on what the city will require for personal protective measure in all city buildings.
- In any case where Maine EMS requires procedures stricter than what the city is requiring, the fire department will follow Maine EMS requirements.
- The city has made provisions and has a policy in place for remote work that will be followed in the event of the need to limit the workforce on site.

The Fire Chief will consult with the South Portland Fire Department Medical Control Officer when needed.