

**CABARRUS COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN  
ANNEX J  
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES**

**Primary Agencies**

- Cabarrus Health Alliance
- Carolinas Medical Center – NorthEast (CMC-NorthEast)

**Support Agencies**

- Board of County Commissioners
- Cardinal Innovations (formerly Piedmont Behavioral Health)
- Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
- Medical Examiner’s Office
- Sheriff’s Department
- Emergency Management

**I. PURPOSE**

This annex provides guidance for the protection of public health during emergency situations.

**II. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS**

**A. Situation**

1. The Cabarrus Health Alliance is the public health authority for Cabarrus County.
2. Emergency situations can create a variety of public health problems. Depending on the nature of the incident, problems may include the spread of communicable diseases, contamination of food and water supplies, and widespread injuries.
3. The lack of medical assistance and the stress of the situation may cause an increase in general health and behavioral health problems.
4. A well-coordinated health support network is essential during emergency situations.
5. Emergency response operations may require an expansion of services provided by the Cabarrus Health Alliance and supporting agencies.
6. Health services agencies must be prepared to meet an array of threats to public health. Of particular concern are the hazards caused by the release of toxic or hazardous materials and the resulting contamination of the air, water, or soil over a large area.

**B. Assumptions**

1. A large-scale emergency increases the demands on health services personnel and resources.
2. Citizens will administer first aid and self-treat many types of injuries regardless of severity.
3. Resources are available through area and regional medical, behavioral, healthcare, and mortuary services mutual aid agreements.
4. The Emergency Management Coordinator requests assistance from state and federal agencies when local resources can no longer meet the demands of the situation. If necessary, state or federal agencies may assume control of the response.
5. A widespread disaster could affect large areas of the County and disrupt, damage, or destroy public health services and resources.

### **III. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

#### **A. General**

1. Emergency operations for public health services are an expansion of normal agency and facility duties.
2. Coordination between public health officials and medical providers is required for emergency operations readiness.

#### **B. Public Health**

1. The primary concern of public health services is disease control.
2. The Cabarrus Health Alliance implements effective environmental health, nursing, and related services to minimize the occurrence and spread of disease. This service is unique to County government, which provides this service to the municipalities within the County.
3. As necessary, Cabarrus Health Alliance personnel conduct frequent inspections of damaged housing and emergency shelters to determine the need for emergency repairs, pest control, sanitation, or other protective procedures.
4. As necessary, Cabarrus Health Alliance inspectors examine and test private water supplies in close proximity to flooded areas or a hazardous materials release. The Cabarrus Health Alliance staff identifies areas that may need mandatory inspection during pre-emergency planning and respond to requests for water testing from residents as needed.
5. The Public Health Director of the Cabarrus Health Alliance makes recommendations for immunizations or other preventive measures during emergency response operations.

### C. Pandemic Disease Planning

1. The Cabarrus Health Alliance employs its Pandemic Influenza Plan when the Public Health Director determines it is needed or is advised to do so by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services or the United States Department of Health and Human Services.
2. The Cabarrus Health Alliance Pandemic Influenza Plan guides the preparation for and response to a pandemic influenza outbreak in Cabarrus County.
3. The Pandemic Influenza Plan provides guidance to Cabarrus County government, the Cabarrus Health Alliance, and County/regional partners regarding detection, response, and recovery from an influenza pandemic. This plan can be modified to react to other pandemic disease events.
4. During a pandemic disease event within the County, the Cabarrus Health Alliance focuses its efforts on the health and safety of the citizens of Cabarrus County. The objectives of this effort are to reduce mortality, reduce morbidity, and minimize social disruption.
5. The Pandemic Influenza Plan supplements the Cabarrus County Emergency Operations Plan and the Cabarrus Health Alliance All-Hazards Plan. The Pandemic Influenza Plan identifies the coordinating and cooperating agencies involved in preparedness for a pandemic flu event and their respective response roles in the event of a pandemic.

### D. Strategic National Stockpile

1. The Cabarrus Health Alliance is responsible for the use of the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS).
2. The SNS consists of medications, vaccines, and medical equipment to be used in response to an incident involving an attack using biological or chemical agents.
3. The SNS is pre-positioned in the region and is used only when local/regional resources have been expended. If necessary, additional SNS supplies may be sent to the County to supplement current stocks.
4. The Cabarrus Health Alliance manages the reception, storage, and employment of the SNS.
5. Upon activation, Cabarrus Health Alliance personnel organize one or more dispensing sites in the County.
6. At the point(s) of dispensing, County residents are given the vaccinations or medications and necessary supplemental information.

### E. Mental Health

1. Cabarrus County Government is required to provide mental health care for County residents.
2. The County has a contract with Cardinal Innovations (formerly Piedmont Behavioral Health) to obtain mental health care for residents who need assistance. This support continues during emergencies.
3. Cardinal Innovations provides mental health care to disaster victims at shelter sites and other locations throughout the County, as necessary. Cardinal Innovations locates space in mental health facilities for victims needing critical behavioral health care.
4. Cardinal Innovations provides crisis counseling and Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Teams for emergency workers and other support staff during an emergency situation, as needed.
5. Cardinal Innovations maintains a Disaster Services Contact, who is available through its call center. This call center operates continuously.
6. The Emergency Management Coordinator contacts Cardinal Innovations to request assistance during an emergency.
7. The Cardinal Innovations Disaster Services Contact coordinates with its service providers to obtain the requested support.
8. The Disaster Services Contact reports all Cardinal Innovations activities to the Cabarrus County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and provides daily status reports on mental health services and supporting personnel to the EOC.

#### F. Mortuary Services

1. During an emergency, Cabarrus County establishes a central morgue site to collect and process human remains.
2. The County mortuary efforts are supported by the morticians in the area, who also provide the initial supply of the items needed to handle these tasks.
3. The County Emergency Management Department maintains a roster of the funeral directors available for this mission.
4. Cabarrus County does not have a designated Medical Examiner. A mass fatality event would require Medical Examiner support. The North Carolina Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) a division of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, maintains the North Carolina Medical Examiner System, a network of over 600 medical doctors throughout North Carolina who investigate deaths of a suspicious, unusual, or unnatural nature.

5. The Emergency Management Coordinator requests North Carolina Medical Examiner System support through Carolinas Medical Center – Northeast.
6. OCME assigns personnel to support the County, which initially come from the regional OCME office in Charlotte.
7. When activated, the Medical Examiner develops procedures to recover, identify, and register fatalities during emergency situations.
8. The Medical Examiner determines the cause of death, notifies next-of-kin, and releases the remains and personal effects to proper representatives.
9. The Medical Examiner issues death certificates and supervises the location and transportation of remains.
10. The Medical Examiner identifies the resources needed to establish an adequate morgue system in the event of mass fatalities.
11. The Medical Examiner directs the expansion of any fixed and temporary morgue capability.
12. The Medical Examiner coordinates with EMS, funeral directors, ambulance services, pathologists, American Red Cross, dentists, X-ray technicians, and law enforcement agencies to provide support to mortuary operations, as needed.
13. If needed, the Medical Examiner requests assistance from a Disaster Mortuary Team (DMORT) through the EOC. The Emergency Management Coordinator requests this support through the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management.
14. The Medical Examiner coordinates all press releases with the County Public Information Officer (PIO) prior to release to the media.

#### **IV. DIRECTION AND CONTROL**

- A. The Public Health Director of the Cabarrus Health Alliance is part of the Coordination Group in the County Emergency Operation Center.
- B. The Public Health Director coordinates all medical-technical aspects of the County emergency response under the supervision of the Emergency Management Coordinator.
- C. The Public Health Director normally directs operations from the County EOC. If the Public Health Director is not available, a representative from the Cabarrus Health Alliance represents the agency in the EOC.
- D. The Medical Examiner controls all activities connected with identification of the deceased and mortuary services. The OCME may assume control of this activity if necessary.

- E. The Public Health Director maintains communications with all Cabarrus Health Alliance teams or sites around the County keeping the EOC informed of all activities, personnel, and equipment.
- F. Additional resources are requested through the Emergency Management Coordinator.
- G. The Cabarrus Health Alliance directs the administration and use of the SNS, when needed. The Public Health Director controls and directs the medical-technical use of the SNS. SNS Operations are coordinated with the Emergency Management Coordinator.

## **V. CONTINUITY OF GOVERNMENT**

- A. Staffing assignments for positions in the EOC allow for continuous operations.
- B. Selection and assignment of personnel is the responsibility of the agencies represented.
- C. Once assigned to the EOC, the Emergency Management Coordinator (EOC Manager) supervises these personnel.
- D. In the event that the primary EOC is not functional, the Emergency Management Coordinator activates an alternate EOC and notifies the Board of Commissioners of this change. Transportation is provided to any County Commissioners who cannot reach the EOC locations.
- E. Orders of Succession (Health):
  - 1. Cabarrus Health Alliance Director
  - 2. Nursing Director
  - 3. Environmental Health DirectorOrders of Succession (Mortuary):
  - 1. OCME Medical Examiner
  - 2. Assistant OCME Medical Examiner
- F. Orders of succession for departments and agencies that support public health services are in accordance with their internal standard operating procedures.