

Colorado

...a healthy place to live, work, play

## Operation S.H.O.T.: Influenza Vaccine Exercise



The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment announced in September that it would offer free influenza vaccinations to employees in the Denver area as part of an exercise to test the department's ability to vaccinate staff during a public health emergency. With approximately 1,000 eligible employees, the exercise, dubbed Operation S.H.O.T. 2006, for State Health Operational Test, was scheduled for a four-hour period.

The exercise managers established seven objectives, with input from a planning committee. In general, the exercise was planned to:

- test the department's ability to operate a mass vaccination clinic
- improve the department's ability to respond to any public health emergency
- fulfill a grant requirement for the CDC Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Cooperative Grant, in the same vein as other mass vaccination exercises conducted by local public health agencies around Colorado

These objectives became "key messages" for the exercise ambassadors, the information staff, to use to respond to inquiries from employees. The exercise information officer developed speaking points for department spokespersons and the incident manager from the key messages.

### Exercise Development

Though employees were notified that the exercise was planned for November, the date was not announced in advance to incorporate an element of surprise. The e-mail notification for the start of the exercise directed employees to make contact with their supervisors immediately to coordinate staff participation while regular department services continued.

Plans were in place to manage long lines of employees in the hallways of the building. Exercise organizers posted signs in English and Spanish to explain to customers that the staff were engaged in an exercise to improve the department's ability to manage public health emergencies. While many staff already had been vaccinated, all available staff were asked to participate by going to the vaccination site and filling out the vaccination screening forms, to increase the challenge to the exercise staff.



Colorado Department  
of Public Health  
and Environment

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment  
4300 Cherry Creek Drive South, Denver, CO 80246-1530  
[www.cdphe.state.co.us](http://www.cdphe.state.co.us) 303.692.2700 800.886.7689

## Lessons Learned

The exercise went so smoothly that the exercise capacity was not stressed by the numbers of employees participating. The exercise staff credit the team's advance planning efforts, which resulted in a very organized process and very few questions from employee participants. The few times that there were lines of people, the lines moved very quickly. Exercise "ambassadors" staffed the lines of employees waiting for flu shots and the entry point, distributing a brochure about the exercise and influenza. The ambassadors, selected from the Emergency Preparedness and Response Section team, also were available to answer questions about the department's preparedness activities.

The exercise happened to fall on Election Day, which ended up being a rather difficult day in many Colorado counties, due to changes in voting technology and voting sites. One employee commented the next day that she wished that the CDPHE staff had planned the election as well, as the exercise ran very smoothly.

## Areas for Improvement

The exercise could have included additional promotion among employees. The department management decided to use only e-mail to notify employees and ask that they participate. Ideally, the exercise public information officer should have used a multi-media approach to contact employees, including voice mail, Health Alert Network "call-down" procedures, walk-throughs in the buildings to hand out flyers, and posters in elevators, break rooms and restrooms.



Colorado Department  
of Public Health  
and Environment



## Results

The vaccinations were administered by registered nurses, primarily nurses on staff at CDPHE. The exercise team processed 701 employees, actually administering 520 vaccinations. An employee survey designed to elicit additional feedback is in process. Initial feedback was very positive, though the exercise staff had too much idle time. Clearly, with the thorough planning, the exercise staff could have been more challenged. If the department has the opportunity to conduct a similar exercise in the future, the span of time to administer vaccinations will be reduced.

The exercise helped CDPHE:

- to evaluate the ability to operate a “vaccination clinic” using National Incident Management System standards and guidelines;
- to evaluate the ability of multiple CDPHE programs and staff to work together to achieve the exercise goals;
- to determine how long it takes to vaccinate 1,000 employees, including intake and registration, triage, medical screening, administration of vaccine and recovery;
- to identify emergency plan components that require modifications;
- to evaluate the ability to manage the flow of participants;
- to educate CDPHE employees on the influenza virus and the value of influenza vaccination;
- to evaluate the ability to effectively communicate the exercise purpose and process; and
- to create and maintain a skills resource inventory of CDPHE staff.



## Supporting Documents

- Incident Action Plan
- Exercise organizational chart
- Information brochure
- After-Action Report and photos



**Colorado Department  
of Public Health  
and Environment**

## Additional Information

Joni Reynolds, Immunization Program Manager  
303-692-2363 or [joni.reynolds@state.co.us](mailto:joni.reynolds@state.co.us)

Barbara J. Beiser, Editor  
303-692-2710 or [barbara.beiser@state.co.us](mailto:barbara.beiser@state.co.us)

July 2007