

COOP CONNECTION

EMI SIG Continuity of Operations Subcommittee Newsletter



Leadership, Staff, Facilities, and Communications

Closed PODs: Ensuring the Health and Safety of Your Employees

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In 1999, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) were tasked by the U.S. Congress to establish a national pharmaceutical stockpile. As a result, the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) was created. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 charged the Department of Homeland Security with stockpile funding and deployment.

The SNS is a repository of antibiotics, chemical antidotes, vaccines, antitoxins, life-support medications, intravenous administration and airway maintenance supplies, and medical/surgical supplies. These supplies can be delivered anywhere in the U.S. within 12 hours of a federal order to deploy.

Dispensing is one of the most difficult pieces of SNS planning and preparedness. Local health departments are responsible for providing prophylaxis to entire county populations within 48 hours. This is where local agencies and businesses can help achieve the community dispensing goal more rapidly by becoming a point of dispensing (POD) site. Local health departments operate open dispensing sites. These open PODs are for the public and accessible to everyone who resides or works within the county served by the health department.

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Closed PODs are operated by a private business, academic institution, healthcare provider, church, or federal agency for a specific population (i.e., employees and possibly family members). These sites are not open to the public.

Closed PODs can be an important part of your epidemic planning because developing a closed POD at your site ensures that employees receive necessary medications in a setting, and in a way, that will be less disruptive to work. By making a closed POD available, you can help ensure the health and safety of your employees, while keeping essential personnel on the job.

If your employees are able to receive medications at your worksite, will they still be needed by family members who must wait at an open POD to receive treatment, thus keeping your essential personnel away from work? A consideration in developing the terms of the closed POD should be given to treating the employees' immediate family members as well.

If you want to seek a closed POD agreement, here are some important points:

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DOE Acquires New COOP Alert System, DOE-AWARE



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Recently, the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), in partnership with the Continuity Program Office and the Office of Management (MA), acquired a new system to keep you informed regarding continuity of operations (COOP) events and emergencies at DOE Headquarters facilities. This new system, branded as the DOE Alert, Warning, Accountability, and Response, or DOE-AWARE, provides improved functionality not available with DOE's legacy notification and alert systems.

The DOE-AWARE system has replaced the COOP notification. The Department will use the system to combine various independent systems (COOP notification, information management notification, building notifications, to include desktop popup notification, and accountability) and manage them under an integrated structure. This integration is predicted to provide a cost-effective opportunity to improve communications. Instead of the population relying on desktop popups for building emergencies and phone notifications for COOP, the new system provides the entire suite of tools to a number of missions.

This practice has proven its effectiveness in allowing various missions to use different modes of communication that were not previously feasible, providing a unified voice for the Department.

All DOE Headquarters e-mail addresses have been added to the system along with locator information from the DOE Active Directory and MIS Identity Management System. Contact information for all continuity personnel has also been entered into the system. It is important that all Headquarters employees, both federal and contractor, use the Employee Self-Service (ESS) system to keep their location information and contact telephone numbers up to date.

Although still in the testing phase, once fully implemented, the new system will include the DOE Alert, and ENS desktop alert systems at HQ. The initial deployment covers approximately 9,000 headquarters federal employees and contractors, both civilian and military, and covers select field element personnel. DOE AWARE leverages the Department's existing IP network to unify all communications to quickly reach and account for personnel through networked desktop alerts, mobile phones, landline phones, PA systems, and the AtHoc Mobile Notifier™ application.

The OCIO is currently testing the desktop client and will be coordinating the installation of this software on workstations within the National Capital Region. As additional functionality is added in the coming weeks, multiple tests will be performed to verify that these capabilities are working correctly.

Under the leadership of the Office of the Chief Information Officer, the Office of Management, and the Continuity Program Office, we expect to provide coverage for all HQ personnel and others as our resources allow, ensuring the alert and notification of the Department's personnel.

COOP Mentors

Congratulations to **Bobby Carlton**, Pantex COOP Coordinator, for achieving Level I Professional Continuity Practitioner certification. If you want to join this mentor and receive certification, check out FEMA's Emergency Management Institute [Continuity Excellence Series](#). To sign up or to view a complete listing of courses, visit FEMA's [EMI Courses & Schedules](#) site.

Upcoming Conferences

[International Disaster Conference & Expo](#)

February 10-12, 2015

Ernest N. Morial Convention Center
New Orleans, LA

[Disaster Recovery Journal's Spring World 2015](#)

March 22-25, 2015

Disney's Coronado Springs Resort
Orlando, FL

[2015 EMI SIG Annual Meeting](#)

July 6-10, 2015

National Conservation Training Center (NCTC)
Shepherdstown, WV

Training Opportunities

[Emergency Management Institute \(EMI\)](#)

Emmitsburg, MD

- [E0427 CERT Program Manager Training](#), **Jan. 21-22, 2015**
- E0427 CERT Program Manager training and the [E0428 CERT Train-the Trainer](#) (offered back-to-back), **Feb. 23-27, 2015**
- [E0550 Continuity of Operations \(COOP\) Planning](#), **April 7-9, 2015**

COOP Subcommittee Conference Calls

COOP Subcommittee conference calls typically occur on the second Thursday of each month from 3-4 p.m., Eastern. The schedule for the next four calls is below.

- Thursday, January 8
- Thursday, February 12
- Thursday, March 12
- Thursday, April 9

Agendas are sent prior to each call. If you have questions about the COOP Subcommittee conference calls, please contact Becky Bullard at Becky.Bullard@orau.org or (865) 576-9623.

Want to Contribute to COOP Connection?

If you'd like to contribute continuity stories, calendar items, or any other news related to COOP, please send them to Becky Bullard at Becky.Bullard@orau.org or to Jeff Morrison at morrisjl@nv.doe.gov. The deadline for submissions for the April issue is March 6, 2015.

Lantern Live Added to DOE Mobile Apps Directory



[Lantern Live](#) allows users to report the operational status of local gas stations, find fuel, and look up power outage maps from local utilities, while also accessing useful tips and guidelines. With the launch of this app, the U.S. Department of Energy is testing the power of crowdsourcing and open data in disaster and recovery.

Future releases of Lantern Live will likely include the ability to crowdsource information on the status of gas stations via standardized hashtags for social media. The app is currently available at the Google Play store for Android devices.

Lantern Live's code will be open source, allowing technology innovators and entrepreneurs to reuse the code in their own apps, explore new opportunities for other sectors and applications, and further leverage the power of open data.

Closed PODs (cont.)

- Closed POD agreements are developed between your site and your local health department. If you are in a rural county, this may be a regional agency. Not all health departments are offering agreements of this nature.
- Some governmental agencies have made their closed POD agreements public, and you can find examples on the internet. Your experiences will vary with your local health departments. Monongalia County, WV, and NETL preferred a Mutual Aid Agreement (MAA).
- Closed PODs are activated only when there is an emergency, as determined by the Secretary of Health and Human Services. At the time the emergency is declared, the Secretary will sign a document that stipulates the terms of the emergency declarations. This declaration may include exemptions to liabilities during the emergency.
- During the emergency, some usual requirements for dispensing medications may be suspended. You should be aware of these changes, which may include antibiotics being dispensed without a prescription or medications that normally require a doctor's order being dispensed under a nurse's purview.
- You will likely be responsible for developing means to ensure that medical staff is available for your closed POD. You may consider a contract with a medical care service provider or source this through your occupational health unit, if you have one.
- Having an agreement to operate a closed POD will likely include a requirement to conduct drills and exercises and the development of procedures under which the closed POD operates.

Operating your own closed POD is a benefit to your community as well. Closed PODs reduce the stress to the open PODs operated in the community and help your local health department meet requirements to dispense countermeasures to the population within the required 48 hours. Ultimately, these are life-saving goals.

Lessons learned in route to the closed POD agreement NETL eventually reached with a local health department include the following:

- Developing the agreement will necessarily involve a legal review. You can help your organization prepare by being thoroughly knowledgeable of the Emergency Preparedness (PREP) Act and its terms.
- Covered persons will be exempt from liability during the emergency declaration. Be aware of the breadth of meaning that "covered persons" can entail. "Covered persons" can mean manufacturers, distributors, program planners, and qualified persons, and their officials, agents, and employees, and the United States. The PREP Act also defines the word "person" as used in the Act: A person includes an individual, partnership, corporation, association, entity, or public or private corporation, including a Federal, State, or local government agency or department.
- Risk in operating a closed POD can be mitigated through program planning, documented procedures, exercises, and training in addition to exercising the terms of the PREP Act. Successful program managers will be able to discuss in detail these requirements, which reduce the risk for all involved. Like emergency response and continuity programs within DOE, operating a closed POD requires plans, procedures, and exercises.

- The goal of reaching the agreement is protecting safety and health while ensuring that the organization is able to meet its commitments for continuity of government and operations. However, the likelihood of deployment of the closed POD is small.

If you want to read more about the terms of emergency declarations that trigger the release of materials from the SNS, you can start with the PREP Act. The PREP Act offers a broad relief from liability during the emergency. You will need to consult with your organization's legal counsel during development of the agreement to ensure that your leadership understands this important relief and the terms under which it is realized.

