

# THE PREPAREDNESS POST

UTAH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

## Handling the Fallout from a Major Disaster Involving Mass Fatalities *By Amy Cornell-Titcomb*



In May 2015, more than 80 participants reacted to a simulated mass casualty event in Davis County. In the exercise scenario, a FrontRunner train filled to capacity left the Woods Cross platform but derailed due to an explosion, resulting in multiple injuries and fatalities.

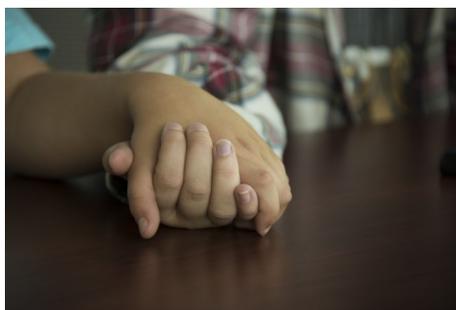
On the first day, participants gathered for the on-scene response including EMS, heavy rescue, and bomb techs. The second portion of the exercise, held the following day, involved opening a Family Assistance Center (FAC) to support the families of the FrontRunner passengers.

During a mass fatality incident, the FAC serves a critical role in giving the family members a private location, away from the public and news media, where loved ones can gather together. They can receive grief and spiritual counseling that may ultimately help them when they get official death notification from the Office of the Medical Examiner. Plus, family members are on hand to

provide helpful information to medical examiners that can assist with identification of disaster victims. It can also serve as an information center, helping those who survived the accident be reunited with their families.

Several of the actors participated in the FAC as family members of the victims who were riding on the train during the simulated explosion. In the FAC, survivors were able to talk to UTA representatives, FBI victims' assistance team members, and mental health support workers. They were also interviewed for ante-mortem information so the medical examiner could attempt to identify the remains of their loved ones.

Part of the scenario also involved actors portraying victims who survived the accident, but were unidentified. Team members staffing the FAC then worked to unify survivors with their families. Some of those acting as family members were briefed by the various agencies and some even received "official death/identification notifications" from the FAC team. All of these activities were



designed to support the exercise training objectives.

Accidents such as the one simulated in this scenario change lives forever and the damage to a community lasts for years. This exercise gave responders an opportunity to work with families and perform caregiving service for the victims' families in an exercise environment. The chance to practice skills designed to help communities is invaluable, not only for the participating agencies, but also for those whom they serve.



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## Invitation to an Earthquake Exercise

*By Mike Stever*

The event wasn't real, but California emergency responders took it very seriously. "It" was a major earthquake centered around an "imagined" big quake in the Los Angeles basin. Local, state, and federal responders from all levels showed up at California Emergency Operations Centers to respond as if it were the real thing. Thanks to Ron Pinheiro, Utah's Health and Human Services Region VIII partner, a few Utah Department of Health (UDOH) preparedness staff members were invited to watch the whole thing play out over a three-day period.

One of those in attendance was Mike Stever, UDOH Emergency Manager, who believes there is no better training than to observe a statewide crisis firsthand. He says, "Watching shortfalls and successes experienced in other jurisdictions gives us a valuable opportunity to bring the lessons home to improve Utah's emergency preparedness."

Mindy Colling, UDOH Lead Planner, expressed surprise at the size of the massive response with more than 800 federal partners from all major federal agencies and the military. Mindy already knew Emergency Support Function Eight (ESF-8) Health and Medical would play an immediate and ongoing role but picked up some valuable pointers to bring home and incorporate into Utah's health and medical response plans.

Utah's team also brought back some ideas on how to better coordinate federal resources. Dean Penovich, Bureau Director, believes this important information will allow UDOH to improve utilization of military services and resources and prioritize the allocation of precious resources to do the greatest good for the most people.

In a nutshell, the UDOH team found ideas to improve our own planning and facilitate the immediate creation of a common operating picture to best prioritize and manage resources including urgent EMS and health care needs. A small sample of other lessons learned include the need to prepare for large numbers of volunteers and modifying ICS forms for improved and more timely reporting; including GIS mapping for planning and response.

The bottom line is that Utah is overdue for a very big, very real earthquake. And, since family and individual preparedness is the foundation of all emergency and disaster response, everyone needs to do what he or she can to better prepare for disaster situations. Check out [www.bereadyutah.gov](http://www.bereadyutah.gov) for all the "how to tips" you'll ever need.

## Planning to Continue *by Mindy Colling*

In May 2015, planners and leadership personnel of Utah state agencies participated in a joint Continuity of Operations (COOP) Tabletop Exercise held by FEMA and State emergency managers. The purpose of this exercise was to allow agencies to discuss and validate their continuity plans and capabilities after a serious incident. What critical functions does the agency need to continue to fulfill? How will these functions be performed, and who will accomplish them? What equipment or resources are needed, and where can work be accomplished if the building has been compromised? These were questions that each agency sought to answer as staff participated in the exercise. A “hotwash” discussion was held at the conclusion of the exercise, examining strengths and areas for improvement for each state agency. Following the exercise, Governor Herbert provided remarks on the importance of COOP planning, understanding the threats that exist to Utahns, and services that government agencies need to continue to perform on their behalf.

For the last two years, the Governor’s Office has mandated that all state agencies complete and maintain a COOP Plan, and exercise and update this plan annually. Accordingly, all state agency COOP plans have identified those critical functions and services that are necessary to provide vital services, exercise civil authority, maintain the safety and well-being of the general populace, or to sustain critical support to the agency. These services, depending on the emergency level, may be implemented within a 12-hour period and should be able to be sustained for a period of up to 30 days. Critical resources – such as applications and records – must be available to carry out many of the essential functions. In addition, backup facilities and equipment must be identified to ensure resumption of essential services even when a primary building is unable to be occupied for some time. All state agency plans must comply with Federal Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) requirements, and are housed in a secure, online software application accessible anywhere via the internet.



### UDOH Web sites:

[health.utah.gov](http://health.utah.gov) (main)  
[health.utah.gov/preparedness](http://health.utah.gov/preparedness)  
[health.utah.gov/ems](http://health.utah.gov/ems)  
[health.utah.gov/epi](http://health.utah.gov/epi)  
[health.utah.gov/lab](http://health.utah.gov/lab)

### Utah Department of Health

Bureau of Emergency  
 Medical Services and  
 Preparedness

3760 S. Highland Drive  
 Salt Lake City, UT

Preparedness Training information:

<https://www.utah.train.org>

## New Faces

### **Rich Lakin, MSPH, MPA** **Immunization Program Manager**

Rich has worked in local and state public health for 18 years. His career in public health began as a Health Educator for the Tooele County Health Department (TCHD), covering all aspects of community health education. He also served as the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator and the Public Information Officer for TCHD.

When an opportunity opened up at the Utah Department of Health to become the program manager for Disease Investigation and Management, he enthusiastically accepted that position. Eventually, this led him to the Immunization Program, which he loves, serving as the Senior Research Analyst. After five years in that position, Rich accepted a position in Medicaid, becoming the program manager for Electronic Health Records. Rich served in that capacity for two and a half years. Now he is back in immunizations as the program manager and is looking forward to new challenges.

Rich has a Masters of Science in Public Health as well as a Master's in Public Administration. What he loves the most about working in public health is making a positive impact on the health of Utah residents.



### **Russell Pierson, MS, CHES** **Epidemiology Planner**

The newest addition to the UDOH Public Health Preparedness team is an Epidemiology Planner, Russell (Russ) Pierson.

Russ is a Utah native who grew up on a ranch in rural Box Elder County. He graduated from Utah State University with a Master's Degree of Science in Community/Environmental Health. Currently he resides in American Fork with his wife, Chris. Combined, their family includes seven adult children.

Russ brings to the planning table a combination of 25 years in Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Services, and Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP). He was a professional firefighter for six years and an active volunteer Emergency Medical Technician for over 20 years. Russ was with the Utah Department of Health as a Risk Communication Coordinator in the early years of preparedness. He coordinated risk communication planning, expanded Joint Information Centers (JICs) to include "on the go kits," and established "all hazard communication" plans with the Local Health Departments throughout the state.

After leaving his initial UDOH employment, Russ gained invaluable experience as a PHEP Planner for Maricopa County in Phoenix, Arizona. Two years later, Russ relocated to Idaho, spending the next six years coordinating efforts with the Health Resource and Services Administration (HRSA) along with Emergency Medical Services throughout Idaho.

Russ is looking forward to the challenges involved in Ebola planning. He is happy to be back in the preparedness arena and is looking forward to the opportunity to be involved in emergency preparedness once again.

*Newsletter produced by Charla Haley*

## Calendar

## 2015 Training

Date	Event	Location	Information
August 12—13 8:30 a.m.— 5 p.m.	Mitigation for Emergency Managers	State Office Building	UTRAIN: # 1034348
August 18—19	Basic Public Information Officer Course	Utah Olympic Park	UTRAIN: # 1011053
August 19 11 a.m.— 1 p.m.	Lunch & Learn: "How to Assist those with Hearing Impairments During a Crisis"	Intermountain Center for Disaster Preparedness (ICDP) 3rd Floor North 8th Avenue C Street Salt Lake City, UT	UTRAIN: #1056835 FREE Barb Clark Phone:(801) 408-7061 barb.clark@imail.org
August 25—26	ICS-300 Intermediate Incident Command System for Expanding Incidents	Utah Navajo Health Services EMS Building Montezuma Creek	UTRAIN: #1011051
August 27	Procedures for Post-Earthquake Safety Evaluation of Buildings	Magna Library Magna, UT	UTRAIN: #1037374
August 30 9 a.m.— 4 p.m.	FSE Pharmacy Pandemic "Scripted Surge"	Salt Lake County Health Department, Macy's Pharmacy, CDC, NACCHO	By Invitation Cindy Morgan, Salt Lake County Health Department cmorgan@slco.org
September 2 9 a.m.— noon	TTX—Radiation Injury Treatment Network	RTN Program at LDS Hospital 8th Avenue and C Street, Salt Lake City, UT	Contact: Rob Dent (801) 520-1330 robert.a.dent.mil@mail.mil
September 9-10 8:30 a.m.— 5:00 p.m.	Mass Fatalities Incident Response Course	Utah National Guard North SL Armory Salt Lake City, UT	UTRAIN: #1019680

## Calendar

## 2015 Training

Date	Event	Location	Information
September 14, 15, and 16 5 p.m.— 10 p.m.	ICS-300 Intermediate Incident Command System for Expanding Incidents (evening class)	Santaquin Public Safety Building Santaquin, UT	UTRAIN: #1011051
September 16, 17 and 23, 24	ICS-300 Intermediate Incident Command System for Expanding Incidents (morning class)	South Salt Lake Fire Station #2 South Salt Lake	UTRAIN: #1011051
September 29-30	PIO Conference	St. George, UT	TBA
September 30— October 1 8 a.m.— 5 p.m.	ICS-300 Intermediate Incident Command System for Expanding Incidents	Carbon County Fairgrounds Price, UT	UTRAIN: #1011051
October 26-28 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Response to Radiological Disasters: Responder Operations Course PER 240	Intermountain Center for Disaster Preparedness (ICDP) 3rd Floor North 8th Avenue C Street Salt Lake City, UT	UTRAIN: #1044908 FREE Barb Clark Phone:(801) 408-7061 barb.clark@imail.org
October 28—29 8:30 a.m. — 5:00 p.m.	ICS-400 Advanced Incident Command System for Command and General Staff	State Office Building Salt Lake City, UT	UTRAIN: #1011057
October 29 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Response to Radiological Disasters: Personal Radiation Detector Course Course PER 243	Intermountain Center for Disaster Preparedness (ICDP) 3rd Floor North 8th Avenue C Street Salt Lake City, UT	UTRAIN: #1053612 FREE Barb Clark Phone:(801) 408-7061 barb.clark@imail.org



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Bureau of Emergency Medical Services and Preparedness