



# Public Health Preparedness News

September 2013

Volume 2, Issue 3

## Ham Radio...When all else fails!

If you ask someone, "What's vital during an earthquake or hurricane?," chances are that most people might not give a second thought to our ability to communicate. After all, cell phones and the Internet are just a click away, right?

But what if all mobile communication devices just...stopped? What if you tried to call, text, email, Facebook, Instagram – but nothing worked? How would you contact your spouse and children? How could you share your location or condition?

One answer is the Amateur Radio Service, better known as "ham radio." It enables agencies, first-responders and worried parents to maintain a communication link, without relying on cell towers or Internet cables to get a message through.



Dr. Randy Blake of the Kaua'i Medical Reserve Corps, at home in his ham radio station. "Ham operators can help the community respond to a public health emergency," he says. "For example, we can open up communications with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that provide support to government agencies."

"Hundreds of Hawaii residents are licensed ham operators, and many regularly plan for emergency communications in a disaster," says Dr. Randy Blake, Kaua'i Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). "During Tropical Storm Flossie, ham operators on the Neighbor Islands called in localized weather reports to the National Weather Service via a radio network.

"No single mode or means of ham radio will work in every situation," he adds. "Operators who are members of their local emergency communication group become familiar with different channels and diverse modes. The more resources you have available when disaster strikes, the more opportunities to help your community.

"I'm excited about the next big techie development: the increasing use of digital data transfer using ham radio."

Ham radio is resilient to infrastructure damage caused by a catastrophic event. It broadcasts on airwaves in many frequencies throughout the radio spectrum. Operators can send and receive transmissions between islands and across vast distances, even into space. They can utilize voice, text, image and data modes from virtually any location, including motor vehicles and boats. They can tap into alternative power sources during a blackout, such as photovoltaic systems, generators, or car batteries.



With a second ham radio installed in his car, Dr. Blake "can contact other amateur operators across the state of Hawai'i, the nation, and around the world."

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## September is National Preparedness Month

Did you know that Hurricane Iniki and the World Trade Center attack occurred on the same date? Would you be prepared if a similar disaster struck today?

To raise awareness that September is National Preparedness Month, the Public Health Preparedness (PHP) branch of the



Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH) conducted on-the-street interviews.

Staff quizzed passersby about emergency preparedness topics – and got hilarious responses! Watch the videos:

- <http://youtu.be/JuHF1A1DZuY>
- [http://youtu.be/R7shNKys4\\_I](http://youtu.be/R7shNKys4_I)
- <http://youtu.be/ml218e5e66E>

National Preparedness Month is part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) "Ready Campaign" and encourages families, businesses and communities to work together to prepare for disaster.

## Alternate Care Capacity planning moves forward

On June 18, the Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) held an Alternate Care Capacity workshop with state and local agencies in attendance.

The workshop was developed to support DOH's ongoing efforts to plan for the provision of non-acute health services in a disaster, needs that cannot be accommodated by a general population shelter alone. The exercise also gave participants an opportunity to explore new approaches for enhancing capacity.



The workshop focused on:

1. Engaging response partners.
2. Building awareness of existing shelter and alternate care plans and resources in Hawai'i.
3. Evaluating multiple alternate care strategies within the context of Hawai'i.



Some of the main areas of discussion included the coordination and integration of staffing and resources. Obstacles were identified, and ideas were generated for resolving these problems collaboratively.

Participating agencies included the American Red Cross, City and County of Honolulu's Department of Emergency Management (DEM), Hawai'i County District Health Office (HDHO), Hawai'i State Civil Defense (SCD), Healthcare Association of Hawai'i (HAH), Kaua'i



*"We feel confident that the momentum generated by this Alternate Care Capacity exercise provides a solid foundation for future planning efforts," said Terry Visperas, PHP Planner.*

County District Health Office (KDHO), and Maui County District Health Office (MDHO).

Planning was done by DOH Public Health Preparedness (PHP) program and contractor Witt O'Brien.

## Stop Flu at School reaches 7th year

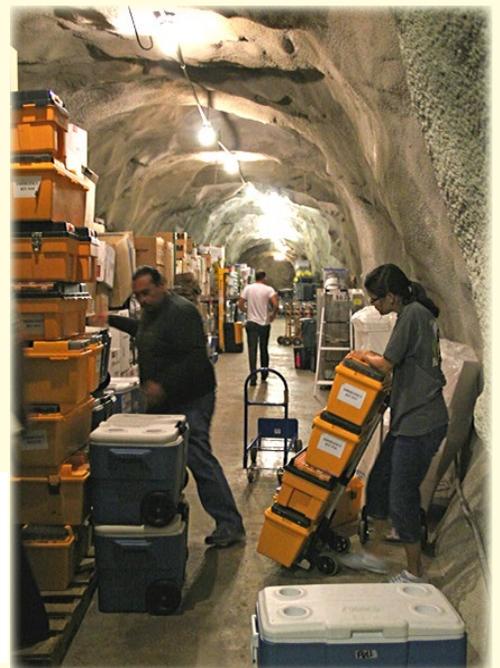
The Hawai'i Stop Flu at School program, first implemented in 2007, is a statewide, school-located influenza vaccination program, offering seasonal influenza vaccines without cost to students in kindergarten through the eighth grade. This fall, 327 public, private, and charter schools statewide will participate in this program. Participation is voluntary and parent/guardian written consent is required for vaccination.

Through the Stop Flu at School program, DOH collaborates with school administrators, health care providers, pediatric associations, health insurers, and federal partners to vaccinate over 65,000 students statewide each year. This program aims to decrease the the number of flu cases in school children and provides a model for an emergency mass vaccination response, as well.

"Flu vaccinations are safe and our best form of protection against the flu," said Dr. Sarah Y. Park, State Epidemiologist. "By vaccinating school children, we protect not only our keiki but their families and our communities as well."

For more information about Stop Flu at School, visit <http://hawaii.gov/stopfluatschool>.

*DOH staff from the Immunization and Public Health Preparedness branches coordinating the massive project of gathering supplies and equipment for the statewide Stop Flu at School program.*





## PHP program hosts training in evacuation, shelter-in-place needs of persons with medical dependencies

On July 25, trainers from Yale New Haven Health System presented a training course, "Planning for the Unique Evacuation and Shelter-in-Place Needs of People with Medical Dependencies During a Disaster," to Public Health Preparedness staff and Public Health Nurses of the Maui District Health Office (MDHO), as well as community participants.

The course is FEMA approved and was coordinated by MDHO PHP staff and attended by 28 participants.

Many of the attendees represented facilities involved in the care of people with medical dependencies, such as hospitals, insurance agencies, long-term care facilities, non-profit organizations, local government agencies, and sign language interpreters. The ma-



*At the O'ahu presentation of "Planning for the Unique Evacuation and Shelter-in-Place Needs of People with Medical Dependencies During a Disaster," attendance was high and audience members were passionate about the subject.*

majority of attendees were nurses. The course was held at multiple locations statewide.

Trainers Deborah Smith and Brienne Lenart presented real-life stories from previous disasters and how the affected communities responded. Lessons learned on mass care were shared with the class.

The training validated the current planning efforts in Maui County among healthcare agencies, and identified additional organizations that should be included in the planning of sheltering people with medical dependencies after a catastrophic event.

"I really enjoyed the workshop and the timing couldn't have been better," said Karen Parrish, nurse supervisor at Kula Hospital, in reference to Tropical Storm Flossie, which hit Maui four days after the training.

## Kaua'i clears TB backlog

Skin testing for tuberculosis (TB) resumed across the state in July following a 120-day suspension due to a national shortage of test solution. To process the pent-up demand for free TB testing services at the Kaua'i District Health Office (KDHO), staff got a helping hand from the Kaua'i Medical Reserve Corps (KMRC).

Supplies were restored to KDHO in early July, and TB testing resumed July 15. During the interim, the backlog of demand had prompted DOH Community Health Services to anticipate many more people than usual would show up. An appeal went out to MRC members across the state, seeking their volunteer help to serve the public, especially individuals who needed to show TB test certification for school or work by the required August 20 deadline.

KMRC members generously volunteered to kokua at the clinics, held on three Mondays: July 15, 22 and 29. No medical skills were needed, as the volunteers reviewed forms and assisted with line flow.

"It was good to see families taking advantage of the free clinic to get their TB tests completed in time for school," said KMRC volunteer Pam Sokei. "We processed a record-breaking 270 clients on July 29 alone."



*KMRC volunteer Pam Sokei (in red) and Para Medical Assistant Cora Pascual assist community members through TB testing procedures at the Kaua'i District Health Office. Other MRC volunteers included Angie Serota, Cindy Marvin, Edie Watanabe, Fran Becker, Henrietta Gonsalves, Jim Venzon, JoAnne Machin, Linda Kaauwai, Sinclair Coghill and Virginia Dunas.*

## Big Island hosts Tropic Care

The Department of Defense's (DOD) latest "Innovative Readiness Training" (IRT) was held on the Big Island June 4-12, with the Hawaii District Health Office (HDHO) taking the role of lead agency for the state. About 75 military reservists from around the country attended the annual event.

Named "Tropic Care 2013," this large-scale joint exercise in rapid deployment involved multiple government agencies at the federal, state and local levels.

Reservists provided an array of health care services, all free, to the community. These included medical, dental and optometry (medical eye exams and supplying eye glasses) procedures, as well as nutrition education, medication review, and provision of some medications.

Members of the Big Island Medical Reserve Corps participated by conducting the registration of community members. The volunteers processed patient forms, kept track of the number of patients, provided follow-up advice when necessary, and directed patients to the appropriate clinic services.

The purpose of Tropic Care, as with past IRTs, was to provide needed medical support to underserved communities in remote areas throughout the U.S. and its territories. In many cases, the residents lack medical insurance, or are underinsured, and cannot afford to be seen by a doctor unless there is an acute health issue or preventable complication.

For the DOD, IRT deployments are designed to provide a military reservist with real-world, rapid-deployment training. Tropic Care 2013 partially fulfilled each participating reservist's annual training requirement by helping to prepare the reservists in the planning and implementation of a rapid mobilization to a distant and culturally unfamiliar area.



*Hawai'i District Health Office, Public Health Preparedness staff, and Big Island MRC members at Tropic Care 2013.*

## Pahala Functional Exercise



Big Island staff took part May 31 in a functional exercise in Hilo. In a disaster, some patients may be directed from an American Red Cross general shelter. This exercise focused on the functional skills needed to rapidly and accurately assess such patients, and triage for further care or transport to a hospital. Big Island Medical



Reserve Corps (HMRC) nurses participated in triage protocols and medical assessment of "patients." Other MRC volunteers helped in the intake station, conducting initial patient assessments, and as "patients" presenting various medical conditions.



### Calendar Events

- October 15 Global Handwashing Day, <http://globalhandwashing.org/gwh-day>
- October 15 Stop Flu at School clinics begin on all islands





*Spotlight on the*

## HAWAI‘I MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS



MRC members attend CPR/AED training.



MRC State Coordinator Marjorie Tayao with junior MRC volunteers at Castle High School.



MRC members helped clear a backlog of TB testing across the islands.

## MRC buzzes with activity

The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) had a busy July of special events, public health clinics, core training modules, and readying for Tropical Storm Flossie.

**Convoy of Hope.** At this annual event that matches local charities with people in need, 20 MRC volunteers arrived July 23 at Aloha Stadium to provide glucose testing to clients.

**Ready 2reACT.** Seven MRC members joined various companies and organizations at Pearlridge Shopping Center. Coordinated by the City & County of Honolulu's Department of Emergency Management, the July 20 event garnered much media attention, visits from elected officials and a large crowd of shoppers. MRC passed out information on public health preparedness and informed the public of the MRC's mission and roles during a catastrophic event.

**TB clinics.** In anticipation of a possible surge in clients as the state resumed tuberculosis (TB) skin testing, the Department of Health's Tuberculosis branch asked the MRC to help staff TB clinics. More than 20 volunteers worked at various clinics in July and August. A national shortage of test solution had prompted the state to temporarily suspend TB requirements.

**CPR/AED/First Aid training.** MRC members kept their life-saving skills sharp and up-to-date with a series of trainings, which are offered free or at a discount to MRC members. Our MRC are as well-trained as they are prepared!



MRC volunteers at the Convoy of Hope.



## Emergency Preparedness goes K-Pop

Boy bands? Cinderella in a hanbok? Emergency preparedness – with hip hop rap, hooks and beats? In da house!!!

Honolulu Theater for Youth kicked off its 2013-14 season with a blockbuster original show, “A Korean Cinderella.”

The school and public performances will run Aug. 23-Sept. 21 at the Tenney Theatre in St. Andrews Cathedral, and Oct. 15-Nov. 15 on the Neighbor Islands.

Cool costumes? Great music? Super fun? All of the above. But this new telling of Grimm’s fairy tale does more than mix in K-pop and traditional Korean drumming. It also carries an important message of emergency preparedness.

After each show ends, Cinderella returns onstage, accompanied by a wall of sound, break dancers, and a clever rap about the nine items to



include in every family’s emergency preparedness kit. By the time you exit the theater, the refrain “We’re not scared, we’re prepared,” “We’re not scared, we’re prepared,” is stuck in your head.

The entire skit, including the music and dance choreography, was specially written for the Hawai’i State Department of Health, Public Health Preparedness branch, which was one of the sponsors of “A Korean Cinderella.”

To reinforce the message, cast members tossed “Personal Emergency Kit” drawstring backpacks to a few lucky kids in the audience. Everyone received a “Plan 9” list of emergency supplies to bring home and share with family members.

To view the “We’re not scared, We’re prepared” skit, visit <https://vimeo.com/72173431>



**What’s an emergency source of drinking water during a disaster?**

Find out at our Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/HI.DOCD](http://www.facebook.com/HI.DOCD)

