Crisis Communications and Management – a tale of two incidents

Texas City Y collision (March 22 – April 29, 2014)
Ebola contactee (October 17 - 19, 2014)
Another misstep in Ebola battle

2nd Dallas nurse to catch virus flew to Ohio and back with CDC approval

By Todd Ackerman

In the latest misstep involving the U.S. response to Ebola, public health officials said Wednesday that the second Dallas nurse to test positive for the deadly disease took a commercial flight after getting clearance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in violation of its own guidelines.

The flight disclosure, on the heels of a series of problems in the diagnosis and treatment of the nation’s first Ebola patient, heightened concerns that health care institutions were not as prepared as had been suggested.

President Barack Obama, who canceled a campaign trip to Connecticut and New Jersey to convene top officials on Ebola, said the administration will be “monitoring, supervising, overseeing in a much more aggressive way exactly what has taken place in Dallas.”

“I want people to understand that the dangers of you contracting Ebola, the dangers of a serious outbreak, are extraordinarily low,” Obama said after the meeting. “But we are taking this very seriously at the highest levels of government.”

Dr. Daniel Varga, the Nurse continues on A8

Wednesday’s mood was somber for Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings, left, and County Judge Clay Jenkins.
Ebola contactee

- ICS-based response: Unified Command
- For this type of incident, no real prior planning effort or experience (e.g., drill or exercise)
- Really two incidents in one
  - (remote) possibility of spread of Ebola
    - Medical community told us this was not likely
  - Public perception of possible spread of Ebola and mis-information about the disease
*Technical Specialists may be assigned wherever their services are required.*
Lessons Learned - Management

• ICS is most efficient when key players are physically present in the ICP
  – Port of Galveston always tries to have a representative (ensures awareness if not satisfaction of interests)

• ICP representatives must have the authority to make decisions on behalf of their organization and faithfully implement the agreed-upon plan

• Infectious Diseases Management Plan
Lessons Learned - Management

Sunday, October 19, 2014

7 Things to Know: Fellow Passenger and Healthcare Worker from Dallas

1. Your fellow passenger remains well and has had no symptoms of illness in the 19 days since performing a lab test for an Ebola patient as part of their job as a healthcare worker.

2. Your fellow passenger, when the cruise departed, was one of the healthcare workers required only to monitor their own health and take their own temperature twice a day.

3. While the cruise was ongoing, your fellow passenger’s requirements for monitoring their health changed after a fellow hospital employee became ill with Ebola and extra cautions were extended.

4. Your fellow passenger, although feeling well, agreed to voluntarily isolate in the ship’s cabin for the remainder of the cruise when health officials notified the passenger of the change of status to active monitoring (someone else takes the temperature) for the rest of the 21 days. The cruise ship’s medical doctor has monitored and confirmed the passenger is in good health and has no symptoms of illness.

5. On Monday, October 20, after a total of 21 days, your fellow passenger will have no restrictions on travel and will no longer require active monitoring of their health.

6. Ebola is not spread through the air. Ebola is transmitted by direct contact with the body fluids of someone sick with Ebola. The CDC confirms that individuals who do not have symptoms are not able to spread Ebola. Surfaces cleaned with common products like bleach kill the virus.

7. Currently, public health officials are not recommending you take any additional actions. We apologize for the disruption this has caused to your vacation.

Thank you for your cooperation.
Passenger symptom free

Carnival ship returns, authorities say quarantined woman not stricken with Ebola

A Dallas health care worker, center, is escorted to waiting vehicles at Pier 25 early Sunday shortly after the Carnival Magic docked in Galveston. The woman, a lab technician at Dallas Presbyterian Hospital, had been in voluntary isolation in her cabin because of potential contact with the Ebola virus. JENNIFER REYNOLDS/The Daily News
Lessons Learned – “Internal” Communications

• Port coordination team
  • great results (prioritization of ships, waterways management) in Texas City Y incident
• Need for open communications during ICP deliberations
• Importance of taking the time for a post-incident critique of the response