

FICEMS Approved Process for Rapid Interagency Coordination During Health Emergencies

ISSUE

The FICEMS approved workplan tasked the Preparedness Committee with “[r]ecommend[ing] to the TWG [(Technical Working Group)] standard operating procedures for sharing preparedness and response information with FICEMS”.

Department of Defense

Office of the Assistant
Secretary of Defense for
Health Affairs

BACKGROUND

Rapidly evolving challenges in the world of emergency care are rarely predictable or well defined, yet they often demand rapid responses. To enhance the response to emerging EMS issues, FICEMS needs a structure in place to coordinate the expedited creation, approval, and distribution of guidance or other priority materials for EMS stakeholders.

Department of Homeland Security

Office of the Assistant
Secretary for Health
Affairs/Chief Medical Officer
U.S. Fire Administration

Internal and stakeholder discussions following the response to Ebola enabled the Preparedness Committee to identify several gaps in Ebola/infectious disease preparedness. At a December 4, 2014 meeting, FICEMS reviewed and approved a memo from the Technical Working Group (TWG) recommending that FICEMS complete FICEMS Strategic Plan Objective 3.2 to “develop a rapid process for providing guidance on emerging EMS issues”. The memo further stated that such a process should:

- Include a clearly defined process for the EMS and 9-1-1 communities to provide early input to guidance and priority activities;
- Solicit input from additional Federal partners, as needed, to improve coordination and information exchange; and
- Emphasize a systems approach to preparedness compliant with Presidential Policy Directive/PPD-8: National Preparedness.

Department of Health & Human Services

Office of the Assistant
Secretary for
Preparedness and Response
Indian Health Service
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention
Health Resources and
Services Administration
Centers for Medicare &
Medicaid Services

Department of Transportation

National Highway Traffic
Safety Administration

Federal Communications Commission

Public Safety and
Homeland Security Bureau

DISCUSSION OF PROCESS

While members of the TWG, Preparedness Committee, and others coordinated to produce and distribute materials associated with the Ebola response and H1N1, the final products could not be branded as FICEMS materials. The creation of a rapid process for guidance and priority activity approval will allow the EMS and 9-1-1 communities to provide early input to guidance and priority activities, as well as allow solicitation of input from additional Federal partners. This process could improve coordination and information exchange among Federal partners. Use of the FICEMS brand in transmitting guidance to the EMS community would signify the collaborative efforts of the FICEMS member agencies and help ensure a coordinated federal message to the EMS community.

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FICEMS APPROVED PROCESS

- 1) FICEMS member agency/staff identifies emerging issue and requests FICEMS support by submitting a written request to the TWG co-chairs;
- 2) TWG co-chairs review the request and submit a written recommendation to the FICEMS Chair. TWG co-chair recommendation must include the following:
 - i. Recommendation for action or no-action.
 - ii. If no-action is recommended then the TWG co-chairs will draft a written explanation for why they recommend no-action.
 - iii. If action is recommended then, in coordination with the TWG, the TWG co-chairs will:
 1. identify members of an ad-hoc working group or existing work group;
 2. develop a recommended work schedule (i.e., meeting frequency, schedule of reporting back to the TWG co-chairs, anticipated duration of ad hoc working group, etc.); and
 3. draft a communications plan (to include a method of communications with tribal governments and organizations) including a recommendation for a cover letter from FICEMS Chair and/or FICEMS approved cover letter, plus any additional recommended communications steps such as blast emails, webinars, etc.
- 3) The FICEMS Chair approves or disapproves the TWG co-chair's recommendation in writing, and notifies FICEMS in writing. As a courtesy the FICEMS Chair may offer to hold a brief conference call with FICEMS members to discuss any concerns;
- 4) Ad hoc working group or existing work group conducts work in support of requesting agency;
- 5) Requesting agency (i.e., CDC) publishes completed guidance using their own internal review process;
- 6) FICEMS Chair signs cover letter prepared by the TWG;
- 7) NHTSA staff, under the direction of the TWG co-chairs, attach approved cover letter and distribute guidance per the TWG approved communications plan.

ACTIONS

FICEMS approved this process on August 4, 2016.

FICEMS directed the TWG to explore mechanisms for the public to provide input to products developed under the process. The Preparedness Committee will provide a report back to the TWG in late 2016.