



SF Ready Mass Prophylaxis Tabletop December 5, 2006

After Action Report

Executive Summary:

On December 5, 2006, the San Francisco Department of Public Health and San Francisco Division of Emergency Management, in partnership with SF Ready, held a tabletop exercise to assess the appropriateness of recruiting 3 types of large businesses (large employers, large commercial buildings/property management companies, and large hotels) to serve as “Push Partners” that provide medications to their own employees during a mass prophylaxis response. This tabletop exercise consisted of panelists from the 3 types of businesses; in addition, representatives from 16 companies participated as audience members. The scenario, provided by SFDPH, was the unfolding of a response in the hours following a widespread outdoor anthrax release in San Francisco. During the exercise, SFDPH narrated the public response plan, (including expected push partner actions), stopping at key points over time for the business panelists to discuss the implications for their capacity and willingness to be push partners based on their expected situations at those key points in the response.

Overall, exercise objectives were met; the general consensus was that:

- Because they would still have many residents or guests there well into a response, large hotels and large residential buildings may be most appropriate Push Partners to target.
- Because of lack of staff, coordination structure and knowledge of tenant situations, large commercial buildings may be least useful to target for push program.
- Large employers could be push partners but uncertainties of event and employee responses could make planning for it problematic for them.

Businesses also indicated that many employees may not come to work during a pandemic. Key factors affecting whether an organization would participate as a Push Partners include: employee safety, liability, availability of staffing, transport and security for the Push sites, knowledge of what proportion of employees, guests and/or tenants would still be there to receive prophylaxis by the time a push response could be mounted, and alternative of people getting their antibiotics through general public means by going to public PODs. These institutions seem to have redundant communication devices and plans in place already, but will be looking to City government to provide content for employee communications.

Because of employment patterns, regional response context is important to their planning for employee responses and continuity of operation plans in a mass prophylaxis scenario. Many participants were interested in follow-up discussions about these topics as well as more detailed descriptions of medication dispensing logistics, anthrax, possible security measures and whether similar plans would be put in place to distribute medication during an influenza pandemic.

Most participants found the exercise well-organized and informative. As a result of this exercise, a large SF employer volunteered their site for a very valuable mass prophylaxis distribution exercise in April 2007, and a large hotel expressed interest in potentially being a POD site.

Exercise Description

Name of exercise: SF Ready Mass Prophylaxis Tabletop
Type of exercise: Tabletop exercise
Exercise Date: December 5, 2006
Location: Conference room at Charles Schwab & Co., Inc. (San Francisco, CA)
Sponsors: SF Ready
San Francisco Department of Public Health
Scenario Type: Anthrax release

Participating Organizations:

- SF Ready (host organization)
- San Francisco Department of Public Health (organizers, scenario narrators, facilitators)
- San Francisco Department of Emergency Management (organizers, panelist)
- Charles Schwab & Co., Inc. (large employer panelist)
- Shorenstein Realty (large commercial building panelist)
- Grand Hyatt, San Francisco (large hotel panelist)

- Organizations present to observe tabletop and participate in Q&A session (# of participants):
 - Business Executives for National Security (1)
 - Charles Schwab & Co., Inc. (13)
 - Community volunteer with American Red Cross (Bay Area) (1)
 - Consulate General of Canada (1)
 - Cushman & Wakefield (1)
 - Gerson Baker and Associates (1)
 - Grand Hyatt San Francisco (3)
 - Levi Strauss & Co. (1)
 - McKesson Corp. (1)
 - New York Stock Exchange Group (2)
 - Philippine Consulate General in San Francisco (2)
 - Shorenstein Realty (1)
 - Smart Interfaces, LLC (1)
 - SVB Financial Group (1)
 - Toolworks, Inc. (1)
 - Union Bank of California (1)

- Types of positions held by participants:
 - Business Continuity (4)
 - Infrastructure Recovery Director (1)
 - Occupational Health Manager (1)
 - Operations Manager (2)
 - Organization Director / VP (2)
 - Project / Senior Manager (4)
 - Property Manager (2)
 - Security Director / Analyst (7)
 - Software Director (1)
 - Other (8)

Exercise Purpose and Design:

The objectives of this exercise were to:

- Present realistic mass prophylaxis scenario for planning (timeline, public response, public messages)
- Identify issues for companies to consider to determine whether they would become Push Partners or send their employees / tenants to Point-of-Dispensing Sites (PODS)
- Provide feedback to DPH for ongoing planning, especially around factors that might make some types of businesses better push partner candidates than others (from both their and our perspectives)
- Develop coordination of public and private planning for mass distribution of antibiotics, including identification of particular companies with an interest in developing or exploring planning partnerships with DPH

This 1.5-hour exercise was moderated by SFDPH. SFDPH narrated the scenario, and the following organizational panelists took turns responding to questions arising at key points over the time covered by the tabletop scenario:

- a large SF employer (Charles Schwab),
- a large commercial property /property management company (Shorenstein Realty) and
- a large hotel (Grand Hyatt San Francisco).

Their responses were oriented to both what they would do in such a scenario in general, and also what they might do or need to do if they were also planning to be push partners. Audience members also participated by asking questions or commented during designated times.

Scenario Summary:

Multiple BioWatch detectors in the San Francisco Bay Area have tested positive for anthrax in one day, which indicates a widespread outdoors dispersal of spores in the previous 24 hours. A public health emergency was declared by city officials after convening with state and federal officials, the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) has been requested and mass prophylaxis plans activated. Four hours after receiving laboratory reports, the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) notifies Push Partners that the mass prophylaxis plans have been activated and that antibiotics from the SNS will be arriving in the next few hours. Push Partners should plan on receiving antibiotics from SFDPH in 12 hours.

Key points in the response addressed by DPH and the tabletop panelists were:

- at initial public notice of emergency requiring mass prophylaxis response
- at notification of push partner companies by SFDPH that we intended to activate push partner plans
- at opening of public PODs
- when push partners were notified of when their pharmaceutical would be available from SFDPH

Summary of Discussion

Communication with tenants/employees during initial notification:

- All 3 companies have phone trees, PA and call-out systems in place; if phone outage, main team members have multiple modes of communication equipment.
- Clarified that City and County of San Francisco will have access to radio/TV stations in such an event, and businesses and the general public can expect to hear from us regarding communication content (which will be consistent among counties).
- Multi-tenant buildings would need help to facilitate coordination among tenants. Would expect the managers of each tenant to be helpful in doing this, but currently there is no developed structure for coordinating a response across tenants in multi-tenant buildings.

Distribution of medicines:

- The position who would be designated to receive drugs varies by company.

Appropriateness of recruiting businesses to be push partners:

- If companies anticipate few employees willing to come to work during such a scenario, large residential buildings or hotels may be more appropriate push partners than commercial buildings or large employers..
 - Employee prophylaxis may depend on timing of event and response, on public messages, on continuity of operations plans, and possibly on regional availability of antibiotics.
 - Some smaller companies in attendance indicated that it may make more sense for them to send people to PODs (SFDPH agrees, and would initially target push strategy only to companies reaching largest numbers of people)
- Managers may be more willing to come to work than other employees, but will have to ensure that drugs are available for their families as well.
- Main incentive for employees to come in would be the expectation that they may get their medications faster than if they were to go to a POD.
- If push strategy would not reach many people to decrease burden on PODs, SFDPH may consider not doing it.
- Not appropriate for the consulates in attendance because their roles and expectations are different from those of businesses.

Critical decision points for organizations regarding push partner status during an event

- Employee safety – if this is not available (given civil unrest, potential risk of added exposure, etc.), no one will come (3)
- Liability (unspecific about what issues) (2)
- Transportation – ability for employees to come to work site (2).
- Confidence that supplies can reach company
- How coordination with non-SF Bay Area Counties would work
- Availability of security for a push site

Outstanding questions:

- What to do about citizens that turn up at a push site wanting drugs? Institutions currently expect SFPD to provide security, but this may not be possible after such a scenario.
- Transparency about the availability of drugs in this situation would help instill confidence in organizations who are considering to be push partners.

Future topics of interest:

- Details about transporting and logistics of dispensing antibiotics
- What happens when employees receive drugs both at PODs and push site.
- Availability of materials in multiple languages
- Is this similar to what will be done during a pandemic?
- Security at a push site
- Many questions from audience members about the nature of anthrax and timeline for effective treatment

Overall feedback from audience members (19 out of 33 attendees):

Plan-related:

- Most agreed that they are more familiar with the sequence of events that must happen to implement the city's mass prophylaxis plan as a result of this exercise. (Average 4.4 points out of 5)
- Most agreed that they are more familiar with the PODs and their role in a mass prophylaxis response as a result of this exercise. (Average 4.3 points out of 5)
- Most agreed that they are more familiar with the push strategy and its role in the mass prophylaxis response as a result of this exercise. (Average 4.1 points out of 5)
- About half of the organizations present could describe the actions that they think their organizations could take to complement mass prophylaxis distribution (Average 3.7 points out of 5)

About half of those who returned a survey indicated interest in further discussions regarding push planning (11/19, representing 9 companies). However when asked near the end of the meeting, not many expressed a need for a follow-up more detailed push planning meeting.

Exercise-related:

- Most felt that the exercise was well-structured and organized (Average 3.9 out of 5)
- About half felt that the participants included the right mix of companies in terms of size and function (Average 3.6 out of 5)
- About half of the participants felt that this exercise was appropriate for someone in their positions (3.6 out of 5)
- Some participants would have preferred to have slide handouts.

DPH Impressions

Large commercial buildings unlikely push partners because they lack structure to organize a response, themselves have few employees available for an organized response, and in any case would not know how many tenants would still be there well into a response.

Large hotels might be the most appropriate push partner because they have spaces, staff and would have need and desire to also provide safety for guests. Liability issues are a concern.

Large employers could be interested in being push partners as part of their continuity of operations planning, to provide for their employees, and may have resources and infrastructure to dispense antibiotics, but there are many uncertainties that make such planning uncomfortable for them.

Other Exercise Benefits

As a result of working on this tabletop, Charles Schwab volunteered to be a site for a POD exercise. DPH held a very valuable POD dispensing exercise there on April 4, 2007.

As a result of working on this exercise, the Grand Hyatt expressed some interest in becoming a downtown public POD site (since DPH expressed the need for an additional public POD site in a large private space in the area near Chinatown). This will be pursued.