

LIMESTONE COUNTY

PANDEMIC

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDE

2020

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PANDEMIC

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDE (SOG)

I. PURPOSE

The Pandemic Standard Operating Guide provides guidance for the response and recovery from a pandemic. This SOG describes the unique challenges posed by a pandemic that may necessitate specific leadership decisions, response actions, and communications mechanisms.

During a pandemic, response agencies will utilize the SOG to achieve the following goals:

- Limit the number of illnesses and deaths
- Preserve continuity of essential functions (government and business)
- Minimize social disruption
- Minimize economic losses

The SOG will be coordinated with other preparedness plans and activities, and will be coordinated with the plans of local, state and federal partners. The primary focus is on the roles, responsibilities, and activities of county and city government. However, specific responsibilities for key response partners are included to highlight points of coordination between agencies during a pandemic.

II. AUTHORITIES

Various state and local public officials have overlapping authorities in protecting public health and safety. During a pandemic, the presence of overlapping authorities will necessitate close communication and coordination between local officials to ensure decisions and response actions are clear and consistent.

A. Governor of Alabama

The Governor has authority to proclaim a state of emergency when a disaster affects life, health, property, or the public peace. After proclaiming a state of emergency, the Governor has the authority to restrict public assembly, order periods of curfew, and prohibit activities that he or she believes should be prohibited in order to maintain life and health.

B. Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH)

The Alabama Department of Public Health has authority to adopt rules to

protect the public health, including rules for the imposition and use of isolation and quarantine and for the prevention and control of infectious diseases. Local officials and law enforcement shall enforce all rules that are adopted by the Alabama Department of Public Health.

C. Limestone County Commission

The Limestone County Commission may proclaim a state of emergency within the County when extraordinary measures are necessary to protect public peace, safety and welfare. Under a state of emergency, the Chairman may impose curfews, close any or all private businesses, close any or all public buildings and places including streets, schools, and parks, and proclaim any such orders as are imminently necessary for the protection of life and property.

D. Mayors of the Local Jurisdictions

The Mayors of the local jurisdictions in Limestone County may proclaim a state of emergency within their jurisdiction when extraordinary measures are necessary to protect public peace, safety and welfare. Under a state of emergency, the Mayor may impose curfews, close any or all private businesses, close any or all public buildings and places including streets, schools, and parks, and proclaim any such orders as are imminently necessary for the protection of life and property.

III. PHASES OF A PANDEMIC

The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed a global preparedness plan that includes a classification system for guiding planning and response activities for a pandemic. This classification system is comprised of six phases of increasing public health risk associated with the emergence and spread of a new virus which could lead to a pandemic.

The Federal Government approach to pandemic response is characterized in terms of the immediate and specific threat a pandemic virus poses to the U.S. population.

Chart 1, WHO PHASES AND FEDERAL RESPONSE STAGES TO A PANDEMIC, provides the framework for local response actions to be taken according to the WHO Phase and the Federal Government Response Stage.

Chart 1

WHO PHASES AND FEDERAL RESPONSE STAGES TO A PANDEMIC			
WHO PHASES			FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE STAGES
INTER-PANDEMIC PERIOD	1	No new virus subtypes have been detected in humans. A virus subtype that has caused human infection may be present in animals. If present in animals, the risk of disease is considered to be low.	0 New domestic animal outbreak in at-risk country
	2	No new virus subtypes have been detected in humans. However, a circulating animal virus subtype poses substantial risk of human disease.	
PANDEMIC ALERT PERIOD	3	Human infection(s) with a new subtype, but no human-to-human spread, or at most rare instances of spread to a close contact.	1 Suspected human outbreak overseas
	4	Small cluster(s) with limited human-to-human transmission but spread is highly localized, suggesting that the virus is not well adapted to humans.	2 Confirmed human outbreak overseas.
	5	Larger cluster(s) but human-to-human spread still localized, suggesting that the virus is becoming increasingly better adapted to humans, but may not yet be fully transmissible (substantial pandemic risk).	
PANDEMIC PERIOD	6	Pandemic phase: Increased and sustained transmission in general population.	3 Widespread human outbreaks to multiple locations overseas.
			4 First human case in North America.
			5 Spread throughout the United States.
			6 Recovery and preparation for subsequent waves.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

The actions listed below will be taken when the WHO Phase reaches 5-6 and the Federal Response Stage reaches 2. Prior actions would involve planning for the response to a pandemic.

A. ALL ORGANIZATIONS

1. Identify mission critical functions that must be maintained during a pandemic.
2. Identify staff who can be cross trained to perform emergency response functions.
3. Identify functions that could be temporarily discontinued or performed via computer interface for several weeks.
4. Be prepared to mobilize all necessary staff to support the response.

B. ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

1. Conduct monitoring and surveillance activities
2. Communicate public health directives to local health care facilities and to the Limestone County Emergency Management Agency (LCEMA)
3. Coordinate with the LCEMA regarding response activities
4. Coordinate with health care partners regarding decisions and strategies for reallocating resources and temporary restructuring of the health system operations in response to a pandemic.
5. Distribute public health resources, as needed

C. HOSPITALS, CLINICS, AND OTHER HEALTH CARE PARTNERS

1. Screen patients using provided guidance
2. Provide testing of those patients presenting with symptoms specific to the virus
3. Provide treatment and implement infection control strategies
4. Implement facility's infection control plan and procedures
5. Ensure EMS response capability
6. Provide appropriate PPE to employees

D. CORONER

1. Lead mass fatality response efforts
2. Coordinate with and support hospitals in mass fatality response

E. LIMESTONE COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

1. Coordinate activation and management of the Limestone County Emergency Operations Center
2. Provide accurate, timely information to the public regarding preparations for a pandemic, the impacts of the outbreak, local response actions and disease control recommendations
3. Coordinate with local health officials in providing resources necessary to the response
4. Coordinate with local health officials to assist in setting up facilities to be used during a pandemic

F. LIMESTONE COUNTY COMMISSION AND MAYORS

Local public officials may need to implement emergency measures to protect the health and safety of the citizens. These measures may be implemented as the situation evolves.

1. Proclaim a State of Emergency
2. Implement emergency protective measures, such as closing public facilities and cancelling local public gatherings
3. Implement "work from home" plans
4. Implement Continuity of Government and Operations Plan

V. PUBLIC INFORMATION

Public information will be a critical component in a pandemic response. All local information will be vetted through the LCEMA, who will be the lead agency for public information in Limestone County and its' jurisdictions.

In the event the situation causes LCEMA to become overwhelmed, the Limestone County Commission and the City of Athens will provide staff assistance to ensure the necessary information is being provided to the public in a timely manner.

A. GOALS

1. Provide accurate, consistent, and comprehensive information

2. Instill and maintain public confidence in the public health care system and its' ability to respond to and manage a pandemic
3. Information provided should contribute to maintaining order, minimizing public panic and fear, and facilitating public compliance
4. Address rumors, inaccuracies, and misperceptions as quickly as possible


VI. APPROVAL AND ADOPTION

This SOG has been reviewed by all tasked agencies and is adopted on the effective date.

Effective Date: March 12, 2020



Director, Limestone County Emergency Management Agency



Chairman, Limestone County Commission



Mayor, City of Athens