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Hospital Disaster Preparedness Conference Focuses on Community Planning, Teamwork

More than 900 Hospital Officials, Community Leaders Gather in Sacramento for 2-Day Meeting

SACRAMENTO (September 23, 2013) – In the aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombing one fact became exceedingly clear – responding to a disaster requires teamwork, open communication and thorough planning. This understanding also carries over to lessons learned from the recent Asiana plane crash in San Francisco and Hurricane Sandy. Recognizing the importance of learning from past disasters and from one another, California’s health care leaders have gathered in Sacramento to discuss emergency preparedness.

More than 900 people have registered to attend this year’s conference, which is sponsored by the California Hospital Association (CHA) and scheduled in conjunction with National Preparedness Month. Attendees include hospital staff, community responders and officials from state and local agencies. The eighth-annual conference is co-sponsored by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), California’s Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA).

“The theme, ‘We’re In This Together,’ speaks to the importance of relationships as hospitals strengthen their preparedness and response,” said Cheri Hummel, CHA’s Vice President of Disaster Preparedness. “The conference is a unique opportunity to connect with and learn from peers and industry experts, government and community partners.”

The conference will feature keynote speakers on a variety of topics and will highlight lessons learned from actual events. The conference will open with an address from Paul D. Biddinger, MD,

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FACEP, Director of Emergency Operations at Massachusetts General Hospital. Dr. Biddinger, who was five miles from the finish line of the Boston Marathon when two bombs exploded, will describe the ways in which the community and 27 local hospitals worked together to coordinate a rapid response despite a citywide lockdown and shelter-in-place order. This session is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, September 24 in the Sacramento Convention Center.

Another highlight of the conference is a breakout session led by Pat Frost, RN, MS, PNP, Director, Emergency Medical Services, Contra Costa Health Care Services; Malcolm Johnson, MD, Director, Emergency Department, Doctors Medical Center San Pablo; and Shirley Steinback, RN, Medical Group Administrator, Kaiser Permanente East Bay. This panel discussion will explain how community-based partnerships were utilized in response to a major fire at Chevron's Richmond oil refinery, as well as provide a comprehensive look into a true community medical surge event and explore the most challenging aspects of the operational area response. Leaders from two health care facilities that experienced the greatest surge in emergency department visits will share their experiences caring for patients in the midst of resource shortfalls.

The conference will close with a session in the Hyatt Ballroom on September 25 at 3:30 p.m. entitled "Teamwork in Action: The Asiana Plane Crash Response." Representatives from San Mateo County EMS Agency and San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center will speak to the Asiana plane crash and the operational and logistical coordination required during a mass casualty incident response, from first responder triage and treatment to patient care at area hospitals.

In addition to these topics, the conference will include model programs from 13 hospitals in the Best Practices Poster Showcase; 16 different breakout sessions on a wide range of topics, including essentials of emergency management programs and emergency response for loss of electronic medical records; and a 60-vendor exhibit show featuring products and services that can aid disaster preparedness and response. Conference sessions will take place at the Sacramento Convention Center and the Hyatt Regency hotel.

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