



OPPORTUNITIES

Events current at time of publication. Have a virtual resource or event to share? Email us!

- June 18 – [Infrastructure Security and Resilience Forum](#)
- July 12-15 – [45th National Hazards Workshop](#)
- July 19-23 – [30th Pacific Northwest Economic Region Annual Summit](#)

CONTACT

- Want to know more? Visit us at pnnl.gov/projects/nwrtc.
- Contact the NWRTC with questions and comments at nwrtc@pnnl.gov.

AROUND THE REGION IN HOMELAND SECURITY

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

The Northwest Regional Technology Center (NWRTC) is a virtual resource center, operated by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL), to support regional preparedness, resilience, response, and recovery. The center enables homeland security solutions for emergency responder communities and federal, state, and local stakeholders in the Northwest.

PANDEMIC CALLS FOR MINDFULNESS, METICULOUSNESS

Our NWRTC team was fortunate for the opportunity to sit down with Matt Riesenberg, Chief of Operations at King County Medic One. Like many response organizations in these trying times, his team has faced a rapidly evolving situation and we appreciate his taking the time to speak with us.



From the start, Riesenberg cited planning has been key to preparedness and response. “We were fortunate that our department’s current and past leadership saw the value in preparing for a pandemic. The county has a pandemic plan that has held up quite well during this emergency.”

The unexpected came with a nationwide shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE). “During this global crisis, it has been hard for our normal suppliers to keep pace with the orders we have been placing for critically needed personal protective supplies. Our pandemic stores and support from the regional emergency management system helped us keep pace with our needs, but it is still quite tenuous,” he said.

The influx of changing information added another layer. “No single medium-sized department would have the resources to research and operationalize every new piece of quality information. We have been working with our partner agencies to vet and develop best practices for the medical care of our patients and the personal protection of our medics,” Riesenberg said.

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While the influx of calls remained somewhat steady, the days soon became astronomically busier due to the complexity of this pandemic. “Medics’ lives have been full of disinfecting medic units and gear; self-checking symptoms throughout their 24-hour shift; meticulously donning and doffing protective equipment; and receiving constant updates on topics of medical care, infectious disease data, and personal safety steps to keep themselves safe,” Riesenberg said. “Back at our headquarters, we have been doing everything we can to order resources and supplies, write and review new policies and directives, and keep our people safe and our community well-served.”

“The way our people have rallied—it is uplifting to see how well the human component has adjusted.”

In the field, the rapid pandemic onset called for rapid response to protect not only patients but also first responders. Protocols for flu-like symptoms, chest pains, and shortness of breath soon called for full PPE and intensified screenings, in addition to the basic best practices recommended for all. “Stick to the basics: hand-washing, covering your cough, disinfect surfaces—but do it meticulously,” Riesenberg said. Stations have also incorporated social distancing such as staggering meals, wearing masks at the station, and limiting the number of staff on a call.

Riesenberg shared that this response has taken a true team effort. “These teams are coming to work every day under austere circumstances, working in cumbersome PPE, and dealing with the impact of this crisis with their families.” Those same people can be an even greater part of the solution, Riesenberg noted. “Some of the best ideas to tackle the issues associated with this outbreak have come from our own people. Our disciplines can be fairly regimented, but this crisis has required us to be innovative and open to new ideas. The way our people have rallied—it is uplifting to see how well the human component has adjusted.”

Looking forward, Riesenberg had a note of humanity, heart, and hope:



“We will need to mourn the losses worldwide. After that we will need to support our community to help its recovery. Long term, first responder and healthcare disciplines can learn from this disease response, and that includes funding for PPE stockpiles, periodic infection control training, annual fit-testing for masks, and having your primary operating model bolstered, but also having policy, procedures, and funding to support your backup plans—this crisis has really called upon our Plan B, C, and maybe more.”

To learn more about the King County Medic One, visit the [King County Public Health website](#).

A NOTE FROM NWRTC

Over the last decade, our center has partnered with public safety teams around the region and want to use this newsletter to highlight the public health and medical personnel, emergency managers, first responders, and others who are keeping us safe.

Additionally, NWRTC is home to a number of reports on regional response, long-term planning, and recovery from our outreach and collaborations over the years that might be relevant to our current crisis:
<https://www.pnnl.gov/nwrtp-publications>.

We hope you find these resources useful. We look forward to continuing to provide you news and resources from throughout the region in this newsletter and on our website:
<https://www.pnnl.gov/projects/nwrtp>.

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