

INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE
PORTLAND AREA
DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (DEHS)

Public Health Emergency Management Program

The following list summarizes the disaster-related services as a part of the standing agency mission in the event of a disaster.

- IHS is the primary Federal healthcare system, and health services provider, to the 566 Federally Recognized Tribes located in 36 States across the U.S. However, compared to our Federal, State, local and Tribal partners, IHS has a relatively small and limited support role in emergency and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery in Indian Country.
- IHS health providers and staff are often part of the given community affected by a local emergency/disaster. In such an event, they will continue to provide health services and community support for as long as they can sustain safe operations. As a broader Federal or State response arrives, IHS personnel may transition and serve as Federal-Tribal liaisons to ensure emergency/disaster response and recovery teams provide culturally sensitive and acceptable services to the affected Tribal communities.
- Current public laws, Federal policies, and individual Tribal governance decisions determine the role and relationship IHS has with each Tribe, and the corresponding level and methods of health services delivery, support, oversight, control, and resources IHS provides. These governing authorities often affect Federal-level support to Indian Country during emergencies and disasters.

The Portland Area Office, Emergency Management Program is under the authority of the Area Director and consists of an Emergency Management Coordinator, the Division of Environmental Health Services (DEHS) Director; the DEHS Institutional Environmental Health Officer, who acts as an alternate Coordinator; and the Medical Epidemiologist, who serves as the public health and medical expert.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND HAZARD CONTROL

The Emergency Management Coordinator manages activities related to emergency preparedness and physical security at the Area Office, IHS field offices and Service Units, and facilitates planning and response among IHS, Tribes, and local, State, and Federal external agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGO). Objectives include the following:

- Coordinate the IHS response to critical incidents or events affecting Tribes and Service Units in the Portland Area.
- Conduct hazard vulnerability analyses (HVA) and develop All-Hazard Emergency Operations Plan and Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) for the Area Office.
- Conduct physical security risk assessments of IHS-owned or leased facilities.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE SURVEILLANCE AND INVESTIGATION

The DEHS works very closely with the states and the IHS Medical Epidemiologist to monitor disease registries and surveillance systems to determine risk and prevent epidemics from occurring, and mitigate health impacts and injuries during disasters.

- Provide direct medical care and public health response assistance, including disaster assessment and disease/injury investigation, within capabilities.
- Monitor influenza-like illnesses and emerging infectious diseases.
- Provide ongoing coordination of health services through a unified incident management system during pandemics affecting the U.S. and Pacific Northwest.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, POLICY DEVELOPMENT, AND STUDY

The DEHS advises and consults in planning and policy development related to emergency management science and disaster medicine.

- Assure awareness and training of IHS staff with National Incident Management System and other emergency management requirements.
- Facilitate critical incident/disaster exercises and drills.
- Provide technical assistance to IHS Service Units and health clinics in conducting HVAs and updating All-Hazard Emergency Operations and COOP, as well as epidemic and pandemic flu planning and response.
- Liaison with NGOs and local, State, and Federal agencies in emergency/disaster declarations involving Tribal communities.