



PAIHS DEHS/IEH Program

Whiteriver IHS Hospital safety officer Frank Robinson is nominated for the Gary J. Gefroh Safety & Health Award for developing a model emergency management program and staffing a full time emergency manager position at the Whiteriver IHS Hospital.

The Whiteriver IHS Hospital is located in the White Mountains of Arizona and is frequently subject to a variety of disasters and emergencies. The hospital is a Joint Commission accredited facility with a 40 bed inpatient unit and a 5 bed labor and delivery department. The hospital is a Level III trauma center and has two operating rooms and a 13 bay Emergency Department. The hospital provides tertiary care for 17,000 active users from the White Mountain Apache Tribe and accrues over 4,800 inpatient days and 40,000 ER visits per year. The next closest hospital is located in Lakeside, Arizona 30 minutes away. There is an associated ambulatory health center in the community of Cibecue, an isolated community of 1,700 tribal members located 48 miles from Whiteriver. Mr. Frank Robinson has served as hospital safety officer since 2004. Mr. Robinson provides the environment of care, Life Safety compliance and emergency management support for the Whiteriver Service Unit.

Frank Robinson is a long-time champion of emergency management. Over the years Mr. Robinson has developed a model patient decontamination system, emergency communication system, incident command system and active shooter response system. Mr. Robinson procured a cache of equipment including 20 Powered Air Purifying Respirators, Tychem-F chemically resistant coveralls, a Wet Bulb Globe Thermometer (WBGT), Geiger counter and an external decontamination tent. Mr. Robinson recruited a team of health professionals to serve as front line first receivers for patient decontamination. Mr. Robinson established a training program including 8 hours of classroom and exercises per year in keeping with the OSHA *Best Practices for Hospital Based First Receivers*. Mr. Robinson championed the installation of an internal patient decontamination room in the ED including a waste holding tank and negative air filtration system. While the system has not been activated for an actual response, the facility is prepared for a CBRN event.

Recognizing limitations in communication, Frank Robinson collaborated with law enforcement, National Telecommunications and Information Administration and an Arizona based telecommunication experts to procure a radio system on the same frequency as community first responders. Due to Mr. Robinson's efforts, the hospital installed a mountainside repeater to ensure signal transmission in a rugged terrain. The hospital purchased a cache of 15 Motorola XTS 1500 radios. Lastly, Mr. Robinson successfully applied for system licensure from the NTIA in Washington, DC. The system has been used to communicate internally and with external partners during wildland fires and a bomb threat evacuation.

In 2019, Frank Robinson made critical contributions to Phoenix Area IHS emergency management system. In preparation for an approaching winter storm, the Hospital Command Center recognized the inability to evacuate high acuity patients to definitive care due to grounding of aircraft and impassible roadways. To address this problem, Mr. Robinson established a process between Navajo County ESF 1 Transportation and the Whiteriver IHS Hospital for patient transport during blizzard conditions. Upon request of the Hospital Command Center, the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) agreed to deploy a snow plow to the Whiteriver IHS Hospital to clear a path for an ambulance to transport a high acuity patient, such as high risk OB, to metro Phoenix for definitive care. This was a novel but important paradigm shift and established a process for Whiteriver and other rural hospitals statewide including hospitals served by Navajo Area and Phoenix Area.

Mr. Robinson facilitated the Whiteriver IHS Hospital's participation in the Arizona Department of Health Services patient surge exercise in March of 2019. This is remarkable as Whiteriver was the only hospital serving tribes in Arizona to participate. Mr. Robinson coordinated exercise activities with ADHS, the White Mountain Apache Tribe Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Coordinator, the Navajo County EOC and the Arizona Northern Region Healthcare Coalition. Under his leadership, the Whiteriver IHS hospital Incident Management Team simulated the emergency evacuation of patients due to a wildland fire. The IMT identified receiving hospitals and arranged transportation through emergency medical services. The IMT apprised Phoenix Area IHS, CMS and AHCCCS of their status throughout the drill. The IMT arranged oxygen support for patients discharged to home. The drill was a significant learning experience resulting in improved communication with tribal and state stakeholders.

Frank Robinson had developed a model active shooter preparedness program using Department of Homeland Security guidelines. Mr. Robinson collaborated with tribal law enforcement, Navajo County Sheriff's Office and the FBI field office in Pinetop, Arizona. Mr. Robinson held hospital-wide active shooter drills with law enforcement partners. In 2019, Mr. Robinson conducted department-specific drills to ensure staff were familiar with their lockable spaces, the exit routes and objects that can be used as improvised weapons in the event of an active shooter.

Lastly, Frank Robinson recognized that emergency management required a higher degree of attention than he could provide. To address this gap, Mr. Robinson collaborated with hospital leadership and obtained support to create an emergency manager position. Mr. Robinson wrote a position description and worked with Southwest Region Human Resources (SWRHR) to classify the position as a GS 12 Emergency Manager in the 601 Series. Mr. Robinson worked with SWRHR to post the position. He interviewed a series of candidates and filled the position in September 2019. Since reporting to duty, the new emergency manager has strengthened relationships with the tribal PHEP coordinator and tribal emergency manager by holding collaborative meetings. He has assumed management of the decontamination team including trainings and drills. Mr. Robinson arranged for the new emergency manager to attend the CDP Tribal Week in Anniston Alabama and Joint Commission EM Training in Orlando Florida in early 2020.

In his work as an Area Institutional Environmental Health Officer, CAPT Gary J. Gefroh would have recognized that safety officers routinely lead hospital and clinic emergency management programs. To that end, he would have likely considered Mr. Robinson's work in emergency management to be groundbreaking. As an IEH professional, CAPT Gefroh knew healthcare facilities are key community assets especially in rural and remote tribal communities. He would have been extremely proud of the work Mr. Robinson has done in 2019 and in the preceding years. For this reason, Mr. Frank Robinson is nominated for the 2019 Gary J. Gefroh Health and Safety Award.