

2022 Gary J. Gefroh Safety and Health Award Winner: CDR David Bales

The purpose of the Gary J. Gefroh Safety and Health Award is to recognize significant contributions by an individual or group resulting in improved healthcare safety and/or infection control conditions at an IHS and/or Tribal healthcare program. This award is sponsored by the IHS Division of Environmental Health and Engineering. The 2022 recipient of the Gary J. Gefroh Award is proudly presented to the Oklahoma Area Office's CDR David Bales.

CDR David Bales has achieved significant contributions and impact within multiple roles resulting in improved healthcare safety and infection control conditions throughout the IHS Oklahoma City Area (OCA). CDR Bales serves in an Area position with hybrid duties as the Area Institutional Environmental Health Officer and the Area Injury Prevention Specialist. Areas of expertise and impact have included workplace violence prevention, emergency management, industrial hygiene, infection prevention, COVID incident management, healthcare accreditation and community injury prevention.

CDR Bales has led the development of a Workplace Violence Prevention (WVP) Policy Template that was utilized at all IHS OCA Healthcare facilities and shared with all IHS areas to assist each facility with improving policy and procedures for the safety of employees, patients and visitors resulting in the establishment of a standardized WVP Policy for all OCA IHS Healthcare facilities and the OCAO. He trained all IHS OCA staff (>2,400 staff) on WVP and initiated and led the establishment of an Oklahoma City Area Office (OCAO) panic button notification system increasing the security and emergency response for our patients, staff and visitors. This initiative included: establishing a list of panic button recipients (31) and responders (18); determining the equipment needed for audible notification; coordinating the contracting and programming of a panic button system; educating panic button recipients and the response team; and conducting initial/routine testing/drills to ensure an effective staff response upon activation of the panic button system.

To increase the emergency preparedness communication capabilities at the OCAO, he coordinated the selection, purchasing, programming and installation of a comprehensive two-way radio communication system. CDR Bales secured and registered three digital UHF radio frequencies and purchased 22 two-way radios increasing communication capabilities throughout the OCAO and the NSSC warehouse. To insure effective use, he developed the OCA IHS Area Response Team Guide and trained OCA security response team on the security procedures and new radios.

Through his industrial hygiene expertise, CDR Bales led the implementation of an electronic ventilation assessment tool to assist healthcare facilities meet the required air changes per hour, pressure relationship and inform staff of the minutes required for 99.9% removal efficiency. This tool reduced the time required to conduct ventilation assessments by 50% and ensured staff were aware of the time required between infectious patients to prevent the spread of infectious disease. He also conducted over 100 ventilation assessments of patient care rooms during the pandemic. To prevent the spread of Covid-19 after room is utilized for known or suspected COVID-19 patient, he provided staff guidelines for the removal efficiencies of 99% of airborne contaminants.

In response to the risk for transmission of infection associated with critical dental instruments being reprocessed, he created a new dental sterilization training. This included providing multiple trainings for

78 staff members from 13 facilities throughout the OCA. He also created a Dental Sterilization Checklist to assist staff and surveyors ensure all dental sterilization process are being performed in accordance with the CDC guidelines.

An integral part of the Area's COVID mitigation and response, CDR Bales coordinated the revisions, training and implementation of the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Burn Rate Calculators (BRC) used to track the burn rate & inventory of PPE across all 12 IHS Areas. This invaluable tool was adopted by IHS Headquarters, and made accessible on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 website for all healthcare facilities throughout the nation to utilize. To fill critical PPE needs, he provided technical assistance for PPE allocations to ensure staff are properly protected. This included the coordination, transfer and allocations of over 2.7 million PPE items across the OCA. Leading an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19, he also coordinated a team to conduct monthly PPE checks within the OCA healthcare facilities (coordinated the development of a COVID-19 PPE Checklist, trained 8 member team, and assisted with follow-up & reported to the Incident Commander).

In continuing emergency management support, CDR Bales prepared the OCAO for reconstitution by implementing protective measures including protective barriers, hand sanitizer, disinfectant and face coverings resulting in no OSHA recordable OCAO illnesses or injuries from 2020-2022. CDR Bales' emergency management leadership includes COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Cold Storage Planning and Implementation which involved programming data loggers, development of procedures & forms, training an 8 member team. The impact was the coordinated delivery of over 31K doses refrigerated/frozen vaccine and ancillary kits to 19 different tribal, urban and IHS healthcare facilities covering over 28K miles with no vaccine compromised. Further contributions included coordinating the safety & traffic flow of a vaccination event at the OCAO and participated in multiple vaccination events resulting in over 3K vaccinations administered.

To support and advance the Area's healthcare accreditation, CDR Bales serves as the Safety Subject Matter Expert on the Mock survey team for the OCA assisting OCA facilities with Safety Officer recruitment, position description development, interviewing, training, coverage during vacancies and technical assistance. This technical assistance in Joint Commission compliance lead to successful surveys for two Oklahoma City Area facilities maintaining their accreditation and successfully passing the environment of care, life safety, and emergency management sections of the surveys.

The expertise and impact of CDR Bales extends to his duties as the Area Injury Prevention Specialist, such as how he initiated and led the implementation of a Locking Medication Bottle Project at the Claremore Indian Hospital (CIH). This project consists of securing a funding source through an IHS grant, identifying high risk patients, purchasing/coordinating delivery of 500 locking medication bottles, developing educational materials, coordinating training CIH Pharmacists, educating patients on opioid problem, disposal options and safe medication storage, obtaining HHS survey approval and implementing the survey. In an effort to sustain the Claremore Indian Hospital's Labor & Delivery child passenger safety program with a spent seat supply, identified a grant totaling \$10,775 to purchase 100 child passenger seats through Safe Kids Worldwide, authored the project proposal, and secured leadership approval for funding.