Pandemic Planning: What Cities Should Be Thinking About
City Operations and Emergency Planning

The current issue facing us is managing an unknown risk for public health. The risk to the public in Kansas of infection from this novel coronavirus is low, although the emergence of any new virus presents a challenge to public health and health care systems. This remains an evolving situation.

Do not panic. This webinar is meant to encourage your city to think about emergency planning – not just current events. Emergency planning is in response to known and unknown threats including natural disasters, annual influenza season, and city-specific instances that could occur based on special circumstances or industries located in your jurisdiction.
There are 3 state agencies that need to be communicating before, during and after an incident (natural disaster, public health, terrorism, etc.)

The state/KDEM and KDHE are the primary agencies that work on emergency issues. In an emergency, county emergency managers are your POC with KDEM. For this current situation, KDHE is managing and monitoring the situation.

The point of this diagram is that you should realize that working with your county EM is critically important. They manage the deployment efforts of supplies, funds and materials needed in an emergency. Be in contact with your
City Operations and Emergency Planning

- Do you have a city emergency operations plan?
- Does your county have an emergency operations plan? (Check online)
- Does your plan include community stakeholders?
  - Schools
  - Health Departments
  - Higher Education
  - Healthcare
  - Local Media
  - Businesses & Employers

[Link](http://www.kansastag.go/) - county by county emergency plans
An Emergency Operations Plan does not have to be overly technical. A plan is an overview of emergency organization and policies. It describes the overall approach to disaster response and recovery operations and assigns responsibilities for emergency tasks. It should be reviewed annually and be functional within your county emergency management planning.
Hazards You Should Have in Your Plan

- Flooding (including flash flooding)
- Tornadoes
- High winds/severe storms
- Power outages

Emergency operations plans should address various types of hazards and how your city would respond in an emergency. In Kansas, you should be thinking about flooding (flash and long-term), tornadoes, high winds/severe storms, cyberattacks, power outages, terrorism/mass shooting, nuclear/hazardous/chemical disasters, excessive heat/drought, wildfires, and snow/ice. NOTE: Your city staff should be familiar with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command Structure (ICS) for responding to a disaster – these frameworks are very helpful for organization and response.
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Good Examples

- Talk to your county emergency management department about existing planning documents.
- Check to see if they have a Local Emergency Planning Committee that is working with the local health department on the current situation.


Personnel Considerations

- NOW is the time to be discussing your policies and how you will be able to keep a continuity of operations?
- What are your essential city functions and how do you staff these operations (at a minimum level) to provide a continuity of operations?

Personnel Considerations
• What does your personnel policy say about essential and non-essential employees?
• What are your essential city functions and how do you staff these operations (at a minimum level) to provide a continuity of operations?

Public Safety – Police, Fire and EMS
Electricity
Water and wastewater
Sanitation (reduced collections.)
Administration
Communications – Public updates, website, social media, etc.
Essential vs. Non-Essential Staff

Your city needs to discuss essential functions.
- Public Safety – Police, Fire and EMS
- Electricity
- Public Works
- Water and wastewater
- Sanitation (reduced collections.)
- Administration
- Communications – Public updates, website, social media, etc.

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Legal & Policy Considerations
What does your sick policy say?

Does your policy state what determines when an employee is required to come to work or what conditions determine they are sick and cannot work?

What does your sick leave policy say? Does your policy state what determines when an employee is required to come to work or what conditions determine they are sick and cannot work?
**NOW** is the time to be looking proactively at policies to determine how your city would handle issues including sick leave, working from home, compensatory time and making decisions on how you would determine requirements for employees to stay home or come to work (depending on the situation).
Work from Home?

• Can any of your employees work from home if they do not have to physically be in the office?
• How do you determine work-from-home options and do you have technology in place to manage tele-work?

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Other Administrative Considerations

- How will you handle billing and payments?
- How will you ensure vendors and employees are paid?

How will you handle payroll and administration?
How will you handle collection of water bills?
Ensure vendors and employees are paid

THIS IS NOT AN EXHAUSTIVE LIST
Local Governments in an Emergency

These are the steps a local government may take as part of an emergency:
Declaration of Emergency (as per emergency plan)
Curfews Can Be Established
Public-Facing Operations:

Governing Body

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Declaration of Emergency (as per emergency plan)
Curfews Can Be Established
Call Special City Council meetings or extend emergency/continuance of special City Council meeting daily at a set time

As Required:
The Mayor/President of the Council can be at EOC (If needed for operations, not management should provide daily briefings.)
Conduct Daily Informational Briefing to Residents
Meetings

In extreme situations, if a meeting had to be cancelled, postponed, or the governing body wanted to meet virtually/by phone, cities need to think **very carefully and in advance**, about how that would occur and still meet KOMA laws.

Residents still need to be able to hear/participate in a meeting and that would be very challenging. All KOMA laws on noticing for time, date, agenda, etc. still would need to occur.

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Be Authorized to Speak

Don’t forget to assign a spokesperson for the city – make sure this person knows ICS and is authorized to speak. Make sure they are the right person to speak to the public on behalf of the city. Limit all official communications to the PIO. Governing body members should defer to the PIO.

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City Buildings & Public Spaces

- Encourage increased sanitation methods in public spaces, offices, community gathering locations (libraries, schools, etc.).
- A city does have the ability to close public buildings and cancel events. This should be a decision that is made with input from local/state health department, city administration, department staff and other community stakeholders.

Take the first steps of increasing sanitation methods in public spaces, offices, community gathering locations (libraries, schools, etc.)

If a public health emergency would be declared, the city does have the right to close public buildings and cancel events. This should be a decision that is made with input from local/state health department, city administration, department staff and other community stakeholders.


In a disaster, remember that it is our job as local government officials to keep calm and clearly communicate with our residents.
5 Key Points for Crisis Communications

- Who is affected??
- When did this happen or when did we know about it?
- What is happening? What are we doing about it?
- Where is this happening?
- What should the public do to stay safe? Why do they need to pay attention to this information?

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“Kansas has been prepared for positive cases of novel coronavirus and will continue to work alongside local and federal public health partners in addressing the potential spread of the virus,” Governor Laura Kelly said. “It is our main priority to keep Kansans healthy and safe. We want Kansans educated on all aspects related to COVID-19.”

The case is located in Johnson County and the patient is currently in home isolation, following the guidance of the CDC. KDHE continues to work with the local health department and CDC to identify and contact people who may have come into contact with the individual while they were infectious, and will monitor them for fever and respiratory symptoms. The patient is a female under the age of 50 years old. No other information will be provided about the patient.

“We continue to monitor the situation closely. In the meantime, the general public can help. Please practice proper public health hygiene,” Dr. Lee Norman, Secretary of KDHE, said. “Wash your hands and stay home if you’re sick.”

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What is happening? What are we doing about it?
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Communicating in a Crisis

- In times of crisis, acknowledge people’s fear and express empathy for those affected.
- Offer reasonable assurance and promise that you will continue to provide information.
- Follow through with regular updates.

In times of crisis, acknowledge people’s fear and express empathy for those affected. Offer reasonable assurance and promise that you will continue to provide information. Follow through with regular updates.
• Local leaders must ensure that accurate, timely information is communicated to your residents about your emergency response plans, how residents should be preparing at home and how/when they should seek medical care.

• Included in that coordination is ensuring that schools are relaying accurate information to parents and families, including messaging that might be helpful for children to understand.

The NLC’s recent blog on managing through the coronavirus outbreak stated:

Local leaders must ensure that accurate, timely information is communicated to your residents about your emergency response plans, how residents should be preparing at home and how/when they should seek medical care.

Included in that coordination is ensuring that schools are relaying accurate information to parents and families, including messaging that might be helpful for children to understand.
Use Official Messaging

Relying on official sources to guide your efforts, including local and state health departments, local healthcare centers, and information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is critical. Utilize social media, community organizations and official government channels to share health and hygiene recommendations with your residents as well as other pertinent local information.
Use city social media channels to provide information.
Resources

- CDC
- KDHE
- Local Health Department
- National Institutes of Health

https://www.newscenter1.tv/crisis-communication-researcher-shares-5-key-principles-that-officials-should-use-in-coronavirus/
What We Will Continue to Do…

We will continue to stay in communication with KDHE and other state agencies.

Sign up for League News if you would like to get information on current updates and municipal information.
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