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Appendix 3.5.5 wcmhpc regional communications plan

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##  Purpose

The purpose of this document is to establish a Communications Plan for the West Central Minnesota Healthcare Preparedness Coalition (WCMHPC) that is aligned with the Minnesota Statewide Interoperable Communication Plan. This document outlines the communication systems available to the WCMHPC. Refer to Chapter 2: WCMHPC Regional Response Plan for operational guidelines.

## Objectives

* + 1. Provide a coordinated, coalition driven process to ensure the comprehensive implementation of communications interoperability strategies outlined within the regional and local planning documents.
		2. This plan will provide information on the available communication resources needed to assist in the WCMHPC’s interoperable communications during an event and/or response.
		3. Provide a mechanism to request and provide for sharing of assets between the West Central Region and key partners.
		4. To document equipment, information, policies, procedures, and systems that provide operational stability for primary and redundant communications in the West Central HSPC Region.

## Information Sharing Process

As identified in the base Response plan, coordination of relevant regional healthcare information will be performed by the Region.

Coordination of State, Regional, and Local partners is depicted in the graph below.



## Essential Elements of Information

Sharing information among regional partners is important to coordination of the response.

1. Types of information that could be shared:
	* + 1. Facility operating status
			2. Facility structural integrity
			3. The status of evacuations/shelter in-place operations
			4. Critical medical services (e.g., trauma, critical care)
			5. Critical infrastructure status (e.g., electric, water, sanitation, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning)
			6. Critical healthcare delivery status (e.g., surge status, bed status, deaths, medical and pharmaceutical supplies, and medical equipment)
			7. Staffing status
			8. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) status involving patient transport, tracking, and availability.
			9. Other information as applicable or determined through coordination.
2. The frequency of sharing will be determined by the incident.
3. The authority to receive and share this information will be determined by the incident.
4. The authority to use and release this information will be determined by the incident.
5. Information and data deemed to be sensitive or confidential will receive protection in accordance with impacted facilities’/Agency’s policies and procedures as directed by the Minnesota Department of Health.
6. The legal, statutory, privacy and intellectual property considerations will be honored and protected as to the extent possible during any real-world response.

## Interoperable Communication Systems

1. State Systems
2. **Health Alert Network**

The Health Alert Network (HAN) is a statewide system for rapid and broad dissemination of information of a developing condition, event or other crucial health information. Each public health agency, after receiving a HAN message from MDH, forwards the message to appropriate local contacts including behavioral health contacts. Hospitals also receive Health Alerts. All appropriate contacts should receive the health alert within one hour and health advisories in 24 hours. Local HANs are tested to determine the rapidity with which partners can receive messages and respond. The goal is for 100% response within 2 hours.

1. **MDH SharePoint**

The MDH SharePoint is a password protected Web portal to information, technology tools, messaging capabilities, and sensitive document posting. MDH and its partners use the SharePoint for three functions: messaging; data collection and report generation; and secure storage of sensitive documents that need to be shared with MDH staff and partners. <https://connect.mn.gov/sites/MDH/oep/rc/SitePages/Home.aspx>

1. **MDH RedCap**
The MDH SharePoint site is password protected and available to invited partners. The use of RedCap is to provide a secure site for healthcare coalitions to track deliverables and complete tasks identified by MDH EPR.
2. **Minnesota system for Tracking Resources, Alerts and Communication (MNTrac)**

MNTrac is a database-driven web application intended as a statewide communication solution. MNTrac can track beds, pharmaceuticals, and resource availability from all designated facilities within the state as well as providing for allocation of these resources to support surge capacity needs. Hospital bed diversion status, emergency event planning, emergency chat, and alert notifications are possible in real time. Information submitted by healthcare facilities can be imported to other systems and agencies to improve communications and share pertinent information. Standard and ad hoc reports can turn data into useful information. www.mntrac.org

1. **Satellite Phones**

The MDH District Office located in Fergus Falls maintains a satellite phone which is used by the regional PHPC and/or district office staff.

1. **Teams**

The State of Minnesota uses virtual Meeting platforms to provide on-demand collaboration, online meeting, web conferencing and videoconferencing applications. This system may be used during an event or healthcare response to disseminate information to the eight HPP healthcare regions as well as other coalition partners.

1. **Regional and Local Communication Systems**
2. **Voice Communications**
	* + - 1. Cellular Telephone

The West Central Region’s RHPCs and staff have cellular telephones from several different cellular providers which allows for better statewide coverage in the case of an event or response.

* + - * 1. 24/7 Emergency Contact

The 24/7 Emergency contact phone is housed at Saint Cloud Hospital and is answered 24 hours a day. The number is (320) 654-2720. The callers will request one of the Regional Coordinators and if that person is unavailable the call center has a list of Regional Staff numbers to call as an alternate.

* + - * 1. Conference Call

The West Central Region maintains a conference call line through Teams audio conference solutions. The audio conference system is available 24/7 and is accessible from any location with a phone.

* + - * 1. Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS)

GETS can be accessed if there is a dial-tone. GETS can be for long-distance calls or during times of local system congestion and damage. All regional coalition partners are encouraged to obtain a GETS card.

* + - * 1. Wireless Priority Service (WPS)

WPS is the wireless complement to GETS. Calls are queued for the next available radio channel by calling \*272. Currently, WPS is available in Minnesota through Cingular, Nextel, Sprint, T-Mobile, and Verizon. All regional coalition partners are encouraged to sign up for a WPS with their wireless provider.

* + - * 1. Plain Old Telephone System (POTS)

POTS telephones remain a crucial communications portal. POTS are fixed numbers that can be forwarded to cellular devices which allows staff to be mobile but using a fixed telephone number. West Central RHPCs maintain a current list of coalition partner POTS telephone numbers.

1. **Two-Way Radio Systems**
2. “ARMER” 800 MHz Radio System

The Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response (ARMER) is used as Minnesota’s strategy for public safety communication interoperability. The ARMER plan provides all public safety / service entities a shared platform to provide for interoperability.

All West Central Hospitals have both a base station as well as several handhelds.

The West Central HPP Region maintains a cache of 800 MHz Radios and a dedicated West Central Region Talk Group

The West Central Regional Coordinator has a radio to support communications.

1. Ham Radios

HAM radio can serve multiple purposes within a hospital or health department. The most obvious function is for HAM radio to be used to communicate with emergency responders outside the hospital. The West Central Regions’ Ham operators link county EOCs, hospitals and public health agencies in the West Central region.

1. VHF Radio System

The West Central Region currently has a bank 20 handheld radios that utilize 6 channels with an estimated 2–5-mile range. These assets are to be distributed to West Central Coalition Partners as an independent system available when all other radio systems are down.

1. **Electronic**
2. FAX

FAX Transmission Systems are included in most copier/scanner/fax systems. The West Central Region has access to three portable systems which allows for portable as well as redundant backup for document/information transmittal.

1. E-Mail

The West Central Region RHPCs maintain individual and group e-mail lists of all coalition partners who will allow for a timely dissemination of information in daily operations as well as during an event and/or response.

1. Electronic Document Portability

Document Scanner Systems are included in most copier/scanner/fax systems. The West Central Region has access to three portable systems which allows for portable as well as redundant backup for document/information transmittal via e-mail attachments as well as document storage and uploads to cloud or server based storage sites.

1. Regional Website at [www.cwchealthcarecoalitions.org](http://www.cwchealthcarecoalitions.org)

The coalition website provides the public access to resources and templates as well as a schedule of our coalition activities. Members of our coalition, that are registered with the website, have complete access to our website which includes access to meeting minutes, coalition specific documents, training opportunities, contact information, and a web-based chat room. This chat room will serve as a back up to MNTrac and can be used to share real time information.

1. Virtual Private Network (VPN)

The West Central Region’s RHPCs and all regional staff have VPN to St. Cloud Hospital which is the Regional Healthcare Resource Center for the West Central and Central HPP Regions as well as the MN-MMT. Additionally, several of the West Central Region’s Coalition partners have VPN access to their agencies which can be used during an event or response.

1. Wireless Cellular Internet Systems

The West Central Region has access to three Wireless Cellular Internet Systems to provide for wireless internet systems in the ACS, Region offices, and other essential areas of operation where critical electronic information transmission and reception is needed.

1. Teams

The West Central Region may also use Teams to facilitate regional meetings or coordination needs.

1. Survey Monkey/Microsoft Forms

The West Central Region has created a Survey Monkey and a Microsoft Forms survey to gather information easily and electronically from the WCMHPC members. This survey could be replaced by a phone call or email to gather information.

1. MNTrac

The West Central Region may also use MNTrac independently of MDH activation. MNTrac alerts and coordination rooms can be activated by RHPC or HMAC personnel.

1. SharePoint

All current regional files will be housed in the WCMHPC SharePoint site. Files include all regional plans, budgets, and contact lists.

# Approvals and Revisions

This plan is reviewed annually and updated as necessary. All changes will be voted upon by the Advisory Committee. Any revisions will be noted within this table.

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| **Purpose/Changes** | **Date** |
| Updated to correct grammatical errors and update links | June 2023 |
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