



## South Central Public Health Partnership

### TRAINING PROFESSIONALS TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC

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## **Improving Disaster Communication: The Role of Poison Centers in Public Health**

### **Instructors:**

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### **Course Description**

Disaster and mass event situations can lead to uncertainty, fear, anxiety and stress. In these situations, community members need effective and timely information. Poison centers currently offer advice to the general public and the healthcare system on a wide range of poisonings and toxicological issues. They are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and are staffed by specialists who are trained and experienced in handling individuals in extremely stressful situations.

Even though poison centers assume a primary role in poisoning prevention and education, they additionally play a major role in disaster communication, surveillance and public health. Faculty will present the ways poison control has previously connected communities with vital public health information and the future possibilities of collaborations between public health and poison control. Recent incidents such as the SARS outbreak and spinach contamination with E. coli highlight the potential role of poison centers in enhancing the public health response to mass events and disasters.

This course will also discuss the potential for public health and poison centers to develop plans for communication and coordination during disasters and mass events. Through such strategic alliances, public health will be able to quickly provide poison centers with vital information, reliably refer the community to poison center phone lines for essential information, and be able to effectively respond to the event in the field as needed. NOTE: This course was originally delivered as a satellite broadcast.

### **Learning Objectives**

- List three reasons individuals require immediate poison control information during disasters and mass events.
- Describe the history, organization and role of poison centers in poisoning prevention and education.
- Illustrate the historical role of poison centers in disaster communication and public health response using specific examples.
- List the many roles of public health during disasters and mass events.
- Discuss potential future poison centers' roles in disaster communication and public health response.

## **Competencies**

Describe the public health role in emergency response in a range of emergencies that might arise.

\* *Bioterrorism and Emergency Readiness*

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