



## Highlights:

[Opioid and Prescription Overdoses Rising](#)

[Open for Comments: Public Health, Cyber Risk](#)

[The Role of the Emergency Manager](#)

[Interacting with Mentally Ill Persons On-Scene](#)

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# The InfoGram

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## Opioid and Prescription Overdoses Rising

Information shows that both prescription and opioid overdoses are rising, with more people dying of overdoses than either car accidents or homicides. The majority of overdoses were from prescription drugs. Two new resources are now available for public health, community leaders, and first responders trying to combat the problem.

The [Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit](#), developed by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), aims to guide communities and local governments to develop policies and actions to prevent overdoses from opiates. Opiates can include illegal street drugs such as heroin as well as prescribed pain killers like morphine, oxycodone, methadone, codeine, and others.

The toolkit is broken down by audience to include community leaders, first responders, patients, prescribers, and survivors or family members. The 8-page guide for first responders specifically discusses symptoms of a potential overdose victim, the signs of opiate withdrawal, and how to use naloxone hydrochloride to counteract the possible fatal respiratory distress caused by opiate overdose.

A new resource provided by Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation gives public health agencies and community leaders a better idea of the prescription drug problem in their state. The interactive tool shows the [statistical mortality rate for drug overdoses by state](#) for the past 30 years and also shows what preventative measures each state has in place to prevent dependence and overdose of prescription drugs.

(Source: [SAMHSA](#) and the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#))

## Open for Comments: Public Health, Cyber Risk

The Department of Health and Human Services is accepting comments on proposed "Guidance for Temporary Reassignment of State and Local Personnel during a Public Health Emergency." The [Federal Register Notice](#) (PDF, 174.6 Kb) and [guidance are available online](#). The deadline for comments is December 17, 2013.

An amended section of the Public Health Service (PHS) Act gives the Secretary of HHS discretion to authorize the temporary reassignment of state, tribal, and local personnel during a declared Federal public health emergency upon request by a state or tribal organization or their designee. "This new provision provides an

*The InfoGram is distributed weekly to provide members of the Emergency Services Sector with information concerning the protection of their critical infrastructures.*

important flexibility to state and local health departments and tribal organizations during an event requiring all the resources at their disposal.”

In February, the President signed an Executive Order to manage cyber risk and increase the capabilities of critical infrastructure to withstand cyber attacks. The [National Institute of Standards and Technology](#) (NIST) is [requesting public comment](#) on the preliminary version of the cybersecurity framework. The public comment period is open until December 15, 2013.

The preliminary cybersecurity framework was developed based on a Request For Information released in February 2013 and several public workshops. The finalized Framework will be a multi-faceted approach for owners and operators of critical infrastructure to manage cybersecurity-related risk while protecting business confidentiality, individual privacy, and civil liberties.

(Source: [NIST](#) and [HHS](#))

## The Role of the Emergency Manager

With slimmer budgets and tighter resource allocation, emergency management offices are finding they must justify their existence to decision-makers who may not have a good understanding of their role. The Regional Catastrophic Planning Team for New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania has released a short video which efficiently describes the role of the emergency manager.

“[The Essential Emergency Manager: What They Do and How They Do It](#)” outlines the role emergency managers play between policy makers and the “boots on the ground” responders during a disaster. Their role as coordinator helps the response logistics move along in an orderly manner, shortening recovery time in the process.

The goal is to help community officials understand the need for and benefit of a centralized hub for information, consequence, and resource management in order to keep the message on target and response defined.

(Source: [Regional Catastrophic Planning Team of NY, NJ, CT, and PA](#))

## Interacting with Mentally Ill Persons On-Scene

The [Firefighters Support Foundation](#) (FSF) released their new free 30-minute video “Interacting With the Mentally Ill at Emergency Scenes.” The video is presented to explain how to identify a mentally ill person, describes why they require different communication tactics than usually employed, and to outline a 5-step process for communicating and interacting effectively with them.

Most training and direction currently available is specific to law enforcement response. This training takes a broader view of emergency scenes in general and the need to gain required information while maintaining safety.

“The focus of the program is on obtaining time-critical information in short time frames during the chaos of any emergency scene – fire, EMS, law enforcement, etc.” The video training is available free through [Fire Engineering Magazine](#) to all members of public safety and emergency management agencies.

(Source: [Firefighters Support Foundation](#))

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