

RARET HCA Brokerage Emergency Preparedness Workshop

Bellevue Hopelink, Quarterly Providers Meeting

November 16th, 2018

Workshop Objectives

- Introduce the Regional Alliance for Resilient and Equitable Transportation (RARET)
- Explore the potential role of a transportation provider in an emergency
- Understand the basics of Business Continuity Planning
- Identify how emergency managers can support transportation providers

Participants

Fourteen transportation providers attended the training. Attendees represented owners, upper management positions, billing specialists, and dispatchers from twelve agencies centered in King and Snohomish Counties.

- Assure Ride
- Eastgate Mobility
- Eastside for Hire
- Easy Access
- MedStar Transportation
- Northwest Transport
- Safe Transportation
- Sound Cabulance
- STITA Taxi
- Tri-County Cabulance
- U.S. Care
- Yellow Cab

Workshop Format

Each attendee was provided an emergency workbook, which was adapted from previous versions to simplify language and jargon. Ann Kennedy, Deborah Whitmer, Donna Sansoterra, Serina McWha, and Randy Fay assisted with finalizing the workbook. The workshop incorporated activities from the workbook, table discussion, and a presentation facilitated by David Lynch and Randy Fay. *The presentation covered the following topics:*

- RARET Overview
- Emergency Management Role
- Business Continuity Basics
- Identifying Essential Services
- Communication Tips
- Staff, Driver Preparedness
- Business Go-Kits
- Finances, Reimbursement

Survey

RARET staff collected information about the operations and preparedness efforts of each transportation provider, to serve as a baseline measure of capacity to assist in an emergency and gauge interest in future RARET activities. 11 of 14 participants completed the survey.

Operations

RARET HCA Brokerage Emergency Preparedness Workshop

Bellevue Hopelink, Quarterly Providers Meeting

November 16th, 2018

- 55% of agencies are willing to provide services outside of their typical service area during an emergency.
- 91% of providers reported having accessible (lift or ramp-equipped) vehicles available. STITA Taxi only uses Priuses and does not have accessible vehicles.
- Two providers (Northwest Transport and Yellow Cab) own or operate their own vehicle maintenance facility.

Emergency Preparedness

- 64% of providers agencies had an emergency plan.
- 45% of providers were unsure how to contact local EM office during declared emergency.
- In an emergency, 55% providers reported that in an emergency, they would continue normal operations. 45% of providers reported they would provide life-sustaining operations only. No providers answered that they would stop all operations in an emergency.

Primary barriers to operating during an emergency (Ranked high-low)

1. Staff/driver availability (81%)
2. Driver safety (72%)
3. Damage to vehicles (54%)
4. Insurance/liability (45%)
5. Financial reimbursement (36%)
6. Driver training (27%)

RARET Interest

- Of the 11 providers surveyed, 91% are interested in being a transportation provider during an emergency if they can operate and compensation was offered for the provided services. One respondent answered that their interest “depends on conditions.”
- 91% of providers are interested in resources for general emergency planning assistance, and 64% are interested in personal preparedness training for staff.
- 100% of providers are willing to be contacted about future emergency planning training opportunities

Agency Preparedness Best Practices

Several agencies shared about preparedness steps they've taken to ensure their organization is better equipped during an emergency:

- Met with all senior assisted-living facilities within service area and collected emergency plans from each facility.
- Identified methods to contact the Red Cross about potential shelter locations.
- Distributed agency emergency plan to all staff and drivers.
- Established a relationship with the local gas station, to facilitate alternate payment methods if credit card payment is unavailable (i.e. extended power outage)
- Used shuttle to transport drivers to work if they are snowed in.
- Created staff roster of availability during emergency or adverse weather event

RARET HCA Brokerage Emergency Preparedness Workshop

Bellevue Hopelink, Quarterly Providers Meeting

November 16th, 2018

- Established list of drivers that are willing to be called in after hours if needed
- Used pay incentives (i.e. 50% higher pay) to offset driver shortages. The agency acknowledged that this sometimes results in negative profits, but prioritized ride fulfillment over temporary financial losses.
- Cross-trained all critical staff on dispatch duties.
- Backed up driver manifests so they are available online/offline.
- Established mobile satellite offices for phone and computer systems to allow for operations to continue at any location.

Discussion Takeaways

- **Untapped potential to supplement transportation system with taxi/for-hire drivers in an emergency:** For-hire agencies have large fleets, and relative flexibility with the services they can offer. However, due to drivers' status as subcontractors, and risk of potential vehicle damage, it is critical to increase buy-in from drivers and determine ways to incentivize drivers to operate during an emergency.
- **Adverse Weather Preparedness Training:** Many providers were interested in an Adverse Weather Preparedness training or seminar for drivers. A few taxi providers expressed that an opportunity for certification would be beneficial for drivers, who would value the appreciation.
- **Limited trip demand:** The influx of trip cancellations during adverse weather results in drivers without trips to fulfill, and drivers are sent home even when available and willing to operate.
- **Limited incentive for operating:** Some providers reported that there is no incentive to risk damage to vehicles or other complications, when they could just wait to operate under normal conditions.
- **What is our first step in emergency?** Providers want to know what to do as their "first step" in a major emergency or adverse weather event. Brokerage staff clarified that providers should check in with Brokerage to be notified of service changes, but this process should be defined for any outside providers.
- **Potential to partner with Medical Reserve Corps** (volunteer medical professionals) if transportation providers are needed to transport individuals who are medically fragile (i.e. if emergency medical services are overburdened)