



RC/PIO News & Notes |

January 23, 2026

A Weekly Update from **Eric Jens, Risk Communicator** – Georgia Department of Public Health
Contents may be FYUO – For Your Use Only

News & Notes

This week we have numerous topics to cover and some that we foresee recurring next week. Specifically, two of those are likely to involve winter weather, and Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication.

Severe Weather

Governor Kemp Thursday declared a State of Emergency through the end of Thursday next week due to severe winter weather threats. Increased monitoring of approaching weather is underway now and will likely continue throughout the weekend and into early next week. Snow, ice, winds, and the multitude of hazards they are likely to create are the focus. Individual and agencywide preparations are ramping up. Within the next couple days we should know which parts of Georgia are impacted and to what extent.

Stay safe during winter weather.



Heat your home safely.

Have at least one of the following heat sources in case the power goes out:



- ▶ Extra blankets, sleeping bags, and warm winter coats.
- ▶ Fireplace that is up to code with plenty of dry firewood or a gas log fireplace.
- ▶ Portable space heaters or kerosene heaters. Check with your local fire department to make sure that kerosene heaters are legal in your area.



If you plan to use a wood stove, fireplace, or space heater, be extremely careful. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Light your home safely.

If there is a power failure:



- ▶ Use battery-powered flashlights or lanterns rather than candles, if possible. Candles can lead to house fires.
- ▶ If you do use candles, never leave lit candles unattended.
- ▶ Keep a fire extinguisher handy, and make sure your family knows how to use it.

Listen to weather forecasts regularly and learn more information at:

bit.ly/40mQUCJ



CERC training

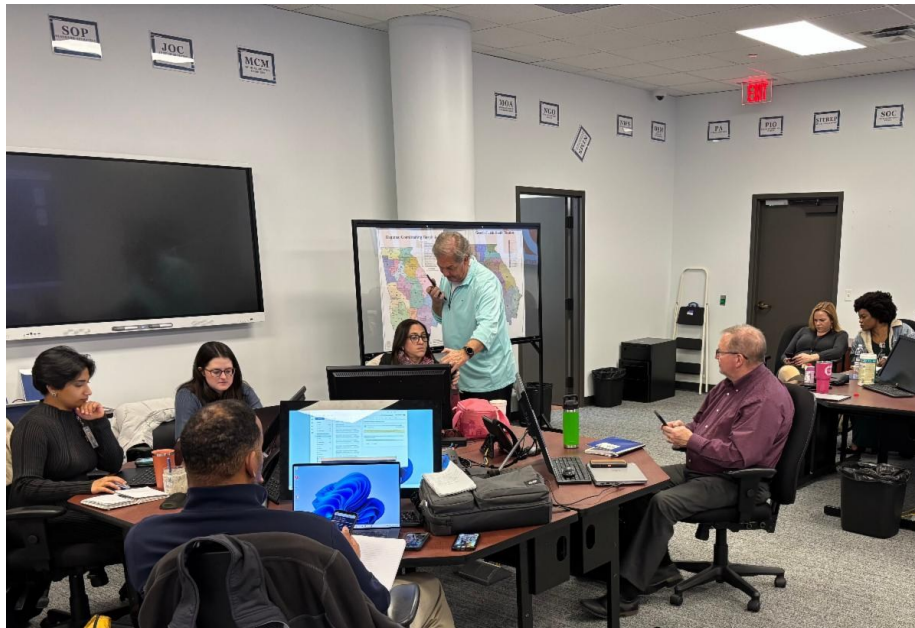
The latest DPH Media / Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication training was held Wednesday at the state DPH EOC. The group, consisting primarily of state DPH epidemiologists, shared their communication-related experiences and knowledge while reviewing best practices aimed at delivering vital information to targeted audiences in Georgia. There were 55 attending this

week's session, and a similar-sized group is expected for the second session to be held on Tuesday next week.



Monthly State EPR meeting

State Emergency Preparedness Staff members learned the latest capabilities and use of Southern Linc phones at their monthly meeting Tuesday. Steven New from Southern Linc and Valerie Attell demonstrated all the ways messages can be sent using different features of the devices. Later in the meeting, Austin Speers and Gwen Ruppert conducted an update of the state DPH Hazard Vulnerability Assessment for the current budget period.





FIFA Planning

Planning efforts are ramping up for the FIFA World Cup games, coming to Atlanta in June and July. DPH disciplines included Epidemiology, Environmental Health, Pharmacy, Nursing, EP, Lab, and Communications. Representatives of each group provided updates on their recent plans and expectations aligned with collaborative potential response efforts.



UASI MARTA exercise

The Atlanta Urban Area Security Initiative hosted a tabletop exercise Thursday in Tucker. The simulated mass shooting at the 5-Points MARTA station during a mass gathering required plans for response activities from numerous agencies. Players discussed ways in which they would secure the scene, and provide physical and mental treatment to those directly and indirectly impacted. There were strong communication components to each step of this cooperative response.



DAISY Award

Thanks to Laura Layne and Alana Sulka for providing the latest update on DAISY Award recipients:

ShaRina Neal, R.N., is the first nurse to receive The DAISY Award at GNR Public Health. Ms. Neal, who works at Norcross Health Center and has been with the health department since 2021.

Ms. Neal received eight DAISY Award nominations. The nominations submitted by patients and peers describe her as a knowledgeable, reassuring, helpful, caring, kind, patient, and thorough nurse who makes her patients feel comfortable. One nomination in particular described Ms. Neal as an active listener who provided her patient both medical and emotional support, "that made a profound difference in the patient's healing journey."

GNR also recognized fifteen additional nominees for their dedication to providing patients with outstanding service and compassionate care.

Next Week Preview

Continuing to respond to, or recovering from, severe winter weather seems likely at the start of next week. There will also be the next aforementioned Media / CERC training on Tuesday.

Multiple planning sessions for FIFA World Cup continue next week, including one connected to BioWatch on Wednesday afternoon. Thursday morning at Twin Towers in Atlanta will be the attempted return of the metro-communicators coffee meeting series. The informal gathering starts about 9:30 where the Starbucks used to be on the cafeteria level, so stop by if you are in the neighborhood and have time.

About "News & Notes"

"News & Notes" is a weekly communication aimed at risk communicators and public information officers within Georgia's 18 public health districts. The goal of the communication is to increase preparedness through the exchange of information about significant events, training and other planned activities. Some information herein may be considered FYUO or For Your Use Only. Please be judicious when forwarding. For questions, comments or to submit information for inclusion, contact Eric Jens at Eric.Jens@dph.ga.gov.

We protect lives.

Georgia Department of Public Health | dph.ga.gov



Reader Advisory Notice: Email to and from a Georgia state agency is generally public record, except for content that is confidential under specific laws. Security by encryption is applied to all confidential information sent by email from the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH). This message is only intended for specific recipient(s) and may contain privileged, private or sensitive information. If you received this message in error, please delete it and contact me.

Georgia Department of Public Health | 200 Piedmont Ave, SE | Atlanta, GA 30334 US