



RC/PIO News & Notes |

February 6, 2026

A Weekly Update from **Eric Jens, Risk Communicator** – Georgia Department of Public Health
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News & Notes

BioWatch, more winter weather, and planning for up-coming events are among the highlights for this week.

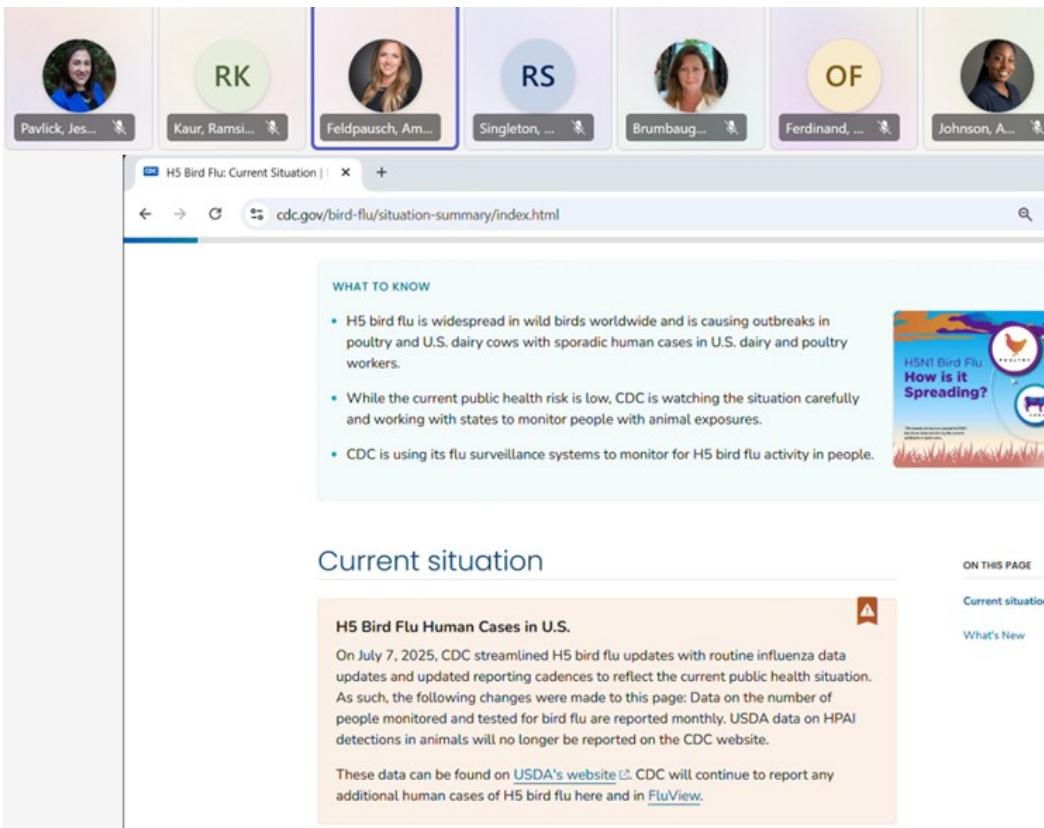
Annual R/C meeting and CERC training

The draft agendas are progressing well and could be finalized by the end of next week for the in-person annual statewide DPH risk communicators meeting and a Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication training to be held in Macon. The dates are Thursday, April 9, and Friday, April 10 respectively. Thanks to all who have already agreed to present, covering a wide variety of important topics. Look for registration notices to be posted before the end of the month.

BioWatch

The Atlanta BioWatch Advisory Committee held its quarterly meeting Monday with numerous updates from exercise planning, strategic air filter placements, and more. The group heard updates from DPH Emergency Preparedness program leads, along with the latest situation on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza impacting Georgia from both the Public Health and Agriculture perspectives. The meeting was originally

scheduled to be held in person in Lawrenceville, but changed to a virtual setting as cold temperatures kept snow from melting in Northeast Georgia.



The image shows a video conference interface with seven participants. The participants are: Pavlick, Jes... (blue), RK (green), Feldpausch, Am... (purple), RS (light blue), Singleton, ... (light green), Brumbaug... (light purple), OF (yellow), and Johnson, A... (dark blue). Below the video conference is a screenshot of a CDC webpage titled 'H5 Bird Flu: Current Situation'. The page URL is cdc.gov/bird-flu/situation-summary/index.html. The 'WHAT TO KNOW' section contains the following bullet points:

- H5 bird flu is widespread in wild birds worldwide and is causing outbreaks in poultry and U.S. dairy cows with sporadic human cases in U.S. dairy and poultry workers.
- While the current public health risk is low, CDC is watching the situation carefully and working with states to monitor people with animal exposures.
- CDC is using its flu surveillance systems to monitor for H5 bird flu activity in people.

On the right side of the page is a graphic titled 'H5N1 Bird Flu: How is it Spreading?' featuring illustrations of a bird and a cow.

Current situation

H5 Bird Flu Human Cases in U.S.

On July 7, 2025, CDC streamlined H5 bird flu updates with routine influenza data updates and updated reporting cadences to reflect the current public health situation. As such, the following changes were made to this page: Data on the number of people monitored and tested for bird flu are reported monthly. USDA data on HPAI detections in animals will no longer be reported on the CDC website.

These data can be found on [USDA's website](#). CDC will continue to report any additional human cases of H5 bird flu here and in [FluView](#).

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CERC Review

Thanks to everyone who helped organize or participate in the two DPH Media / Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication trainings last month at the state DPH EOC. Based on pre and post test self-assessment surveys, we've determined for class I:

- There was a 60.3% improvement in the knowing roles of developing public messages
- There was a 71% improvement in knowing public message elements
- There was a 110.8% improvement in understanding the Public Information Officer - Subject Matter Expert relationship

For class II:

- There was a 59.1% improvement in knowing roles for developing public messages

- There was a 49.5% improvement in knowing public message elements
- There was a 78% improvement in understanding the Public Information Officer - Subject Matter Expert relationship

In general, the open-ended feedback indicated participants wanted more structure and direction to the mock interview portion of the class, although a majority also cited strong interest in the small group activity. Some were interested in more details on the mis-dis-mal information part, and others wanted more direct references to the PIO One-pager handout.

Other comments:

"What body language and facial expression (should be) while delivering messages to the audience, and the importance of the right message for the right audience at the right time."

"Excellent class! I liked that it was interactive and had some great examples and enthusiasm."

"I don't ever want to be a media spokesperson."



More Winter

Just less than a week after cold, icy conditions shut down operations and limited travel in metro Atlanta and farther North and East, the same area faced impacts of up to a half foot of snow and even colder temperatures including wind chills below zero. On Monday, Groundhog Day, both the national and state marmots saw their shadows, thus forecasting six more weeks of winter.

Next Week Preview

Next week Tuesday is the Region C Healthcare Coalition meeting in Waco. Wednesday there will be a DPH Hot Wash for Winter Storm Fern. Thursday there will be a Highly Infectious Disease Concepts and Objectives meeting in the afternoon, followed by a Networking Night at Emory that evening.

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 FYOU 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.

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