

OVERWHELMING OUTBREAK



An Environmental Health and Epidemiology Strike Team Exercise

Citizens of Florida continually face the dangers of illness spread through human contact or contamination of their environment. To combat these hazards, the Florida Department of Health (DOH) and local County Health Departments (CHD) have public health professionals experienced in investigating the causes of outbreaks and minimizing their spread. Unfortunately outbreaks can very quickly overwhelm the resources available within any single community. For this reason DOH and Florida's Regional Health & Medical Co-Chairs have established specialized strike teams of public health experts at the ready to aid stricken communities contain an outbreak.

To further enhance strike team preparedness, DOH and CHDs will conduct a day-long field exercise in each region of the state, focusing on procedures, cross-disciplinary cooperation and coordination within these strike teams. Entitled "Overwhelming Outbreak", this exercise provided just such an opportunity for these public health strike teams.

The broad exercise scenario revolves around an outbreak of an illness that has afflicted educational and / or congregate care institutions within a chosen community. It was be the strike team's job to investigate and determine what is making dozens of people ill and to stop the spread.

The exercise day itself consisted of a series of locations (called "stations") around the community that teams deployed to conduct public health investigations, collect and analyze data / samples and formulate recommendations for containing the outbreak.

This exercise was functionally based and focused just on the regional Environmental Health and Epidemiology Strike Teams.