

Centre for Health Protection and Exercises

Part 1 : Introduction of Centre for Health Protection

V.o: The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) is a public health agency established in June 2004 under the Department of Health (DH). Our mission is to achieve effective prevention and control of diseases in Hong Kong in collaboration with local and international partners. Throughout the past decade, the CHP has played a pivotal role in developing the capacity of Hong Kong's public health system to deal with various important public health challenges.

V.o: There are six functional branches under the CHP shouldering different health protection programmes.

V.o: "Surveillance and Epidemiology Branch" is responsible for epidemiological investigation, surveillance and control of communicable diseases; it is also responsible for surveillance and prevention of non-communicable diseases of public health significance as well as control of related risk factors, formulation of strategies and action plans, and implementation of health promotion and publicity activities.

V.o: "Emergency Response & Information Branch" (ERIB), it facilitates all emergency preparedness and management of public health crisis through developing and updating of contingency plans; it co-ordinates exercises and drills from time to time and it assists the formulation of risk communication strategy including the CHP's operational directions and strategies.

V.o: "Infection Control Branch" is responsible for developing, promulgating and evaluating best practices in infection control, it provides corresponding training for health care staff, supports epidemiological investigation in hospitals and conducts surveillance on infection hazards in public health perspective.

V.o: “Public Health Services Branch” is responsible for supporting the prevention and control of communicable diseases in the community, it provides specialist treatment and care services for tuberculosis, human immunodeficiency virus and sexually transmitted infection. Furthermore, it supports strategy development of communicable diseases.

V.o: “Public Health Laboratory Services Branch”. It provides laboratory diagnostic services for disease surveillance and control, health promotion and disease prevention, public health consultation service relating to microbiology and virology, and laboratory support on outbreak investigation. It also conducts quality assurance program for continuous improvement of standards of laboratories in Hong Kong and act as Reference Laboratory to provide confirmatory service and technology transfer/training for laboratory personnel. Moreover, it collaborates with local and international partners on disease surveillance, infection control standards and information exchanges.

V.o: The “Programme Management and Professional Development Branch” coordinates with and provides secretariat support for the Board of Scientific Advisers and various Scientific Committees of CHP. It liaises with international and regional health authorities to facilitate collaboration activities; coordinates visits and exchange programmes with international, regional and local institutions; coordinates applied researches, including research projects conducted in collaboration with universities, the Hospital Authority and other government departments; coordinates and organizes professional development activities for healthcare professionals and provides secretariat support to the Council for the AIDS Trust Fund. The various Government's free vaccination programmes and vaccination subsidy schemes are also planned and implemented by the Branch.

V.o: These six functional branches contribute towards the multi-disciplinary health protection programmes under the CHP.

Part 2 : Introduction of ERIB and Exercises

V.o: The ERIB organises regular public health exercises to test the preparedness and responsiveness of relevant departments on public health

actions and emergency outbreaks. Since its establishment, many exercises have been conducted. Recent exercises include:

V.o: On June 3 and 4 of 2010, the DH and the Airport Authority jointly coordinated an airport exercise codenamed “HUA SHAN”

V.o: The exercise simulated an outbound flight returned to Hong Kong because of a passenger was potentially carrying a severe infectious disease. Government departments and relevant organisations collaboration required reactions towards the incident.

V.o: On October 25, 2010, Exercise “NEPHRITE” was performed in order to test relevant departments’ response to an imported case of plague.

V.o: Frontline staff geared with personal protective equipment disinfected the possible affected area after understanding the case background.

V.o: A cross-boundary public health exercise organized by the CHP of the DH and the Shenzhen Entry-Exit Inspection and Quarantine Bureau, codenamed “JASPER”, was conducted at Shenzhen Bay Port on May 9, 2011.

V.o: The exercise scenario unfolded when a man, travelling to Shenzhen, was identified with fever and required to send hospital for further checking and treatment.

V.o: The whole tour group was put under medical surveillance in Shenzhen. Two HK residents from the group request to have medical surveillance and treatment in Hong Kong

V.o: Exercise” JASPER” improved the communications and coordination between the Hong Kong government and Shenzhen Entry-Exit Inspection.

V.o: On January 9, 2012, Exercise “JADEITE” was held to test the preparedness of government departments and relevant organizations to respond effectively in screening and evacuating involved residents in a major infectious disease incident.

V.o: The exercise provided an opportunity for the DH and relevant organizations to try out relevant contingency plans and identify areas for improvement. It also enhanced community and healthcare personnel awareness, preparedness and the ability to detect and respond to possible epidemics.

V.o: Exercise “AMBER” was held on January 17 and 25 of 2013. The Exercise simulated that three inmates of an elderly home were close contacts of a novel influenza.

V.o: On-site quarantine was set up in the elderly home where the three inmates stayed.

V.o: The Exercise aimed at testing the response actions to the locally acquired novel influenza infection of a Hong Kong citizen, with emphasis on the raising of the response level according to the risk to the community.

V.o: The CHP arranged a high level interdepartmental desktop exercise code-named Exercise “RUBY” on March 27 of 2013 for testing preparedness for the possible outbreaks of Severe Respiratory Disease associated with Novel Coronavirus.

V.o: The exercise had served to formulate and oversee the implementation of a coordinated and timely response and disease control strategy; and decide on measures to be taken which will have a wider impact on the community.

V.o: Exercise “CORAL” took place on November 21, 2013 and March 3, 2014. The exercise simulated the situation where Hong Kong encountered confirmed local cases during the peak season of dengue fever.

V.o: The scenario centered on the identification of a Lantau resident as being the first confirmed local dengue fever case since 2010. Response measures including vector investigation and control as well as surveillance of suspected cases were carried out immediately.

V.o: On June 23, 2014, the CHP also held an exercise codenamed “OPAL”.

V.o: The exercise simulated influenza pandemic in Hong Kong, where large numbers of patients were admitted in all seven hospital-clusters under the Hospital Authority and huge demand of anti-influenza drugs were required. Various services/units under the DH activated their contingency plans, opened temporary clinics, distributed the drugs and replenished stocks by emergency procurement with the assistance of the Government Logistics Department.

V.o: Exercise “TOPAZ” involves a series of multi-agency drills based on the Ebola virus disease (EVD) Preparedness and Response Plan launched on August 20, 2014.

V.o: The exercise was divided into five parts, including “Village House Disinfection” testing the co-ordination and procedures between the CHP and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) regarding residential disinfection; “Guesthouse Disinfection” testing the co-ordination between the CHP and the FEHD on field investigation and disinfection in a guesthouse setting; Large-scale interdepartmental and multi-agencies “Table-top Exercise”; “Quarantine Center” enhancing infection control measures; and “Airport Ground Movement” optimising the Contingency Plan in response to EVD cases.

Part 3 : Conclusion

V.o: The CHP plays an important role in controlling and preventing diseases and performs various drills to strengthen the responsiveness in case of health crisis.

V.o: The CHP is developing into a better disease control agency after years of planning, experimenting and drilling.

V.o: The CHP will continue to work hard and cooperate with local organizations and international health organizations to improve the control of communicable diseases, raise community and health sector awareness, and strengthen public health crisis preparedness and response to provide a healthier environment for the public.