The TCHD Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) provides an important core public health service and is committed to strengthening the jurisdictions’ health security by preparing for, responding to, and recovering from public health threats, natural or human-made, and being part of a system for community resiliency.

EPR leads agency efforts to promote coordination, collaboration, and communication among all divisions in TCHD to ensure that public health is an effective partner in preparedness and emergency response to all other disciplines in the TCHD jurisdiction.

On a day-to-day basis, EPR is responsible for maintaining the Public Health Emergency Operations Plan and all associated systems and documentation related to how TCHD, as an agency, responds to any incident impacting Adams, Arapahoe, and Douglas Counties. TCHD EPR also supports Elbert County Health and Human Services to ensure depth of service during incident response.

EPR is also responsible for maintaining the agency Continuity of Operations Plan, detailing how the agency will continue to protect the public’s health while it is impacted by an incident.

Held to a high standard, TCHD EPR undergoes rigorous federal and state assessments, tests response capabilities through exercises, and responds to real world incidents with a focus on continual improvement.
Partnerships

TCHD EPR actively coordinates with cross-jurisdictional and cross-discipline partners throughout the state on emergency preparedness and response planning activities.

Subject matter experts work together through the North Central Region Board of Directors and a network of committees and working groups established to identify threats, recognize capability gaps, and create a consistent response framework across the ten counties in the Denver Metropolitan Area.

EPR staff also participates in and leads similar efforts across the state and at the national level through leadership on the Colorado Healthcare Coalition Council, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) Surge Workgroup, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response (OPHPR) Board of Scientific Counselors.
Using the basic tenants of the Incident Command System (ICS), TCHD EPR leads the Public Health Incident Management Team (PHIMT), providing the depth in incident management during complex or long term incident response operations at TCHD.

This cross-divisional team is made up of approximately 42 TCHD staff members trained in command and general staff responsibilities to fill vital incident response positions tasked with setting the framework, crafting the tactics and supporting the response to any incident above day-to-day operations impacting Adams, Arapahoe, Douglas, and Elbert Counties.

TCHD Public Health Incident Management Team in 2016:

- **7 Trainings**
- **3 Exercises**
The Rocky Mountain Medical Reserve Corp of Colorado (RMMRCO) supports our communities in emergency preparedness, response, and community resilience through preparedness activities, education, and emergency response.

The RMMRCO participation grew to include 83 members in 2016, which supported 17 activities over the course of the year. These activities supported community events, served vulnerable populations in the communities we serve, and helped strengthen our public’s health.

One highlight includes the activation of the MRC to support a shelter for senior adults with access and functional needs after they were displaced by a large apartment fire.
The Health Alert Network (HAN)

The Health Alert Network Provides a method of actively sharing information of public health incidents with local partners. These messages can be relayed as:

- HAN Alert – conveys the highest level of importance and warrants immediate action
- HAN Advisory – Provides important information for a specific incident
- HAN Update – provides updated information regarding an incident or situation
- HAN Public Health Brief – for your information and does not require action

Health Alert Network ... By The Numbers:

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<td>Health Alerts</td>
<td>Health Advisories</td>
<td>Health Updates</td>
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Project Public Health Ready Re-recognition

In January 2017, Tri-County Health Department officially received Project Public Health Ready (PPHR) re-recognition from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). Local health departments seeking recognition by PPHR undergo a thorough evaluation process by peer review. PPHR required Tri-County Health Department to meet capabilities in three key areas: all-hazards preparedness planning, workforce capacity development and demonstration of readiness through exercises or real events. Staff from the TCHD Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response put forth a tremendous amount of effort to realize this achievement.

The recognition confirms that Tri-County Health Department has an emergency response plan in place, the plan is connected to other jurisdictional emergency response plans, agency staff members are trained, and plans are exercised and utilized during incident response. As local health departments nationwide strive to protect the public from emerging infectious diseases, bioterrorism, natural disasters, and other public health and non-public health threats, NACCHO has recognized Tri-County Health Department for its ability to conduct efforts to sustain effective incident response. The recognition is maintained for 5 years.
Community Inclusion

EPR conducted ongoing work with existing and newly established groups to create resiliency in our communities to better respond to disasters, which included:

- The EPR Healthcare Coalition is utilized to educate community and partner organizations within Adams, Arapahoe, Douglas, and Elbert Counties and continuously improve health and medical systems through preparedness planning, training, and policy development
- The Regional Specialty Healthcare Coalition was utilized to train long term care, dialysis, hospice, and nursing homes until members were included in the broader healthcare coalition at the end of the calendar year
- The Home Health Collaborative is utilized to help our partners address the newly proposed CMS rules for EPR

Medical Reserve Corps efforts, in coordination with county and city Offices of Emergency Management, worked to interact with Vulnerable Populations regarding Emergency Preparedness and Response efforts.

TCHD enhanced our Public Health Emergency Operations Plan to include operational detail related to Vulnerable Populations by using the Communication, Maintaining Health, Independence, Support/Services/Self-Determination, and Transportation (C-MIST) framework. The framework integrates considerations for at-risk individuals with access and functional needs into emergency preparedness, response, and recovery planning at all jurisdictional levels. The C-MIST Framework provides a streamlined approach for inclusive emergency planning through a broad set of common, cross-cutting, function-based and access-based needs irrespective of specific diagnoses, statuses, or labels.
Training and Exercises

TCHD Staff hosted and participated in 74 trainings and exercises during 2016. These preplanned events help our agency and our partners better prepare for and respond to incidents impacting our jurisdiction. Because emergencies rarely impact a single jurisdiction, the integrated nature of our trainings and exercises also prepares TCHD staff and partner organizations to support each other when we have reached our capacity to effectively respond without support.

On October 10, 2016, the Tri-County Health Department conducted an Emergency Responder POD, a full scale, emergency preparedness and response exercise focused on rapidly providing influenza vaccine through a single Point of Dispensing (POD) site to all TCHD staff, who may serve as emergency responders, and their families.

Through this full scale exercise, TCHD strengthened existing plans to respond to incidents requiring mass prophylaxis, tested, and improved incident management capabilities within our PHIMT, and continued to develop the capability to respond to any all-hazards incident.

TCHD staff gained awareness of TCHD’s ongoing dedication to health and safety and received basic emergency preparedness information and supplies to ensure a more resilient community. In four hours, TCHD was able to immunize 374 emergency responders (TCHD staff) and family members who enabled us to test our medical countermeasures dispensing capabilities.

Throughout 2016, TCHD EPR, working with cross-disciplinary and cross-jurisdictional partners including local and state partners, re-evaluated and revised the health and medical resource mobilization process used during incident response. The novel approach used during this process and the outcomes incorporated into the TCHD Public Health Emergency Operations Plan (PHEOP) and Emergency Support Function #8 (ESF #8) Operational Annex were presented at the 2017 Colorado Emergency Management Association (CEMA) Conference and provided best practices that may be adapted for use statewide.
On July 15, 2016, TCHD began response efforts related to a suspect, and later confirmed, case of measles in a child. This patient, having recently returned from international travel, was seen on multiple successive dates at Southeast Denver Pediatrics, Sky Ridge Medical Center Pediatric Emergency Department, and Presbyterian Saint Luke’s Hospital (PSL).

Once the diagnosis of measles was taken into consideration, the patient was moved to an isolation room at PSL for the remaining treatment period. During the infectious period, the patient had also visited multiple community establishments.

TCHD activated the Public Health Incident Management Team (PHIMT) in response to the incident. This complex response included efforts from over 40 TCHD staff members and support from an additional four professionals from other local health departments across the Front Range.

Additionally, TCHD coordinated response efforts closely with CDPHE, the State Laboratory, Denver Public Health and the impacted healthcare facilities and community businesses related to healthcare worker monitoring, case investigation, contact investigation, and disease control activities. TCHD conducted 258 interviews over the course of two days and held two points of dispensing over the weekend to ensure contacts and family were protected following exposure. Ongoing monitoring and community containment efforts were implemented to ensure those that could not be prophylaxed were supported.

We could not have done this without everyone’s partnership, expertise and collaboration. The end result was a well-executed response with the successful protection of the communities we serve.
The National Syndromic Surveillance Program (NSSP), formerly called BioSense, is a collaboration of local, state, and national public health programs for the timely exchange of syndromic data for situational awareness and enhanced response to hazardous events and disease outbreaks.

TCHD and Denver Public Health (DPH) are using syndromic surveillance (SyS) data to analyze population health data by receiving timely alerts and providing information to key emergency preparedness and response and disease control staff for further investigation to enhance the response to any outbreak or incident.

In the summer 2016, the NSSP effort spearheaded locally by TCHD and DPH expanded to include Boulder and Jefferson Counties. At the end of 2016, TCHD provided the first hands-on training for all of the data users from Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson Counties.

Additional information regarding Syndromic Surveillance efforts can be found at www.tchd.org/syndromicsurveillance.

*Data source: Syndromic Surveillance data
Emergency Preparedness and Response is funded through a variety of revenue sources. The major source of revenue is through the Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) grant, which also includes the Cities Readiness Initiative (CRI), both passed through the state health department from federally funded dollars from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Additionally, the National Syndromic Surveillance Program (NSSP), a federally funded program from CDC, is awarded directly to Denver Public Health and TCHD.