

2005 National Rainbow Family Gathering Monongahela National Forest Gauley Ranger District Heath & Safety

Incident Objective

The first and primary objective for the Incident Management Team, and the primary duty of the Safety Officer on this incident was to ensure that the safety of employees, assigned personnel, the public, and event participants are considered throughout the course of the event.

The Safety Officer also provided support to NIMT in meetings, and to the remaining three Incident Objectives:

Establish and maintain internal and external communications and relationships with cooperating agencies, federal, state, county, and local government officials, private landowners, local businesses, communities, and the rainbow family.

Protect resources and coordinate rehabilitation.

Manage the event proactively as a noncommercial group use consistent with Forest Service Regulations and Orders.

Issues & Concerns

The major health and safety issues and concerns that were identified for the incident are summarized into nine general categories:

- Overall Public Safety.
- Safety of all Incident Personnel- Law Enforcement Officer's and Resource Incident Workers.
- Public Health - Infectious Diseases.
- Emergency Medical Service.
- Potable Water Quality.
- Solid and Human Waste Disposal.
- Food Preparation and Storage.
- Site Specific Environmental Factors, such as Forest Service access roads and wild land fire potential.
- Travel issues related to vehicles and driving.

Strategy

Several means were used to mitigate the safety and health issues and concerns. These included:

- Identification of site-specific hazards and concerns associated with the event. As applicable, these

hazards and concerns were communicated to incident and agency personnel, cooperators, affected community members and gathering participants

- Efforts to identify and maintain contacts with state and local health management agencies as well as emergency medical services, including ambulance crews and area hospital administrators.
- Meetings, phone conversations with participating agency personnel and health care providers.
- Site visits were done by health and safety personnel to survey, monitor and identify risks and hazards with follow up to propose appropriate mitigation measures.
- Incident personnel were debriefed to determine near misses, accident reports for applicable information from prior shifts.
- Safety briefings of assigned personnel were included as the daily operations shift briefings.
- Incident personnel and cooperators were provided with information about special health concerns, such as potential known diseases and possible infectious disease potential of high-risk transports.
- Contacts and interaction with personnel from State of West Virginia Department of Health Human Resources (DHHR), Bureau for Public Health and Safety, DHHR Bureau for Children and Families, West Virginia DHHR EMS System, Pocahontas County Public Health Department, County Environmental Services, Shavers Fork Fire Department, Pocahontas Memorial Hospital, Richwood Medical Center, Greenbrier Valley Hospital, Davis Memorial Hospital, Snowshoe Mountain Department of Public Safety, Beverly Pike Veterinary Clinic, and others as needed.

Appropriate procedures and actions to mitigate or minimize exposure to identified concerns were discussed with personnel at briefings. Cooperating health and EMS personnel also provided input and suggestions for mitigation measures during the incident.

Biohazard bags were made available to each patrol unit for use in the event for potentially infectious material. Sharps containers were available to all patrol units for disposal of needles or other sharp objects. Trauma kits were available for each Law Enforcement Officer EMT's along with the Division Supervisor, Safety Officer as well as the Incident Command Post and Cranberry ICP, to provide emergency medical supplies in the event of an on-scene medical emergency.

Biohazards generated were disposed of through Pocahontas Memorial Hospital and DHHR, EMS System to the appropriate medical waste disposal facility.

Forest flight maps with pre-located helicopter air ambulance landing zones were identified and were given to West Virginia DHHR, EMS System, air ambulance services. A helicopter landing site was identified within the grass area at Cranberry ICP, and Forest Scenic Highway # 150 in the event of a medical emergency.

Water Quality

Water sources were developed by the rainbow gathering participants and piped through PVC pipe and water lines to various locations. Pocahontas County Environmental Health Department, along with F.S. Resource incident workers had inspected the water lines and sources. The Forest Service will sample water quality during rehabilitation and develop a monitoring plan based on initial results.

It is believed that some of the water lines and PVC pipes were not disaffected or cleaned when installed.

The Rainbow participants were advised that water on the site is non-potable and needs to be chemically treated, properly filtered and boiled for consumption. Participants were also encouraged to bring their own potable water from known safe sources.

West Virginia DHHR, Pocahontas County Public Health Department and Randolph County Public Health Department had given handouts with information about Drinking Water Safety, Dishwashing Set-Up, Hand Washing Set-Up, Kitchen Set-Up & Food Preparation, as well as other general health and safety issues such as Insects, Snakes, Sun Exposure, Dehydration, and Heat Exhaustion/Sunstroke. These handouts were distributed to Rainbow Information, gathering participants and the CALM units, and Rainbow Information.

Wildfire and Potential Evacuation Situations

Due to the general fire weather conditions in the area there was little concern for potential risks and hazards associated with possible wildfire in or adjacent to the gathering site.

In the event of a situation requiring evacuation, the gathering attendees will be directed to leave the area and or gather in the large meadows.

Trash And Human Waste

The accumulation of solid (garbage, paper, cans and bottles) and dog, human waste, (feces and urine) was identified as a concern at previous national gatherings of the Rainbow Family. Pocahontas County Health Officials and the local F.S. Resource incident workers readily verified these concerns. These issues regarding solid waste accumulation include odors, insects and animal attraction and possible potential spread of disease.

This is a concern because of possible down stream impacts to the drainages that is a used by wildlife, cattle and popular variation of recreation activities. Direct impacts to the live streams in the gathering area is also of great concern.

Long standing human waste issues at the annual Rainbow gatherings include failure to develop an adequate number of toilet facilities, failure of individuals to use developed toilet facilities or to bury individual waste, disposal of feminine hygiene products and condoms, as well as potential for contamination of downstream waters. Long-term environmental effects of such volumes of concentrated human and animal waste will continue to remain a concern to resource managers involved with this gathering, although the actual impacts are largely unknown and these impacts may not be evident for some time.

The Monongahela National Forest, Gauley Ranger District was able to issue a Special Use Permit for Noncommercial Group Use on June 19, 2005.

A permit was issued and it specifically identified specifications within Part II of the permit and within Exhibit A, Operations and Maintenance Plan. This permit directed efforts to recommended preferred locations to build slit trenches, pit toilets, and locations for kitchens and waste pits.

Latrines or slit trenches, and waste pits were allowed on upland sites. These latrines and waste pits were placed 300 feet away from running waters, or located outside of riparian vegetation areas. The latrines and waste pits were inspected and approved by designated F.S. resource workers and Special Use Permit Administrators. Due to the small size of the gathering area and the high number of springs and streams, Special Use Permit Administrators did waive the 300 foot requirement when water quality could be protected or mitigated. .

Lime and ash was used by some of the Rainbow Family members at some latrine locations to breakdown waste and discourage the presence of flies within the pits. Once the pits were filled, waste was covered by topsoil and a new pit was dug near the old pit.

Food Preparation and Kitchens

Approximately thirty-one Kitchens were identified at the gathering area. Food preparation was under the control of the Rainbow Family. Numerous soup and coffee kitchens and bakeries were part of the food service facilities constructed on the site. In addition, a number of Rainbow family members prepare their own meals at individual campsites.

The permit had specifically identified specifications within Part II of the permit and within Exhibit A, Operations and Maintenance Plan within the permit. This permit directed efforts to recommended preferred locations to build the kitchens and waste pits. Kitchens and wash water and food waste (gray water) was directed to be disposed of at least 300 feet from running waters or was approved based on site specifics.

In an attempt to prevent a potential major outbreak of illness, West Virginia DHHR, Pocahontas County Public Health Department and Randolph County Public Health Department personnel had provided information handouts to the kitchens, camp units and Rainbow information, that advise on safe food handling, preparation and kitchen utensil sanitation, and improved water filtering treatment systems as well as improved hand washing stations compared to prior years gatherings.

Public Health

Due to the nomadic lifestyles and personal hygiene practices of a number of the gathering participants, an outbreak of several communicable diseases was possible. Potential risk areas included blood borne pathogens, viral hepatitis, acute diarrhea, sexually transmitted diseases, and food borne and animal related diseases. For protection of incident personnel involved in contact activities, such as medical assistance or law enforcement, personal protective equipment including medical gloves (both latex and non-latex), CPR facial shields and antiseptic chemical barrier products were provided. Several of the safety briefings addressed for prevention measures for reducing exposure to these diseases. Biohazard bags and sharp containers were made available to each patrol unit.

Information regarding the availability of emergency medical services and local environmental health hazards was provided to the workers at the CALM units and Rainbow information center.

The Safety Officer and West Virginia DHHR, Pocahontas County Health and Safety workers made periodic visits to the primary and secondary CALM units in the gathering area. Information was exchange with the Safety Officer and the local EMS and West Virginia DHHR, Pocahontas County Health and Safety workers. No medical supplies were provided to gathering participants by the above government agencies. However West Virginia DHHR, Pocahontas County Health and Safety workers did provide safety information. Pocahontas Memorial Hospital did sign-out refillable oxygen kit.

West Virginia DHHR Emergency Management Services did set up at two trailers at Cranberry Nature Center ICP and provided two contract ambulances, to lesson the impact to the local hospitals.

CALM

The Rainbow calm units at this year's gathering supposedly were well staffed. There was one physician, two nurses, mid wife and paramedic assisting with the calm units. A rainbow vehicle was identified for use for patient transport.

Calm unit report to me they had several family members who had diarrhea, sore throats, acute bronchitis, abdominal pain, allergic reactions to spider bites and two babies that were delivered.

Environmental Factors

The primary access routes into the gathering area are County and Forest Service development roads. These routes were also subject to logging trucks, recreational use such as motorcycle riders, mountain bike trail riders, hikers, fisherman, equestrians and other forest visitors. Concerns related to the significant increase of traffic on these roads include congestion on the roadways, visibility, the narrow segments of the road and the temporary mixing of different user groups, some of which are not familiar with mountain driving techniques did create a variety of road/ traffic related safety hazards.

Additional environmental concerns included adverse weather issues, related to thunderstorms, high winds, and rain. Weather forecasts were given to incident personnel at daily briefings.

Ticks, mosquitoes spiders, bears and snakes were known to be within the area. Forest Service and Pocahontas County Public Health Department stated that Lyme disease had not been detected in the immediate area. West Nile Virus also had not been detected in the area. Information was provided to incident personnel in safety briefing and health alerts.

Safety of Incident Personnel

The personal health and safety of all agency personnel assigned to and supporting this incident was the first priority for the National Incident Management Team.

The Safety Officer focused on twenty-two primary areas of concern to incident personnel. These were:

- Travel issues related to vehicles and driving.

- Vehicle maintenance.
- Law Enforcement Officer Safety.
- Law Enforcement Horses and Police K-9 Officer Safety.
- Safety for Resource Incident workers & Special Use Permit Administrators.
- County Public Health workers safety.
- Local public visitation safety.
- Unsafe Situations.
- Threatening.
- Physical Contacts, Assaults.
- Blood Borne Pathogens.
- Needles and Sharp Objects.
- Over all health issues.
- Environmental and Situational Hazards.
- Infectious Diseases.
- Availability of Emergency Medical Services.
- Animal Bites.
- Mental Alertness.
- Body Lice/Fleas.
- Stress – Fatigue – WORK/REST-RATIO---2 hours work to 1 hour rest.
- Radio Communications.
- Sources of Food & Drink.

The five primary methods was used to distribute information about health and safety concerns; (1) daily briefing, (2) written safety messages and alerts (3) safety meeting with the Ranger District personnel, (4) one on one conversations with personnel by the safety officer, (5) meetings with local and county public health and safety and EMS workers.

Verbal and written safety messages for incident personnel was developed by using direct observation, discussion and consultation with state, county and local officials, and background information from prior Rainbow gatherings, Officer input and information provided by local Forest Service resource personnel.

The Incident Commander, L.E. Operations Section Chief and Division Supervisors supplemented the general safety messages with specific Officer safety messages related to planned enforcement missions.

Safety visitation guideline for resource incident workers had been developed for recommendations for site visits, conduct and general safety. These guidelines were provided to resource incident workers, Special Use Permit Administrators and other visitors prior to their visit to the gathering site. Employees and co-operating agency personnel were also given copies of this guideline.

Medical Plan and EMS

A Medical Plan was developed for the incident with input from local Forest Service employees and the West Virginia EMS System DHHR Services, ambulance crews and area hospital personnel. Within the general area five ground and two air ambulances were identified along with two Medical Centers, and three Hospitals. Some of this information was shared with the main CALM unit at the gathering site.

All medical resources for Pocahontas and Randolph County was ordered and coordinated through West Virginia EMS System DHHR Services Dispatch Center then further coordinated through W.V. State Police.

Statistical Reporting

Except for emergency medical transports a precise tracking of the effect of the National Rainbow Family Gathering on the area medical facilities was difficult to obtain this year. During the period from June 19 to July 5, 2004 it is presumed other Rainbow members had gone to other local and state health care facilities in nearby towns or cities. These other health care facilities or clinics required payment at time of non-emergency services; therefore most gathering participants who visited these clinics elected to go to the ER's at Pocahontas Memorial Hospital or Davis Memorial Hospital. Contact with these Hospitals indicated an increase of indigent care cases they had seen during the period of the gathering.

The specifics of request for public assistance (welfare) resulting from the Rainbow Family Gathering are not known. It is presumed it was a large impact to the small communities and lost among the statistics of the larger cities near by. Local individuals had given goods to the Rainbows during the event.

At this time of this report, Pocahontas Memorial Hospital and Davis Memorial Hospital indigent health care, ground and air ambulance costs are not known, final costs will be reported to the Safety Officer and forwarded to the Washington Office for inclusion into the final package by end of summer. There were five ground ambulance transports to Pocahontas Memorial Hospital, and no air ambulance calls.

Incident personnel filled out two CA-1's (Traumatic Injury and Claim for Continuation of Pay Compensation) two CA-2's (Notice of Occupational Disease and Claim for Compensation) two CA-16's (Authorization for Examination and/or Treatment) and two R5-6700-9 (Occupational Exposure.)

These forms were filled out for precautionary measure in case of follow-up medical attention becomes necessary for a later date. These were for:

On June 16, 2005, Law Enforcement Officer / EMT was exposed to blood to skin on face while providing EMS care at a local motor vehicle accident, non rainbow participant.

On June 26, 2005. Law Enforcement Officer was exposed to human saliva. LEO spit in the face during an arrest.

JON SELBY, NIMT SAFETY OFFICER



SAFETY WAS EVERYONES # 1 JOB ON THIS INCIDENT!!!