ASPR TRACIE Technical Assistance Request

Request Receipt Date (by ASPR TRACIE): 10 May 2018
Response Date: 18 May 2018; updated 23 May 2018; updated 19 March 2025
Type of TA Request: Standard

Request:

The requestor asked for technical assistance in searching for plans (e.g., continuity of operations plans [COOP]), tools (e.g., checklists and action item lists), templates, and any other resources that can help to develop a disaster/emergency plan for sterile processing departments in hospitals.

Response:

The ASPR TRACIE Team conducted a literature review for resources related to hospital sterile processing departments. In addition, we reached out to ASPR TRACIE Subject Matter Expert (SME) Cadre members to gather examples of written materials or anecdotal information that they could share with the requestor.

Section I in this document includes feedback provided by an ASPR TRACIE SME Cadre member. Section II provides resources related to emergencies/disasters and hospital sterile processing departments. Finally, Section III includes additional resources related to sterile processing departments that may be helpful.

I. ASPR TRACIE SME Cadre Member Comments

Note: The following contains direct quotes or paraphrased content from emails and other correspondence provided by ASPR TRACIE SME Cadre members in response to this specific request. It does not necessarily express the views of ASPR or ASPR TRACIE.

SME Cadre Member 1:

- Planning options will depend on whether the facility is a stand-alone hospital or part of an integrated system. Based on previous experience our hospital had in supporting another hospital, factors to consider include:
    - Whether there is a partial or complete functional loss.
    - Whether to curtail or eliminate surgery/procedures pending restoration.
    - Whether the facility will receive interim help from another facility or vendor. If that support is available, the following issues must be addressed: transportation, documentation and financial implications.
    - Addressing restoration plans.
- We have not had great luck identifying vendors with the capacity to meet our needs that are either in proximity to our hospital or can provide us with a mobile operation.

II. Sterile Processing Department Resources

ASPR TRACIE. (2023). Utility Failures in Health Care Toolkit.

Utility failures are a major concern for healthcare and may cause substantial harm to patients, staff, and facilities. Threats include infrastructure damage due to natural disasters and other incidents, planned outages to relieve stress on services or prevent other hazards, and malicious acts such as physical and cyber sabotage. It is also important to note the cascading effects a failure of one utility may have on others; more than one utility may fail simultaneously or sequentially. This suite of tip sheets can help healthcare facility managers and emergency planners identify issues to consider when planning for and responding to various types of utility failures. **NOTE**: The Water tip sheet can help healthcare facility planners prepare for and manage related outages and includes information regarding sterilization.

Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN). (2019). Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Tool Kit: Perioperative Emergency Preparedness Checklist.

This guidance document can be used by healthcare facilities when developing or reviewing a disaster plan for perioperative services. Sterilization considerations are included throughout the checklist.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2024). Guidance for Healthcare Water System Repair and Recovery Following a Boil Water Alert or Disruption of Water Supply.

This webpage focuses on the infection control recommendation to be used during a boil water alert. There is also a section specific to sterile processing, which provides the requirements by the CDC and the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation (AAMI).

Duro, M. (2015). Internal/External Disasters in Sterile Processing: Are you Prepared? Healthcare Purchasing News, Self-Study Series.

The author of this article discusses the importance of planning and preparing for disasters that may impact a sterile processing department. Examples of potential disasters and their adverse effects on the sterile processing department are provided.

Lind, N. (2022). The Employee's Role in Disaster Preparedness. Healthcare Sterile Processing Association.

This document identifies steps that Certified Instrument Specialist Technicians (CISTs) can take to be better prepared when disasters strike and impact sterile processing departments. It also includes a quiz that CISTs can take to assess their levels of preparedness.

MedStar Washington Hospital Center. (2018). Emergency Operations Plan: Central Sterilization System Outage. (Contact ASPR TRACIE for access to this document.)

This document provides a framework for the Central Sterilization staff and Hospital Incident Management Team to follow when the hospital's system becomes inoperable due to power failure, water outage or contamination, equipment failure, limited staffing, or if the system is expected to be out of service for longer than two hours.

Shelton, S., Hamm, J., Olatosi, B., and Ory Johnson, R. (2017). Recovery of Surgical Equipment Sterile Processing During a Floodwater Boil Advisory. (Abstract only.) Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness.

The authors of this article discuss the challenges faced in recovering their sterile processing for surgical equipment after floodwater contaminated their public water supply. They provide considerations for recovery plans, such as including a potable water source and a method to connect it to a required location.

Steris Healthcare. (2024). Managing a Water Crisis in Sterile Processing.

This article provides short- and long-term steps that can be taken by sterile processing departments during times when there is no water available or boil-water notices are issued.

Taylor, D. (2019). Emergency Preparedness: Is your SPD Ready for the Unexpected? Healthcare Purchasing News.

The author of this article provides a list of considerations for sterile processing departments to incorporate into their disaster plans. He also provides tables that list potential impacts to the department based on various disaster scenarios.

Vinovsky, D., and Stallard, B. (2023). Sterilization and Water Quality During Natural Disasters: Are You Prepared? Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation (AAMI) News.

This article and corresponding video provide examples from two healthcare systems that faced challenges with medical device processing during natural disasters. A representative from Houston, TX described how hurricanes and flooding can contaminate water lines, while another from Colorado explains how soot from a wildfire contaminated the healthcare water supply for months. Both speakers emphasized the need for contingency plans (e.g., tanks that contain potable water) specific to sterilizing medical equipment

Vockley, M. (2023). AAMI Publishes First National Standard on Water Quality for Medical Device Processing. AAMI News.

The author of this article explains the new standard, ANSI/AAMI ST108:2023, *Water for the processing of medical devices,* that provides the minimum requirements for water quality necessary to effectively process medical devices intended for patient use. ST108 complements the 2022 water management standard by the Joint Commission and the 2017 requirement by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which required healthcare facilities to have a water management program that inhibits microbial growth in building water systems and staff who are responsible for overseeing and implementing the program.

III. Other Related Resources

Leach, R., Khan, N., Ange, G., et al. (2017). The Impact of Operating a Central Sterile Processing Department from a Mobile Trailer at a Level 1 Trauma Hospital. (Abstract only.) American Journal of Infection Control. Volume 45, Issue 6, Supplement, Page S28.

The authors of this report conducted a study to observe implications to normal operating procedures while the sterile processing department of a Level 1 trauma hospital underwent renovations for an eight-month period. Results indicated that there was no significant difference and there were minimal disruptions when compared to the prior six months.

NHS. (2011). Effective Emergency Planning in the Hospital Sterilisation and Disinfection Unit (HSDU).

This speaker in this brief (1 minute and 25 second) YouTube video addresses the impacts that St. Mary's Hospital facility (in the United Kingdom) faced when the new HSDU suffered plant failure and was completely shut down for four and a half days. He also discusses how the hospital activated the HSDU's contingency plan.

U.S. Department of Defense. (2017). DOD Space Planning Criteria. Chapter 450: Sterile Processing.

This guidance document is intended to provide space planning criteria for sterile processing departments within the Military Health System facilities.