

Environmental Health

Radon

The Two Rivers Public Health Department Radon Program works through both grant funding and an internal testing program. Radon is a radioactive gas that can cause lung cancer when a person is exposed over a long period of time. If the person is an active tobacco user, the likelihood of developing lung cancer is increased. Nebraskans are frequently exposed to high levels of radon and approximately 50% of the homes in the Two Rivers district will test above the recommended level of radon.

What is Radon

- Radon is an invisible, odorless, and tasteless gas that is naturally occurring and can be found in homes posing a serious health risk.
- Breathing radon gas is the second-leading cause of lung cancer, behind smoking, and is responsible for approximately 21,000 deaths each year in the United States.
- Radon Levels are measured in picocuries per liter (pCi/L) and homes with levels above 4.0 pCi/L can increase the risk of developing lung cancer.
- Nebraska, because of its soil, has a very high incidence of radon, over half the homes that test in the state have levels that need to be mitigated.
- Percentages of houses that test high in your county:
 - Buffalo County 56%
 - Dawson County 37%
 - Franklin County 70%
 - Gosper County 51%
 - Harlan County 66%
 - Kearney County 62%
 - Phelps County 62%
- Testing for radon is the only way to know if it is present in your home.

DISRUPTING THE PATHWAY TO VIOLENCE

Targeted violence can happen anywhere. Disrupting the Pathway to Violence aims to create safer communities by reducing barriers to reporting potential violence. There are a variety of reasons why behaviors of potential violence may go unreported, including fear, intimidation, language barriers, and trust. Utilizing a public health based approach, the program intends to address the potential barriers to reporting violence by training front-line organizations and community leaders on how to identify the signs of violence.

Taking Action

During the month of December TRPHD staff hosted a stakeholder meeting at the public library in Kearney. During the meeting, TRPHD staff members Cody Samuelson and Assistant Director Laura Steele relayed information from the Great Plains Threat Assessment Professionals Conference to the group. The bulk of the information consisted of methods of forming violence prevention teams and who should be part of violence prevention teams. In early 2019 members of the Kearney Community will meet to form a violence prevention team begin the process of sharing resources to keep the community safe.

Emergency Response

Emergency Response activities include developing and testing plans for responding to disasters in an effort to protect the Two Rivers Public Health Department district from health threats. Emergency Response also involves working closely with other agencies and organizations to best serve the citizens living in the Two Rivers Public Health Department district. Preparedness activities can inform the response time of the community to provide lifesaving help and resources to individuals who are in need. Through collaboration with community partners, clinics, hospitals, agencies, and organizations Two Rivers Public Health Department has the ability to assist with coordinating a collaborative response to emergencies.

During the month of December Two Rivers Public Health Department Emergency Response Coordinator Cody Samuelson facilitated two tabletop exercises. The first tabletop exercise took place in Alma on December 4, 2018. Multiple staff members from the Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society facility were present in addition to staff from: Harlan County Health System, Harlan County Sheriff's Office, Harlan County Emergency Management, Alma Fire Department, and Director Jeremy Eschliman of Two Rivers Public Health Department. The Alma community exercise discussed how the community might respond to an armed intruder.

The second tabletop exercise took place at the Viaero Events Center in Kearney on December 11, 2018. Multiple stakeholders from various agencies in the Kearney community gathered together to discuss how to respond to an active shooter. A full-scale exercise will take place in January 2019 to build upon the discussion and tabletop exercise. Samuelson and Assistant Director Steele served as facilitators/evaluators for the exercise.

During the month of December the TRPHD Emergency Response Program facilitated a tabletop exercise in Alma that was attended by over a dozen people and assisted with a tabletop exercise in Kearney that was attended by approximately 70 people.

Disease Surveillance and Investigation

TRPHD is committed to promoting healthy communities, families and individuals through communicable disease surveillance. The intention of surveillance is to identify, promptly investigate, and monitor each incident of a reported communicable disease. Timely recognition of the disease within the community enables the proper implementation of prevention and control activities. This action can contain the spread of the disease before the illness becomes a major public health crisis.

A good surveillance system also identifies emerging infectious diseases, acts of bioterrorism, and potential influenza pandemics, as well as providing a basis for evaluating the outcome of public health prevention programs.

At the end of December, it was clear that H3N2 influenza is more widespread in Nebraska. This is bucking the national trend, where H1N1 is circulating. This year is being described as a severe influenza season. H3N2 generally causes more severe illness. The vaccine is still strongly recommended to avoid different strains of the flu. Influenza A 2009 H1N1 is also circulating in Nebraska.

- Preventing the Flu
- Get the flu vaccination
- Avoid close contact
- Stay home when you are sick
- Cover your mouth and nose
- Clean your hands
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Practice other good health habits

TRPHD also conducts school absenteeism surveillance, which mean schools report the number of students absent due to Influenza-like illness. This provides a snapshot of influenza circulating in schools. Across the state of Nebraska at the end of November, absenteeism due to influenza-like illness was at 2.27%. School age children may miss school due to influenza, and miss valuable classroom time. Therefore, TRPHD strongly urges parents to consider the influenza vaccination. It is not too late to receive the vaccine.

TRPHD saw an increase in Norovirus cases during the month of December. This is common during the holiday season, as more people host gatherings food. Norovirus is contagious, and can cause vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, and stomach pain. Outbreaks of Norovirus are common in the US, and can occur in healthcare facilities, restaurants, pot lucks, schools, and cruise ships. Protect yourself from Norovirus by washing your hands, practicing safe food preparation and handling, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, and washing laundry. It is also important to refrain from preparing food for others while you are experiencing symptoms.

Preparing For Flu Season!

Two Rivers continued to monitor cases of reportable infectious diseases in the area. The surveillance team continued to encourage the public to get their flu shot as well as practice good hand hygiene, frequently clean contact surfaces, and stay home when you are sick. Two Rivers in collaboration with Loup Basin Public Health Department was able to set up a pilot program of providing flu immunizations in 3 area schools, and will be conducting these activities in November.



Move Kearney is an advocacy group based in Kearney NE. This group advocates for active transportation and complete streets policies. A complete streets policy requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for the users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation. Active transportation encourages community members to commute in a way other than using a car, for example; biking to work, walking to the grocery store, and skateboarding to meet friends.

- Move Kearney hosted the annual Walk and Bike the Lights event at the home of Grace and John Watson. This is an opportunity to reflect on all the hard work that was dedicated to the purpose of encouraging active transport in the community.
- During the monthly meeting, Move Kearney members reviewed initial data from the survey, and started moving towards processing the data from the survey on active transportation. This data will be presented at the January meeting. The data will help inform a proposal on encouraging active transportation in Kearney.

Move Kearney always welcomes new members to join. Monthly meetings for Move Kearney are held on the second Thursday of every month, at 6:30 PM at the Kearney Public Library. Please feel free to contact the health department at 308-995-4778 for more information.

LIFESMILES DENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

I read an inspirational quote by Dr. Bruce Daggy that is worthy of sharing. He stated, "Let's build wellness rather than treating disease." The LifeSmiles' Dental Health Program focus on prevention is where we know time and money is best spent. We help with referral for those suffering from existing dental and oral disease, but ultimately, we know that dollars spent on prevention is the best investment to reduce healthcare costs for our communities' and improve our health condition. As we spend our winter trying to avoid cold and flu viruses, remember that a healthy mouth contributes to a healthier immune system. If you do get the flu or a cold, change your toothbrush once you are feeling better to reduce the possibility of reinfecting yourself. The fact that toothbrushes can get germs embedded in the bristles also reinforces the recommendation of changing your toothbrush every 3 months.

December's program outreach consisted of regular dental prevention services at schools, preschools, Head Starts, long-term care facilities and WIC clinics.

January's activities will include continuance of prevention services, and exploration of sustainability options for preservation and growth of program outreach.

In December, the LifeSmiles team provided services at 25 clinics located with our partners at 5 different long-term care facilities, 4 clinic visits were held at WIC sites, and with the holiday limiting our visitation days, 2 preschools received dental preventive services.



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During the month of December Cody Samuelson served as acting TRIMRS Coordinator and facilitated two tabletop exercises. The first tabletop exercise took place in Alma on December 4, 2018. Multiple staff members from the Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society facility were present in addition to staff from: Harlan County Health System, Harlan County Sheriff's Office, Harlan County Emergency Management, Alma Fire Department, and Director Jeremy Eschliman of Two Rivers Public Health Department. The Alma community exercise discussed how the community might respond to an armed intruder.

The Tri-Cities Medical Response System (TRIMRS) helps to strengthen emergency response through collaboration. TRIMRS assists in designing, facilitating, and evaluating community-wide disaster drills and table-top exercises.

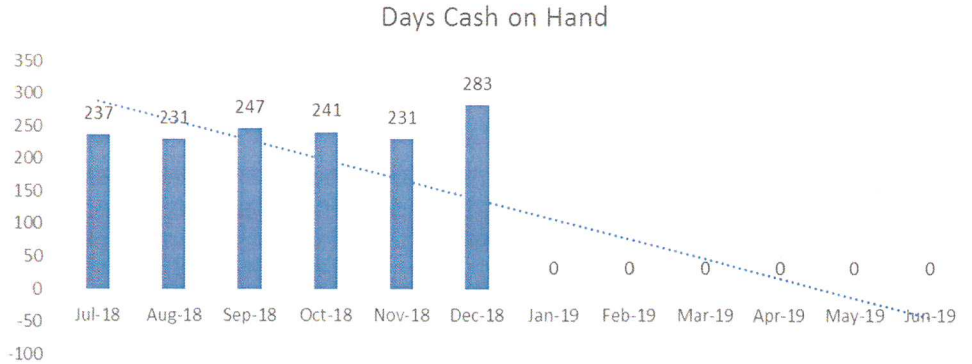
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Samuelson also prepared items for the January 2019 TRIMRS Steering Committee meeting and worked on finalizing assessments of TRIMRS that will be submitted in January.

TRI-CITIES MEDICAL RESPONSE SYSTEM

DECEMBER FINANCIAL REPORT

Two Rivers fund balance on December 31st was \$903,045. We have 283 days cash on hand.



Current Assets



Current assets are at an estimate of \$920,999, a decrease of \$30,226 from November. This is due to a decrease in receivables for the month of December.

Current Liabilities have decreased in the month of December by about \$11,916. This is due to a less amount of payables entered in the last week of December for payment, along with less charges on the company credit cards.



A/R and A/P this month are both operating efficiently. We are still awaiting payment from DHHS for the Radon 2018 program of \$3000 that is over 90+ days past due. We have sent in our documentation for the period of this grant towards the end of September, so we will see when the payment will be processed for the past due amount. Same thing applies for West Nile Virus for \$2,453.00 that was issued in May 2018, and for 1422 Chronic Disease for \$72,001.23 that was issued in June 2018.

DEC UPDATE: Invoices for Radon, West Nile, and Chronic Disease have been paid and collected in December. A/R is now efficient, with the exception on collecting a past due amount from the NE Teeth Forever Grant for about \$12,000. This invoice is between 60-90 days past due. Hoping to get an update on this invoice from DHHS.

Closeout and decreased revenue: West Nile Grant has come to an end.

REAL IMPACT

Maria Barocio is the Community Health Worker at the health department. In this role, she is out in the communities we serve every day, providing health education and resources—and serving as a resource ‘hub’ herself.

During the month of December, she worked at the Life Smiles Dental Program at Gibbon site, Lexington WIC site, Holdrege WIC site, as well as partnered with Barry Feldner, and Dr. Karen Sorenson to get services for individuals in need. Maria assisted in connecting people to services such as Intelliride ,which provides transportation for some families who have medical appointments, and other services like diabetes classes, nutrition classes, immunization, WIC, Dentist, food bank. She will also call and remind patients of their appointments, and provided car seat education on installation.

Administrative Notes

Second round interviews have been scheduled along with any TRIMRS Executive Committee for the Healthcare coalition Coordinator Position

Finishing up second round interviews, and gathering up notes to determine the final candidate for the Community Health Nurse position. Will have a possible candidate by mid-January.

Contact Us

Give us a call for more information

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Visit us on the web at www.trphd.org

Two Rivers Public Health Department

September 2018

Monthly Newsletter


Jeremy Eschliman, Director