



OPPORTUNITIES

Events current at time of publication. Have a virtual resource or event to share? Email us!

- July 12-15 – [45th National Hazards Workshop](#)
- August 15-19 – [30th Pacific Northwest Economic Region Annual Summit](#)
- August 25-27 – [Preparedness Summit](#)

CONTACT

- Want to know more? Visit us at pnnl.gov/projects/nwrtc.
- Contact the NWRTC with questions and comments at nwrtc@pnnl.gov.

AROUND THE REGION IN HOMELAND SECURITY

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

The Northwest Regional Technology Center (NWRTC) is a virtual resource center, operated by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL), to support regional preparedness, resilience, response, and recovery. The center enables homeland security solutions for emergency responder communities and federal, state, and local stakeholders in the Northwest.

PLANNING, PREPAREDNESS CRITICAL FOR PANDEMIC RESPONSE

Just a few months into his new role as Assistant Chief of Resource Management for Seattle Fire Department (SFD), Willie Barrington and his team faced the unknown when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Seattle, Wash.



SFD Assistant Chief of Resource Management Willie Barrington

“This was a new experience for all of us—a once-in-a-100-year event. It has been a challenge but my predecessor, A.D. Vickery, and others set us up to be able respond better than some have been able to,” Barrington said.

Barrington cites preplanning surrounding the H1N1 and SARS outbreaks in the early 2000s as being especially helpful in SFD’s response capabilities.

“A big effort went into pandemic planning at the city level and we leveraged that plan going into COVID-19 response,” he said. In particular, the plan included extensive resourcing of personal protective equipment (PPE), specifically sustaining supplies sufficient for a 12-week cycle.

While his team was braced for impact, they were shocked just like many other organizations with the severity of the situation.

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“The real light bulb moment was our first potential exposure and impact within the organization,” Barrington said. “We had to change protocols, change the way we interact with patients, and change our footprint on response calls.”

In particular, Barrington noted immediate changes to 9-1-1 call screening, PPE use, and training. For example, screening questions broadened to address patient’s recent travel, respiratory distress, and other COVID-19 symptoms.

“As we learned more, we realized people may not know if they have COVID-19 (i.e., be asymptomatic). We recognized this potential gap and changed our approach to minimize how many people enter the patient zone,” he said.

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Teams were also fit-tested and refreshed on PPE use, even using the product Glo Germ to show where mistakes were made. “We put together a training package that went to every battalion to fit-test staff on masks and refamiliarize them with the donning-doffing process,” Barrington said.

The onset of the pandemic brought with it an onset of new guidance.

“We received new information every day, if not more, at the start,” Barrington said. The department issued weekly training packages with news from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as station-specific information. Stations began implementing best practices such as designating one point of entry, establishing spaces for temperature and symptom checks, and implementing social distancing. “We are leading by example,” Barrington said.



While the pandemic response continues, Barrington looks forward to how the work to date will enhance response efforts in the future.

“We have seen the importance of knowing what resources we have and what we will need and being able to provide that information at a rapid pace to meet our department’s needs,” he said. “Technology will be a major part of making that a more automated process.”

To learn more about the SFD COVID-19 donation and volunteer opportunities, visit <https://www.seattle.gov/fire/safety-and-community/donations-and-volunteering>.

VISIT US ONLINE

Our new NWRTC web site is home to numerous reports on regional response, long-term planning, and recovery. Visit us online at pnnl.gov/projects/nwrtc.



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