



AZCHER

Arizona Coalition for Healthcare
Emergency Response



ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

www.azcher.org

About AzCHER



The Arizona Coalition for Healthcare Emergency Response (AzCHER) is a membership organization comprised of hospitals and healthcare organizations, public health, EMS, emergency management and other entities whose purpose is to build resilience in the healthcare delivery system so that it is prepared to respond to large-scale emergencies or disasters.

AzCHER has more than 1,000 members in the coalition, and the coalition conducts trainings and exercises around the top vulnerabilities in Arizona. Coverage is divided into four regions: western, northern, central and southern.

Members collaborate every day to be more prepared to respond to, and recover from, any event.



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

AzCHER'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

As we conclude the 2023/2024 fiscal year, we celebrate the fifth anniversary of our statewide coalition. This year has been remarkable, marked by significant events ranging from assisting in securing air transportation for a critically ill newborn in a remote area of Northern Arizona during a snowstorm to our involvement in the multi-agency coordination center during the Superbowl. AzCHER conducted more exercises than ever before, with a total of nine, including four in-person and five virtual sessions. Over 600 individuals were trained in courses such as incident command, how to write plans and medical moulage.

Most importantly, we have built thousands of connections and relationships, uniting Arizona's healthcare, public health, EMS and emergency managers. Our collaboration and coordination efforts have strengthened our ability to work as one team, dedicated to protecting the health and safety of all. We have learned many lessons and continue to improve our systems and procedures for the greater good.

As we reflect on our achievements and look forward to new challenges, the AzCHER team is excited to continue fostering the great relationships we have built and to create many more.

Sincerely,



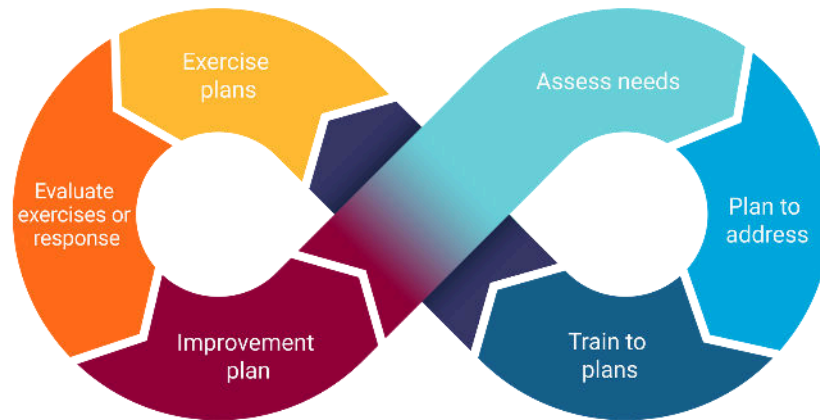
Robin Oothoudt
Executive Director
AzCHER



The AzCHER team from left to right, top row: Robin Oothoudt, Dawn Irons, Mary Douglass; middle row: Jamie Beauvais, Amy Di Miceli and front row: Shawna Murphy

PLANS

Planning process



Under the requirements of the Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP), AzCHER is tasked with aligning **Crisis Standards of Care Concepts of Operations** with the Arizona Crisis Standards of Care.

- We convened a core group of more than 20 subject matter experts and members representing public health at the local and state level, hospitals, EMS and emergency management specialists to inform the plan.
- Three tabletop exercises were held in January and February to validate the plan and make changes before presentation to all members.
- The concepts of operations received 100% approval from all members who reviewed it.

An additional requirement for the year was to develop and implement a **Chemical Surge Annex**, dealing with response to a chemical incident causing a surge in hospital admissions. AzCHER convened a group of members and subject matter experts to create a response plan and a toolkit for hospitals to use in building their own programs. Emphasis was placed on decontaminating patients before they reached the emergency department. Many hospitals have hospital emergency response teams who are trained in decontamination procedures. Three tabletop exercises were held to validate the plan, and it was approved by 100% of reviewers.

Plans are constantly undergoing changes as we learn from exercises and real-world events. The coalition revises its plans annually and as needed. The Emergency Response Plan and associated annexes, as well as the Continuity of Operations Plan were reviewed and updated.



TRAINING

AzCHER offers training throughout the year to introduce members to the following subjects:

- National Incident Management System (NIMS)
- Incident Command System (ICS)
- Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program (HSEEP)
- How to write emergency plans
- How to conduct a hazard vulnerability assessment
- Hospital Emergency Response Team (HERT) patient decontamination
- Introduction to exercises

This year AzCHER also held training sessions in crisis standards of care, chemical surge planning and medical moulage.



Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program training at AzHHA

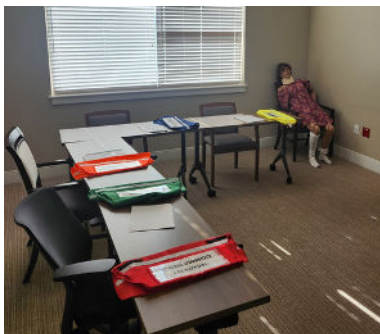


Valleywise Health and Honor Health training in decontamination procedures during a mass casualty drill.



EXERCISES

What a year we had for exercises. July 2023 to June 2024 marked the final year of a five year cooperative agreement. Nine individual exercises were offered, four in-person and five virtual. We covered a wide array of subject matter and included content for all healthcare sectors. These exercises not only provide practice but also help facilities meet Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and Joint Commission requirements.



Welbrook Opco Yuma



Friendship Village of Tempe



Haven Yuma



Center for Domestic Preparedness

The exercises were as follows:

- Cybersecurity virtual tabletop exercise.
- Crisis Standards of Care tabletop exercise delivered in person in Tucson, Phoenix and a statewide virtual session.
- Chemical Surge Annex tabletop exercise delivered in person in Tucson, virtually due to weather in Flagstaff and a statewide virtual session.
- The Medical Response Surge Exercise (MRSE), a functional exercise, was delivered virtually statewide to 24 participating hospitals around the state.
- Jumanji Too functional/full-scale exercise was a capstone event to validate the previous four years of improvements to plans and procedures. Over 225 facilities and over 2,000 individuals participated in this statewide virtual exercise. The scenario covered the top three hazards found in Arizona, including heat-related events, wildfires and staffing shortages. Participating facilities used their plans and locations to play. Facilities were required to write their own evaluation of what parts of their plans work and where improvements are needed to meet CMS requirements. An overall after-action and improvement plan was produced for the coalition.



REAL WORLD EVENTS

AzCHER responded to multiple real-world events this year including:

- Pediatric surge (influenza, RSV and COVID-19) - Nov. 23-Jan. 24, 2024.
- Border surge - Dec. 23, 2024.
- Assisting a very remote facility in finding transportation for a critical newborn during a snowstorm - Dec. 23, 2024.
- NCAA Final Four - March 2024.

While AzCHER is dedicated to promoting preparedness on a daily basis, we also function as a response organization. We act as a liaison to bridge the gap between healthcare and public health, emergency management and state and federal agencies. We facilitate situational awareness meetings, send requests for essential elements of information to our members and collect data to provide an accurate understanding of the current situation. Our logistics lead will search regionally and statewide to find necessary resources, and we assist with resource requests that cannot be filled locally.

TESTIMONIALS

“Just wanted to extend my deepest thanks for your time and expertise Tuesday during our HERT course at Abrazo West. The residents had a great experience as did I!”

Caleb Rees, MD, FAAEM director of EMS and disaster medicine, Abrazo EM residency assistant facility medical director, Abrazo Central ED EMS medical director, Abrazo Health Network.

“I am new to my role and to the AzCHER group. My organization is new to AzCHER as well. I attended the introduction to writing emergency plans meeting on April 4, and it was very informative.”

Candice Richardson, RN, BSHA, Omegalife Hospice of Arizona, Inc.

“To the dynamic trio of Jamie, Jason, and Mary, I am grateful the three of you volunteered to present together a second time during the 2023 EPP webinar series. Yesterday’s webinar was excellent! So much important information was conveyed through a professional, collaborative, easy-to-understand, relaxed presentation.”

Karen Schindler, PT, senior clinical improvement advisor, Health Services Advisory Group, Inc.



2024 CONFERENCE



GUARDING THE HEALTHCARE GALAXY

Gearing UP for when systems go DOWN

AzCHER 2024 CONFERENCE



AzCHER's fourth annual conference was a great success. We began the day with a fascinating discussion from Jon Riggi, cybersecurity specialist and former FBI agent with the American Hospital Association.

We also heard from representatives from utility and communication providers, SRP, Tucson Electric Power, Verizon, First Net/AT&T and Tucson Electric, on their efforts to prevent outages and how to request assistance if an outage occurs. Members also learned how utility companies prioritize different medical settings for the restoration of power. The Arizona Statewide Independent Living Council provided information on how outages affect people with access and functional needs and addressed how to find resources to assist when an outage occurs.

Rounding out the day, Onvida Health, formerly Yuma Regional Medical Center, discussed a ransomware event that left their systems down for several days. We learned of the exceptional amount of work and time needed to get all of the paper records back into the system. Presenters put a spotlight on a downtime that everyone can learn from.



MEMBER SATISFACTION

The member satisfaction survey was provided to AzCHER's 850 member organizations in July 2023. Responses represented all core members and all but two sectors.

Members give AzCHER an outstanding rating for member satisfaction with an average of a nine out of 10 rating on the overall value of the membership!

Overall, AzCHER received eight and nine out of 10 as average ratings in 11 of the 12 categories.

Here are some other highlights:

- Training and education (virtual and in-person): Nine out of 10 rating.
- Exercises (discussion-based or operational-based): Nine out of 10 rating.
- Communication (newsletter, website, webinars, toolkits): Nine out of 10 rating.
- Member services (digital platforms, additional support): Eight out of 10 rating.

WE'D LIKE YOUR FEEDBACK!

Scan the QR code and let us know how we are doing.



- Satisfaction with AzCHER programs, resources and support
- Effectiveness of communication
- Value gained from participation





AzCHER STAFF CONTACTS

- Robin Oothoudt: roothoudt@azhha.org
- Jamie Beauvais: jbeauvais@azhha.org
- Amy Di Miceli: adimiceli@azhha.org
- Mary Douglass: mdouglass@azhha.org
- Dawn Irons: diron@azhha.org
- Shawna Murphy: smurphy@azhha.org

24/7 Warmline - 602-264-2930

azcheradmin@azhha.org

www.azcher.org