

HOW ONE COMPANY RESPONDED TO A RUBELLA OUTBREAK

Kevin Cassidy
Vice President,
Global Security for
Thomson Reuters



Incorporating Security and BCDR

- **Security** and **Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery** (BCDR) are two separate and diverse disciplines that operate independently of one another other until a crisis arises. The intricate planning prior to, during and after a crisis will either allow your organization to continue doing business as usual, delay doing business as usual, or fail. If your organization had a business disruption due to a serious medical situation, such as a rubella outbreak, would you have plans already in place to deal with the crisis?
- Or, would your organization have to begin a process to deal with the crisis?



What is Risk Management?

- Risk Management is the process of identifying, assessing, and **reducing** a risk(s) to an acceptable level and implementing the right mechanisms to maintain that level of risk. (e.g. acceptable risk)
- Risk management reduces risks by defining and controlling threats and vulnerabilities.
- Once the risk is identified, how does your organization implement a strategy to effectively deal with it?



DEFINITIONS

- Rubella – commonly known as German measles – is a viral infection that primarily affects the skin and lymph nodes. It is caused by the rubella virus (not the same virus that causes measles). The primary medical concern of rubella is the infection of pregnant women in the first trimester, which may cause Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS) in developing babies.



Rubella: What Are the Health Effects?

Rubella infection may begin with one or two days of mild fever (100-102 degrees Fahrenheit or 38-39 Celsius) and swollen, tender lymph nodes, usually in the back of the neck or behind the ears. A rash then appears that begins on the face and spreads downward. The rash appears as either pink or light red spots, which may merge to form evenly colored patches. The rash can itch and lasts up to three days.

Other symptoms may include: headache, loss of appetite, mild conjunctivitis (inflammation of the lining of the eyelids and eyeballs), stuffy or runny nose, swollen lymph nodes in other parts of the body, and pain and swelling in the joints (especially in young women). When rubella occurs in pregnant women, it may cause Congenital Rubella Syndrome, with potentially serious consequences for the developing fetus. Children who are infected with rubella before birth are at risk for mental and growth retardation, malformations of the heart and eyes, deafness, and liver, spleen and bone marrow problems.



Scenario of Events Facts

- Thursday, 9:30 a.m.
 - 8 employees arrive at work feeling weak, and 4 of them are breaking out in a rash
 - 2 of these employees are pregnant
 - There are a total of 24 employees on that particular floor
 - 28 employees are on another floor, none of these employees report any illness, however 7 employees who work on this floor call out sick
 - The 2 pregnant employees request an ambulance



Scenario of Events Actions

- Thursday, 9:55 a.m. The 8 employees are isolated in a separate room
 - Emergency Medical Service is notified and are responding
 - Human Resources, Senior Management and Security are notified-All respond wearing N95 masks and gloves
 - Building management is notified
 - Building Management is asked to check with other tenants in the building to see if their employees have the same symptoms
 - Building Management proceeds to check the HVAC and water systems
 - Other employees entering the floor are advised of the situation and told to report to a different floor to work
 - They are first asked if they are experiencing any of the symptoms
 - None of the employees entering complain of the symptoms
 - Employees on other floors are not affected at this time
 - Emergency Medical Service Responds
 - They begin obtaining information from the sick employees



Scenario of Events Actions

- Emergency Medical Technicians speak to the 8 employees and transport the 2 pregnant employees the hospital
- EMT requests a point of contact name for the company and is issued the Incident Management Team (IMT) coordinator's name
- They question the remainder of the employees and advise them to leave and see their primary care physician
- The Human Resource Manager and the Security Manager, wearing N95 masks and protective gloves, are present during the medical examinations
- Human Resources, security, and a senior manager notify the BCDR director and apprise her of the situation
- A managerial decision is made to close and clean the office (both floors) immediately
- A 24 hour phone line is established for employees



Scenario of Events Actions

- BCDR plan is put in motion
- Employees are advised to work from home for the next 48 hours
- A back-up location, in another office, has been prepared for additional staff
- Incident Management team (IMT) is assembled
- Crisis Management Team (CMT) in another city is assembled
- IMT reaches out to the following employees:
 - Director of Environmental Services and Safety
 - Coordination is made between building cleaning and air and water testing
 - Vice President of Risk Management
 - Coordination is made between insurance carriers and medical providers
 - Internal Communication Team
 - Message to be drafted to employees
 - Message to be drafted to clients
- Facilities and security secure and lock the office until it has been cleaned and the air and water tested



Scenario of Events Actions

- Four hours after the two pregnant employees are transported to the hospital, it is reported that the hospital is testing the employees for dengue, measles and Rubella fever
- A representative from the health department is notified and advises the IMT coordinator of the following:
 - It's an air borne disease and it's communicable
 - The first symptom is fever, then a rash
 - Employees who get these symptoms need to report it to HR and remain home
 - They need to get medical attention
- IMT continues to meet and drafts a communication to be sent to all staff and clients
- Seven hours after the incident, it is decided to close the office for the next 72 hours and continue to implement the BCDR plan
- The floor is sealed by building management. Elevators are bypassing the two floors.
- Signs are posted in the elevator and at the lobby desk.



Scenario of Events Actions

- 24 hours after the initial report, internal and external communications are sent to staff and clients
- The IMT coordinates with various hospitals and city officials trying to determine the cause
- The two employees taken to the hospital report back that they have Rubella
- Other employees call the 24 hour hotline and report they have been diagnosed with Rubella as well
- IMT advised the corporate communication team to send out additional information
- We speak with the hospital, city officials and building management and are advised that only our employees are being treated for these symptoms
- The outbreak seems confined to our offices



Scenario of Events Actions

- 30 hours after the initial report the offices are cleaned and sanitized (Remember this occurred on a Thursday)
 - Carpets are shampooed and disinfected
 - Drapes and cloth covered upholstery are steam cleaned
 - All air vent filters are removed and replaced
 - All walls, desks, phones and computers are sanitized and wiped down
 - Coat closets are cleaned and all clothing is removed and placed in plastic bags
- IMT advised the corporate communication team to send out additional information to staff and clients
- Building management reports no other tenants are reporting these symptoms affecting their staff



Scenario of Events Actions

- Sunday Morning, IMT and CMT convene, a determination is made to close the two offices for the next 5 days
- Employees will continue to work from home or from another office
- Cleaning and sanitizing of both offices continue
- Corporate communications continues to draft notices for staff and clients



Management Decisions With The Advice of Legal

- 1. Those that are positive for Rubella cannot return to work for 14 days after the onset of the rash.
- 2. All those who were ill but have tested IgM negative (i.e. Negative for Rubella) can return to work as soon as they feel well. We will contact these employees directly to provide these instructions.
- 3. The recommendation is to vaccinate all employees at our location. This is a two - step process (2 doses provided over a month).
- a. Counseling and appropriate medical advice will be provided to ensure that the appropriate staff are provided the vaccination and will be encouraged to take up our offer.
- b. We will ensure appropriate communication occurs daily.
- c. Those employees that choose not to get vaccinated will be required to stay home for two weeks from the time the last person is vaccinated.
- d. The vaccination process should ensure that people do not congregate together in order to lower the risk of infecting each other. This will be achieved by establishing vaccination stations on multiple floors and scheduling intervals between each individual meeting.
- e. Human Resources meet to discuss and review the 'sick day' policy for those affected by the outbreak.



Management Decisions With The Advice of Legal

- 4. Pregnant women:
 - a. IgG antibody test is being done for all pregnant women to check for immunity.
 - b. Those that are IgG positive (immune) can return to work immediately
 - c. As the rest of the employees are being vaccinated, pregnant women who are not IgG positive cannot return to work until after 2 weeks of the last vaccination takes place
 - d. Male employees whose wives are pregnant - should get their wives tested for IgM and IgG antibodies. It is recommended that male employees (even if their wives are pregnant) should be encouraged to take the vaccination



Management Decisions With The Advice of Legal

- 5. Counseling and medical advice will be provided to all women to ensure they know the risks of contacting Rubella in the early weeks of pregnancy to ensure that they take adequate protection to (1) have the vaccination (2) avoid pregnancy during this period
- 6. We will provide all necessary help and documentation to health advisors who would assume the responsibility of reporting any incidents to the health authorities
- 7. Travel from our office by our employees and visitors elsewhere is prohibited for the next two weeks. We will evaluate this travel ban subsequently.
- 8. Management will provide recommendations on new entrant hiring and provide advice on what vaccinations should be advised for all new hires within the organization



DISCLAIMER

- Our company accepts no liability for the content of this presentation, or for the consequences of any actions taken on the basis of the information provided.
- This presentation is intended to share information and strategies with others in the security/ Business Continuity industry.



Thank You for Your Participation

Questions & Answers


