

PRESTON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL



PRESTON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL AND LIVEPROCESS®
COLLABORATE ON COMMUNITY EXERCISE

Preston Memorial Hospital is a 25-bed, critical access facility in Preston County, a rural area in northern West Virginia. Dr. Fred Conley, Director of Threat Preparedness and Chief-of-Staff at the small hospital in addition to his role as the area's Health Officer, saw an opportunity to use LiveProcess and their expert team to assist in planning a "Code Black" bomb threat exercise. By utilizing LiveProcess assistance, which cut his exercise planning time in half, Dr. Conley was able to focus on involving other key hospital staff members and team members in the community in the tabletop drill. The result? New community alliances, more hospital administration participation, and better preparedness.

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*Fred Conley, M.D.
Preston County's Health Officer*

Fred Conley, M.D., could easily be called a man of his community. Returning to his hometown of Kingwood, West Virginia, after completing medical school and residency, Dr. Conley has spent the past 32 years as a physician in rural Preston County, West Virginia. In 1992, he was named Director of the Emergency Department at Preston Memorial, a 56-year-old, 25-bed critical access hospital in Kingwood, the county seat of Preston County. In 2000, Dr. Conley became Preston County's Health Officer, a role he fit into well, having also been involved in nursing home care since beginning private practice in 1979. Working with Preston Memorial to improve regional health and medical response, Dr. Conley organized the county's first hospital disaster decontamination team. In 2006, the hospital added another role for him as Director of Threat Preparedness.

"I've always been interested in the problems that disasters can pose for small, rural areas," said Dr. Conley. "From animals to humans, it became apparent to me that Preston County needed to make plans for how to help each other in the case of any kind of disaster, natural or otherwise, that we might face."

Typical of rural communities, Preston County is the kind of place where people help each other. The motto of Preston Memorial is "We Treat Our Patients Like Family." In the case of a disaster, staff

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at Preston Memorial knows that the community will need, and want, to pull together. The hospital draws patients from a 25-mile radius and has excellent working relationships with county emergency management, the health department, and with a larger, tertiary care center about 25 miles away. But the question was, in a disaster like a bomb threat, could everyone effectively be a "team player?"

WELL-KNOWN NEIGHBOR

Although Preston County is located in the mountainous terrain of northern West Virginia, it has an auspicious neighbor in the form of Camp Dawson, a West Virginia Army National Guard Training Site. The camp has trained various components of the Active Military and Reserve Forces for many years. Preston Memorial is the closest hospital to the camp, giving it greater responsibility to triage and treat the medical needs of their civilian and military community.

Having a valuable military resource nearby also makes it imperative that Preston County be trained in the response for any kind of terrorist threat.

"Being a first responder puts us in a little different situation," Dr. Conley notes about Preston Memorial's position relative to Camp Dawson. "Being as prepared as we can be is our only option."

CALLING FOR SUPPORT

Preston Memorial had been using LiveProcess for several months when Dr. Conley received an email informing customers that the emergency management professionals at LiveProcess were available to assist with exercise planning and execution. Since planning a drill is time-consuming, Dr. Conley considered taking them up on the offer. He sent an email message to LiveProcess, requesting assistance in planning a scenario for an upcoming tabletop exercise. He spoke with Fred Sievers, Manager of Client Services, and Mitch Saruwatari, Vice President of Quality and Compliance for LiveProcess, about his upcoming challenge.

Dr. Conley knew this exercise needed to be focused on community coordination. "We had been part of a regional drill

in the fall that had been successful at a hospital level. However, in regards to other county teams, such as local law enforcement, we didn't know their policies thoroughly, and they didn't know ours." For this exercise, Dr. Conley brought in the Chief of Police of their community of Kingwood and members of the dispatching staff of Preston County E-911, and gave them an opportunity to use LiveProcess as a member of the incident management team, along with the hospital administration.



"Our Incident Command team really impressed me," remembered Dr. Conley about the drill. "They dug in, used the technology easily and efficiently, and were very good at staying one step ahead of the information, resource requests and tasks we were throwing at them."

AN EXERCISE IN EFFICIENCY

With a scenario and situation manual written by Saruwatari, a renowned expert in the field of emergency management, the group responded to activities ranging from evacuation concerns and patient transportation issues to staff coverage and erroneous news reporting.

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The incident management team of 15 individuals included the hospital's CEO, the Director of Maintenance and Security, the Emergency Department Supervisor, the Chief Nursing Officer, and also the CFO. The fast-paced exercise took approximately two hours, which Dr. Conley credits to the efficiency that using the LiveProcess tools offer. "Before, we communicated only with land lines, cell phones, HAM radio operators, and satellite phones – all of which will always play some role – but it was really much more efficient and interesting to be able to watch all the conversations going back and forth in real time on the event log across the screen. This was one of the most valuable parts of the exercise – having a record of what was said and done for our hot wash and after-action reporting."

The ability to keep accurate records of supplies going in and out of the hospital was particularly impressive to Preston Memorial's

CFO. "I could almost see the dollar signs in his eyes and hear his brain going, 'Ka-ching! Ka-ching!'" noted Dr. Conley. "Hospitals are put under enormous pressure and financial strain when it comes to managing disasters, and this kind of tool is invaluable in attempting to recoup those costs."

Other points Dr. Conley highlighted when comparing exercises, before and after using LiveProcess, include:

- **Ask for help with planning.** "I had seen many emails from LiveProcess offering help with planning exercises, but I had not taken them up on it until now. I'm glad I did and will certainly get their help with our next drill."
- **No more "call-down tree."** "We will never use that again," said Dr. Conley, who now notifies teams via his LiveProcess dashboard.
- **Everyone can get involved.** Each of Preston Memorial's 275 employees has his/her own username and password for the LiveProcess system. While only a select few can access confidential areas and post critical information, all employees can view pertinent disaster information. "It allows everyone to stay as informed as they want to be," said Dr. Conley. He has also used this tool in the past for employee communication when posting helpful information on avian and swine flu updates.
- **Provide access to policies.** Preston Memorial posts a copy of its emergency management and trauma policies on the LiveProcess platform for employees to easily locate. There is no more looking through complicated hospital intranet sites or large paper manuals for necessary, timely information.
- **Keep records.** One of the most useful aspects of using LiveProcess for Dr. Conley was being able to record and keep conversations, fulfillments, and inventory on the

platform, and save it for future analysis. "By looking at our conversations, we realized we should have been calling the Preston County EOC more for assistance with problems that we were trying to solve ourselves. That was a key learning point for us."

Dr. Conley and his threat preparedness committee are already working on an exercise for next April that will encompass hospitals and resources in a 14-county Homeland Security area of northern West Virginia. He plans to partner with the American Red Cross, animal team members, local Fire and EMS, and officials and hospitals from across the region to conduct a two-day, two-scenario event involving a major flood and a dirty bomb explosion. Dr. Conley's goal is to someday see multiple agencies coordinating all their communication with a disaster tool like LiveProcess.

MAN OF HIS COMMUNITY

Dr. Conley enjoys his role in threat preparedness. He says that when he goes home at the end of the day to his family, he hopes that that he's done as much as he can for everyone in his community.

In the 32 years since he returned to his hometown, working alongside people he's known all his life, helping take care of his friends, family, and neighbors, has been his biggest reward.

"Most people don't really know what you do until disaster strikes. But I know what we in our hospital do every day. In a community where you know the names of all the kids on the street, you feel a responsibility toward them, toward everyone. Our Threat Preparedness team at Preston Memorial is training to make sure we are at our best in case we are needed."



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888-400-CORE (2673)

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