# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

**What are the SNS drill deliverables for Budget Period 1 (BP1, July 2019 – June 2020)?**

For BP1, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Office of Preparedness and Emergency Management (OPEM) has given communities the option to either conduct the three required SNS drills or to participate in a Tabletop Exercise (TTX). Communities that comprise the Boston Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) are required to complete both. The Region 4AB Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) Planners conducted a survey to determine each community’s preference. Similar to prior budget periods, the SNS drill deliverables include: 1) staff notification and assembly; 2) site activation and availability; and 3) facility setup.

**Which communities will conduct the SNS drills in BP1?**

The following communities have elected or are required to conduct the SNS drills in BP1: Ashland, Boxborough, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Framingham, Hanover, Hudson, Littleton, Marlborough, Natick, Quincy, Revere, Sherborn, Somerville, Weston, Winthrop, and Wrentham.

**How will the PHEP Planners support communities to complete the SNS drills?**

Each of the above communities has been assigned to a PHEP Planner for technical assistance related to the SNS drills. To support communities to complete the drills, the PHEP Planners will conduct a regional notification drill during the week of September 23, 2019 using the Metro Regional Preparedness Coalition (MRPC) Send Word Now (SWN) notification system. The regional notification drill will serve as a prompt for participating communities to complete two of the three SNS drills: 1) staff notification and assembly; and 2) site activation and availability. The regional notification drill is considered a “partial notice” drill, meaning that the participating communities do not know the exact date and time of the drill.

**What are the requirements for the staff notification and assembly drill?**

Participating communities should review the Command Staff roster listed in the community’s Emergency Dispensing Site (EDS) plan and update it (if needed). If updates are made to the Command Staff roster, it should be noted on the plan’s Record of Changes/Modifications. ***The current Command Staff roster should be submitted to the community’s assigned PHEP Planner by August 30, 2019.*** The PHEP Planners will use the Command Staff rosters to prepare the drill forms that will be used by participating communities to collect drill data that is reported to MDPH OPEM.

The September regional notification drill will serve as a prompt for participating communities to issue a staff notification to designated Command Staff using the local notification system(s) documented in the community’s EDS plan. Prior to the regional notification drill, the PHEP Planners will provide participating communities with optional template materials for the staff notification and assembly drill including a letter to designated Command Staff explaining the upcoming drill and a drill script. Command Staff will ***not*** be required to assemble for this drill as it is a “call down only” drill. Upon completion of the drill, participating communities will enter the acknowledgement time for each staff person listed in the drill form and submit the completed drill forms to their assigned PHEP Planner by October 11, 2019.

**What are the requirements for the site activation and availability drill?**

Participating communities should review the site contact information listed in the community’s EDS plan and on the MDPH WebEOC EDS board and update it (if needed). If updates are made to the site contact information, it should be noted on the plan’s Record of Changes/Modifications. ***The WebEOC EDS board should be updated and current site contact information should be submitted to the community’s assigned PHEP Planner by August 30, 2019.*** The PHEP Planners will use the site contact information to prepare the drill forms that will be used by participating communities to collect drill data that is reported to MDPH OPEM.

The September regional notification drill will serve as a prompt for participating communities to issue a site activation notification to designated EDS facility contacts using the local notification system(s) documented in the community’s EDS plan. Prior to the regional notification drill, the PHEP Planners will provide participating communities with optional template materials for the site activation and availability drill, including a letter to facility contacts explaining the upcoming drill and a drill script. Designated EDS facilities will ***not*** be required to make the facility available for this drill as it is a “call down only” drill. Upon completion of the drill, participating communities will enter the acknowledgement time for each designated EDS listed in the drill form and submit the completed drill forms to their assigned PHEP Planner by October 11, 2019.

**What are the requirements for the facility setup drill?**

The regional notification drill will ***not*** serve as a prompt for participating communities to complete the facility setup drill. Participating communities should complete a facility setup drill at a designated EDS facility and submit the completed drill forms to their assigned PHEP Planner by March 27, 2020. Participating communities may utilize a seasonal influenza vaccination clinic for the facility setup drill or use a scenario. ***Note: per CDC requirements facility setup drills should alternate each budget period between pandemic influenza and aerosolized anthrax scenarios.***

Participating communities should notify their assigned PHEP Planner of the date of the community’s facility setup drill once it is determined. When requested, and depending on availability, the PHEP Planners will attend the drill as an Observer to document setup time, calculate throughput completion times, and offer improvement recommendations.

**How will participating communities be notified on the day of the regional notification drill?**

The primary and secondary 24/7 public health contacts for each 4AB community are required to be registered on the MRPC SWN notification system. On the day of the regional notification drill, the 24/7 contacts for the participating communities will receive a simulated incident notification that indicates “this is a drill”. The notification will require confirmation from the 24/7 contacts and request that the participating communities issue a staff notification to designated Command Staff and a site activation request to designated EDS facilities contacts.

**What should the 24/7 contacts do when they receive the regional drill notification?**

Once the 24/7 contacts have acknowledged the SWN notification, they should issue notifications to the community’s designated Command Staff and to the designated EDS facility contacts by following the notification and activation procedures outlined in the community’s EDS plan. Prior to the regional notification drill, the PHEP Planners will provide sample notification messages that can be used for the for these drills. The sample notification messages will also be attached to the SWN incident notification.

**What if the 24/7 contacts are unable to conduct the drills on the day that the regional notification is sent?**

While it is preferred that the staff notification and site activation drills be conducted on the same day as the regional notification to simulate a real-world event, we acknowledge that an unannounced drill may conflict with local events or priorities. Given this possibility, the regional notification drill will provide the 24/7 contacts with the option to complete the staff notification and site activation drills within 7 business days. However, participating communities should make every effort to have both the primary and secondary contacts ready to respond to the regional notification by using the drill resources provided by their assigned PHEP Planner.

**What if my community has not designated specific individuals to Command Staff positions?**

If the community’s EDS plan identifies an agency or organization that is responsible for staffing Command Staff positions, then the staff notification can be issued to the designated contact(s) for the agency or organization.

**Are staff required to assemble for the drill?**

No. The regional notification drill is “call down only” meaning that the drill is used to validate community Command Staff rosters (i.e. phone numbers, e-mail) and to test local notification procedures and systems. Staff will be asked to acknowledge receipt of the notification. The sample notification messages provided by the PHEP Planners will include instructions for staff.

**Is the EDS facility required to make the site available for the drill?**

No. The regional notification drill is “call down only” meaning that the drill is used to validate facility contact information (i.e. phone numbers, email) and to test local activation procedures and systems. Facility contacts will be asked to acknowledge receipt of the notification. The sample notification messages provided by the PHEP Planners will include instructions for facility contacts.

**How should participating communities prepare for the regional notification drill?**

During August 2019, participating communities should:

* Review and update SWN contact information and notification preferences for 24/7 contacts
* Review and update Command Staff roster and contact information in EDS plan
* Review and update contact information EDS facility contacts in EDS plan
* Update the MDPH WebEOC EDS Board for each designated facility
* Notify Command Staff and facility contacts of the upcoming drill (optional)
* Schedule the facility setup drill and notify the PHEP Planners of the date

**Who is my assigned PHEP Planner?**

Participating communities are listed below by their assigned PHEP Planner.

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