**Public Health Alerts**

**Overview**

Public Health Alerts is an application on CNPHI that allows for the timely notification and/or dissemination of information between local/regional, provincial/territorial and national public health stakeholders. Users can select the target audience (single P/T, multiple P/Ts, national) to whom an email notification will be sent to advise that a new PHA has been posted. PHAs are used for case finding and to provide situational awareness on current national, provincial/territorial and local investigations.

**History**

The Enteric Public Health Alerts System (EPHAS) was developed by a local, provincial and federal working group and was launched in August 2001 on CEOSC (Canadian Enteric Outbreak Surveillance Centre) and then moved to CIOSC (Canadian Integrated Outbreak Surveillance Centre), housed on CNPHI (Canadian Network for Public Health Intelligence), in 2003. Many people still refer to PHAs as “CEOSC postings” or “CEOSC alerts”.

**General content**

* **Audience**
  + Automatically populated based on choices selected before posting.
* **Author and contact information**
  + Sections auto-populate.
* **Posting information**
  + Completion of drop-down fields.
  + Some fields may be entered as “unknown” as PHAs are often posted in advance of all information being available.
* **Priority levels** (assigned when posted)
* Non-critical (Green) 🡪 minimal to non-existent threat to public health. Should be read within 7 days.
* Important (Yellow) 🡪 possible threat to public health. May require immediate attention or action depending on relevancy. Should be read within 72 hours.
* Urgent (Orange) 🡪 significant threat to public health. Warrants immediate attention, may require action. Should be read within 24 hours.
* Emergency (Red) 🡪 Extraordinary threat to public health. Warrants immediate action or attention. Should be read within 60 minutes.

**Other points**

* Can associate with previously posted alerts.
* Documents can be attached (e.g., spreadsheets, maps, and other relevant information).
* Links to websites can be included.
* Depending on your access level you will post directly (Reviewer) or submit to a Reviewer for approval and posting (Writer).

**Template/Examples**

[Agency name] is collaborating with [insert other agency names] to investigate a cluster/outbreak of [pathogen] cases linked to / associated with [details].

Summary of the cases, event and/or key actions date, for example:

* A national Outbreak Investigation Coordinating Committee (OICC) was established on [date]
* There are currently X cases with matching PFGE pattern combination (XXXX.0001, XXXX.0002).
* The case worked at Restaurant A in City X as a food handler while infectious between [date] and [date].
* All X cases reported consuming Product A from Farmer’s Market B in Jurisdiction Y.

**CASE DEFINITIONS**

[insert case definitions for confirmed, probable, and suspect cases, if available]

**EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SUMMARY**

* Age range: X to Y years (median age = Z years)
* Sex: X% (Y/Z) female
* Onset date range: [earliest date] to [latest date]

In collaboration with provincial and laboratory partners, epidemiological information for the cases is currently being reviewed. Investigations are ongoing to determine the source and the scope of the issue.

**ACTION:**

The requested action will depend on: who is sending the alert, the event, and the audience. Be sure to include contact information somewhere within the alert. Potential actions could include:

* Please report any cases of [pathogen] with PFGE pattern XXXX.0001 with symptom onset on or after [date] to your Provincial/Territorial representatives. Provincial Health representatives, in turn, are asked to notify the Outbreak Management Division (OMD) at [email address] or [phone number].
* If you receive any reports of [pathogen], please ensure PFGE is completed for these isolates and the patterns are uploaded to PulseNet Canada. Please report any recent [pathogen] with PFGE pattern XXXX.0001 to [contact name] and re-interview cases to the attached standardized questionnaire.
* If you identify cases in your jurisdiction that may be associated with this case or who report consumption of food at Restaurant A in City X between [date] and [date], please contact [name] at [phone number].
* When interviewing cases, investigators are requested to enquire about exposure to Product A. In addition, please ask about exposure to Farmer’s Market B and any risk factors at the market that could be associated with [pathogen].