

# Communications Plan: Supporting The “Traffic Light Protocol”



# Communications Plan: Supporting the “Traffic Light Protocol”

*This Communications Plan was developed through commercial market and federal partner collaboration. It is intended to provide guidance in how partners can communicate during the Green, Yellow and Red phases outlined in the Playbook produced in September 2023.*

# Communications Plan: Supporting the “Traffic Light Protocol”

## Executive Summary

The Communications Plan is intended to support the *Traffic Protocol Partnership: Monitoring the Medical Product Supply Chain Playbook* by establishing effective communication channels between commercial supply chain partners and the federal government. The communication plan outlines the actions and information needed to support the partnership in each of the supply chain status designations (Green, Yellow, Red) as well as how to utilize existing structures for information sharing. Key information for each designation includes:

1. **Key stakeholders** participating in routine meetings and when additional stakeholders and subject matter experts may be needed.
2. **Meeting cadence.**
3. **Communication plan** for each supply chain status designation.
  - a. Level of detail needed for recipient to take appropriate action (if necessary).
    - i. What is the disruption?
    - ii. Anticipated duration of disruption.
    - iii. Recommended appropriate action (if any) for each stakeholder, such as product substitutions and clinical information for patient care.
    - iv. How detail varies by audience.
  - b. Audience
    - i. Supply chain leaders.
    - ii. Public partners (federal, state and local).
    - iii. Clinicians.
    - iv. Non-traditional healthcare stakeholders (e.g., schools, etc.).
    - v. The public.
  - c. Tools for delivery (e.g., email, webinar, newsletter, alert, social media, etc.).
  - d. Communicate when the disruption has been resolved.

## Key Stakeholders:

1. **Health Industry Distributors Association (HIDA):** National trade association for medical product distributors. HIDA plays a convening role in bringing public and private sector subject matter experts together to discuss supply chain resiliency and proactive planning. HIDA also plays a role in consolidating and disseminating communications.
2. **Commercial Supply Chain Partners:** Entities involved in the supply chain, including manufacturers, distributors, and healthcare providers. These partners provide the boots on the ground expertise to inform communications and flag potential disruptions.
3. **Federal Government Agencies:** Organizations within the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR) to include the Critical Infrastructure Program (CIP), Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), Industrial Base Management and Supply Chain (IBMSC), HHS Coordination Operations and Response Element (H-CORE), as well as other agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).



## GREEN: COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Per *The Playbook*, “Green” status is normal/standard operations. During “Green,” a group of medical product supply chain partners and agencies share high level status updates. It is critical during “Green,” to test new ideas and continue proactively planning for future responses.

A key communication focus during “Green” is to educate stakeholders by disseminating information on best practices and lessons learned while building relationships. Additionally, the “Green” group will develop informational notices on potential disruptions and develop guidance on how they will be disseminated. Furthermore, this core group of stakeholders will convene to develop and exercise plans.

The combination of this collaboration and educating other stakeholders about the work will establish a supply chain “source of truth” for future public health responses.

**Key Stakeholders and Their Roles:** During “Green,” the following partners perform the identified roles as key stakeholders in the effective execution of this Communication Plan.

- **HIDA:** Convene stakeholders (manufacturers, distributors, and additional federal partners listed below) to monitor the supply chain, develop education materials, consolidate and disseminate communications.
- **ASPR:** Federal lead on public health response.
  - **SNS:** Help convene stakeholders to collaborate on the supply chain, consolidate, and disseminate communications.
  - **CIP:** Provide communication mechanism to government and industry.
  - **IBMSC:** Monitor and provide information on commercial supply chain.
- **FDA:** Monitor and provide information on shortages.
- **CDC:** Monitor and provide information on disease trends.

**Cadence:** In “Green” status, bimonthly (occurring every second month) virtual meetings will be convened. These virtual meetings will focus on building trust, discussing status of supply chain, flagging any potential disruptions, developing education tools, and planning in-person activities.

Additionally, there will be two or three in-person annual meetings to discuss solutions, test new ideas, and plan. These in-person meetings will likely be planned in conjunction with existing industry meetings such as HIDA’s MedSupplyChain Conference and Preparedness Summit, The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) Preparedness Summit, and Industry Days held by Federal partners.

**Communication Guidance for Green:** The following communication guidance provides a framework for partner-to-partner communication during “Green” status (normal operations).

- **Guidance for HIDA**
  - **Consolidation of Critical Information:** HIDA will consolidate information received from commercial partners. Information may be collected through email, hotline, surveys, virtual meetings, online reporting, etc.
  - **Dissemination of Critical Information:** HIDA will maintain open lines of communication and will disseminate updates to Commercial Partners via:
    - » *Commercial Channels* (industry newsletters, webinars, etc.),
    - » *Government Channels* to include ASPR’s CIP Office’s Supply Chain Resiliency Workgroup, Government Coordinating Council (GCC), and the Supply Chain Resiliency Workgroup (SCRWG).
    - » *Frequency:* Information will be disseminated bimonthly (every second month) and ad hoc updates will be sent out as needed.

- **Communication Types:**
  - » *Informal communication* will occur through established mechanisms such as HIDA's PPE Council, Vaccine Related Products Council, and Shipping and Logistics Work Group. Informal communication includes questions, items of general interest, or seeking clarity for a given situation.
  - » *Formal communication* will occur through notices, official requests, and status updates provided by, or through CIP, SCRWG, SCRWG Technical Team, FDA, SNS, or industry leaders.
- **Guidance for Commercial Partners**
  - **Notification of Critical Information:** Commercial partners will promptly notify HIDA and its committee of potential supply chain disruptions or critical incidents.
    - » *Communication Channels:* Commercial partners will utilize HIDA's dedicated communication channels which may include email, dedicated hotline, surveys, virtual meetings, online reporting, etc.
    - » *Frequency:* Information will be submitted as immediately as identified.
  - **Open Line of Communication:** Commercial partners will actively work to support and maintain open lines of communication.
    - » *Meeting Attendance:* Commercial partners will dedicate personnel to supporting protocol efforts, to include attendance at virtual meetings.
    - » *Seek Clarification and Information Vetting:* Commercial partners will request additional information and clarification as needed for any given situation, as well as support efforts to vet critical information.
- **Guidance for Government**
  - **Dissemination of Critical Information:**
    - » *Communication Channels:* ASPR CIP SCRWG, SCRWG Technical Team, other ASPR Offices, and the FDA will manage official government communication channels for supply chain resilience to include relevant official announcements and new directives.
    - » *HIDA as Principal Recipient:* Official communication will be provided to HIDA based on a time-sensitive basis.
    - » *Frequency:* Routine messaging and reporting will occur with ad hoc messaging as critical information emerges.
  - **Communication Types:**
    - » *Informal communication* will occur through ad hoc or within known relationships across federal partners.
    - » *Formal communication* will occur through official notices, call to action, communication, requests, status updates, newsletters, etc.

## “Green” Messaging Guidance:

- **Audience:** The appropriate audience for any given messaging will vary by the specifics of the critical information. However, the potential audience could include:
  - Public health
  - Emergency managers
  - Healthcare providers
  - Industry stakeholders
  - Academia
  - State and local government representatives
- **Messaging Goals:** Messaging may be designed to achieve the following goals:
  - Educate
  - Provide situation awareness
  - Gather information
  - Seek mitigation options and establish solution setting

- **Messaging Delivery:** The following are examples of messaging delivery options:
  - HIDA, commercial partner, and Federal Agency
    - » Newsletters
    - » Listservs
  - Informational webinars
  - Web-portal monitoring dashboards
  - Virtual meetings
  - In-person meetings
  - Workshops (best practices, tabletop exercises, education)
- **Code of Effective Messaging:** All partners will work to ensure:
  - Consistent messaging (to include routine, style, and utilization of effective channels)
  - Messaging is jointly developed and agreed upon
  - Messaging is designed for the appropriate audience and exemplifies clarity
  - Appropriate audiences are included
  - Existing communication channels are utilized
  - New communication channels are developed if existing channels are ineffective or limiting
  - Collaboration is open and effective across all partners

**Baltimore Bridge Collapse Example:** The following HIDA notification is an example product that results from properly utilizing the guidance set forth under this Communication Protocol.

## The Port of Baltimore and Supply Chain Impacts

### **What is the current status of the Port of Baltimore?**

The Port of Baltimore is closed until further notice following the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge.

### **What impact does the port closure have on the medical supply chain?**

The Port of Baltimore is not a major medical supply container port. The impact of the closure on the medical supply chain is expected to be minimal.

### **What impact does the port closure have on trade in general?**

Baltimore ranks as the 9th biggest US port for international cargo. It handled a record 52.3 million tons, valued at \$80.8 billion, in 2023. This included 1.1 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), 1.3 million tons of roll-on/roll-off farm and construction machinery, 11.7 million tons of general cargo, and 847,158 shipments of cars and light trucks. Among the key cargo transiting the Port of Baltimore are automobiles, coal, sugar, and gypsum.

With respect to containerized cargo, however, Baltimore is one of the smallest container ports on the Northeastern seaboard, handling 265,000 TEUs in the fourth quarter of 2023. By comparison, the Port of New York and New Jersey handled around 2 million TEUs in that same period, and Norfolk handled 850,000.

### **Where are Baltimore vessels expected to be re-routed?**

Aside from the MV Dali, only one other cargo ship was in the harbor at the time of the collapse and unable to leave port. Cruise ships based in Baltimore that are currently at sea will be diverted to Norfolk at the conclusion of their scheduled voyages. More than 100 cargo ships that were expected to call at the Port of Baltimore in coming weeks will now have to be diverted to other East Coast ports.

### **Action Needed by medical device supply chain stakeholders?**

Not at this time.



## YELLOW: COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Per *The Playbook*, “Yellow” status is strained operations. “Yellow can be representative of two operational postures. The first is a move from “Green” to “Yellow;” where a group of medical product supply chain partners and agencies start to meet more regularly as a potential disruption has been identified. It is critical during the initial move from “Green” to “Yellow” that the root cause of the potential disruption is identified, and mitigation strategies are discussed. The second posture occurs when status moves from “Red” to “Yellow;” where the supply chain partners and agencies enter a more relaxed posture and work to ensure the successful execution of mitigations and a smooth ramping down of “Red” operations. While operational goals of each of these postures may vary, the importance of effective communication remains equally critical. As such, a key communication focus during “Yellow” is to inform stakeholders regarding disruption, steps toward successful mitigating, and clearly delineate any action needed.

**Key Stakeholders and Their Roles:** During “Yellow,” the following partners perform the identified roles as key stakeholders in the effective execution of this Communication Plan.

- **HIDA:** Convene stakeholders (manufacturers, distributors, and additional federal partners listed below) to monitor the supply chain, develop education materials, consolidate and disseminate communications.
- **ASPR:** Federal lead on public health response.
  - **SNS:** Help convene stakeholders to collaborate on the supply chain, consolidate, and disseminate communications.
  - **CIP:** Provide communication mechanism to government and industry.
  - **IBMSC:** Monitor and provide information on commercial supply chain.
- **FDA:** Monitor and provide information on shortages.
- **CDC:** Monitor and provide information on disease trends.
- **State and Local Public Health Organizations:** Monitor and provide local intelligence to inform understanding of disruption.
- **Provider/Clinical Organizations:** Monitor and provide clinical level intelligence to inform understanding of disruption.
- Additional key stakeholders may include:
  - **White House:** Guidance and overall direction on federal government actions and intelligence.
  - **FEMA:** Inform on whole-of-government coordination efforts.

**Cadence:** In “Yellow” status, weekly or daily conversations may be needed to determine cause of issue, evaluate worse case scenarios to minimize disruption, and determine options for mitigation.

**Communication Guidance for Yellow:** The following communication guidance provides a framework for partner-to-partner communication during “Yellow” status (strained operations).

- **Guidance for HIDA**
  - **Consolidation of Critical Information:** HIDA will consolidate information received from commercial partners. Information may be collected through email, hotline, surveys, virtual meetings, online reporting, etc.
  - **Dissemination of Critical Information:** HIDA will maintain open lines of communication and will disseminate updates to Commercial Partners via:
    - » *Commercial Channels* (industry newsletters, webinars, etc.),
    - » *Government Channels* to include ASPR’s CIP, SCRWG, and the GCC.
    - » *Frequency:* as needed throughout the disruption.

— **Communication Types:**

- » *Informal communication* will occur through established mechanisms such as HIDA's PPE Council, Vaccine Related Products Council, and Shipping and Logistics Work Group. Informal communication includes questions, items of general interest, or seeking clarity for a given situation.
- » *Formal communication* will occur through notices, official requests, and status updates provided by, or through CIP, SCRWG, SCRWG Technical Team, the FDA, the SNS, or industry leaders.

• **Guidance for Government**

— **Dissemination of Critical Information:**

- » *Communication Channels:* ASPR CIP SCRWG, SCRWG Technical Team, other ASPR Offices, and the FDA will manage official government communication channels for supply chain resilience to include relevant official announcements and new directives.
- » *HIDA as Principal Recipient:* Official communication will be provided to HIDA based on a time-sensitive basis.
- » *Frequency:* Routine messaging and reporting will occur with ad hoc messaging as critical information emerges.

— **Communication Types:**

- » *Informal communication* will occur through ad hoc or within known relationships across federal partners.
- » *Formal communication* will occur through official notices, call to action, communication, requests, status updates, newsletters, etc.

## “Yellow” Messaging Guidance:

- **Audience:** The appropriate audience for any given messaging will vary by the specifics of the critical information. However, the potential audience could include:
  - Public health
  - Emergency managers
  - Healthcare providers
  - Industry stakeholders
  - Academia
  - State and local government representatives
- **Messaging Goals:** Messaging may be designed to achieve the following goals:
  - Educate
  - Provide situation awareness
  - Gather information
  - Seek mitigation options and establish solution setting
- **Messaging Delivery:** The following are examples of messaging delivery options:
  - HIDA, Commercial Partner, and Federal Agency
    - » Newsletters
    - » Listservs
  - Informational webinars
  - Web-portal monitoring dashboards
  - Virtual meetings
  - In-person meetings
  - Workshops (best practices, tabletop exercises, education)



- **Code of Effective Messaging:** All partners will work to ensure:
  - Consistent messaging (to include routine, style, and utilization of effective channels)
  - Messaging is jointly developed and agreed upon
  - Messaging is designed for the appropriate audience and exemplifies clarity
  - Appropriate audiences are included
  - Existing communication channels are utilized
  - New communication channels are developed if existing channels are ineffective or limiting
  - Collaboration is open and effective across all partners



## RED: COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Per *The Playbook*, “Red” status is for critical conditions that severely disrupt operations. “Red” can be described as a large scale supply and demand issue with the federal government utilizing multiple levers such as a Public Health Emergency declaration or the Defense Production Act.

An important part of “Red” status will be to assess when the immediate crisis is over and supply chain partners and agencies enter a more relaxed posture and work to ensure the successful execution of mitigations and a smooth ramping down of “Red” operations. Effective communication remains critical throughout “Red” and during the transition back to “Yellow.”

As such, a key communication focus during “Red” is to inform stakeholders regarding the whole of government response with clear steps toward successful mitigation, and clear delineation of needed actions. Additionally, when the disruption is resolved and status returns to “Green,” it will be important to utilize the knowledge gained during “Red” to conduct after action assessments, create lessons learned, and develop education material for stakeholders.

**Key Stakeholders and Their Roles:** During “Red” the following partners perform the identified roles as key stakeholders in the effective execution of this Communication Plan.

- **HIDA:** Serves to ensure federal and industry partnerships and communication is preserved during “Red” response. Specifically, HIDA will convene stakeholders (manufacturers, distributors, and additional federal partners listed below) to monitor the supply chain, develop status and information reports, facilitate new partner connections necessary for situational awareness, distribute education materials, and consolidate and disseminate communications.
- **ASPR:** Serves as the federal lead on public health response.
  - **SNS:** Help convene stakeholders to collaborate on the supply chain, consolidate, and disseminate communications.
  - **CIP:** Provide communication mechanism to government and industry.
  - **IBMSC:** Monitor and provide information on commercial supply chain.
- **FDA:** Provide information on shortages and mitigation steps. FDA can also issue Emergency Use Authorizations (EUA) and work with SNS on off label use during emergencies.
- **CDC:** Provide information on disease trends and mitigation steps.
- **State and Local Public Health Organizations:** Provide local intelligence to inform understanding of disruption.
- **Provider/Clinical Organizations:** Provide clinical-level intelligence to inform understanding of disruption and federal mitigation strategies needed.
- **Additional Federal Partners:** More federal agencies may be included for a whole of government response. The federal government may provide distributors with prioritization or tiering of medical treatment facilities to ensure limited products (such as medical countermeasures and personal protective equipment) are directed to where there is the most need.
  - **White House:** Guidance and overall direction on federal government actions and intelligence.
  - **FEMA:** Inform on whole-of-government coordination efforts.

**Cadence:** In “Red” status, daily conversations may be needed to keep partners informed of mitigation efforts, actions required to support federal response, and ensure coordination of resources.

**“Red” Messaging Guidance:** Messaging guidance during “Red” status will follow the recommendations outlined under “Yellow” with the caveat that a greater proportion of “Red” messaging will be drafted, tailored, and directed by federal, state, and local partners. HIDA will work to ensure that communication channels remain open and that messaging is clear and digestible during the rapidly changing environment typical of “Red.”



510 King Street, Suite 200  
Alexandria, VA 22314