

Bill Gentry

Preparedness training benefits North Carolina,
national and global communities



Bill Gentry's preparedness skills are legendary.

From his college days as an emergency medical services technician in Wilmington, N.C., Gentry has valued an organized, collaborative approach to getting the job done – especially when the job at hand is preserving health or saving the lives of humans and animals. His emergency management work led him to UNC in 2005, where he now directs the Gillings School's Community Preparedness and Disaster Management (CPDM) certificate program and consults with local health departments and first-responder personnel in countries as far away as Botswana and Moldova.

N.C., that involved a simulated collision of a tanker truck and school bus. More than 200 responders and volunteer victims participated in the half-day exercise, played out in a busy downtown intersection.

The CPDM program also provided evaluation in a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional contaminated water exercise involving the Orange County Water and Sewer Authority, Orange County, the UNC campus and UNC Health Care (the hospital system) in investigating, identifying and mitigating a *Cryptosporidium* contamination event. *Cryptosporidium* is a parasite, found in contaminated drinking or recreational water sources, that causes severe diarrhea.

Gentry was at the forefront of the State Animal Response Team (SART), formed in N.C. in response to 1999's Hurricane Floyd. Floyd left more than three million domestic and farm animals dead, and Gentry was asked to help form a network that could save pets and other animals during natural and other disasters.

"The SART model," Gentry says, "is built upon public-private partnering that integrates efforts by government agencies, not-for-profits, business and volunteers to build and support state and local networks. The model is based on our belief in the one medicine/one health concept, which closely aligns human and animal health."



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trained statewide every year by the Gillings School's Department of Health Policy and Management

Gentry's areas of expertise are disaster management and preparedness skills training.

He has led training for the Orange County (N.C.) school system to prepare for winter storms, during which students and staff members with special health needs may need to shelter overnight at school.

He facilitated a full-scale hazardous materials exercise in Vance County,

"In all these exercises, Gentry says, "the importance of preparedness, communication and collaboration were emphasized. We stress the importance of sustaining training and education opportunity – and also of sustaining partnerships."

In 2004, the U.S. Department of Agriculture funded a cooperative agreement with N.C.'s SART to develop local animal response teams on a national scale, based on North Carolina's model.

—Linda Kastleman

Gentry (left) and Dr. Jimmy Tickel admire a horse corralled at NCSU's College of Veterinary Medicine.



PHOTO BY LINDA KASTLEMAN