

Receipt, Stage, Store (RSS) No More! Emergency, Emergency, Relocate Maryland's Primary RSS

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OBJECTIVES

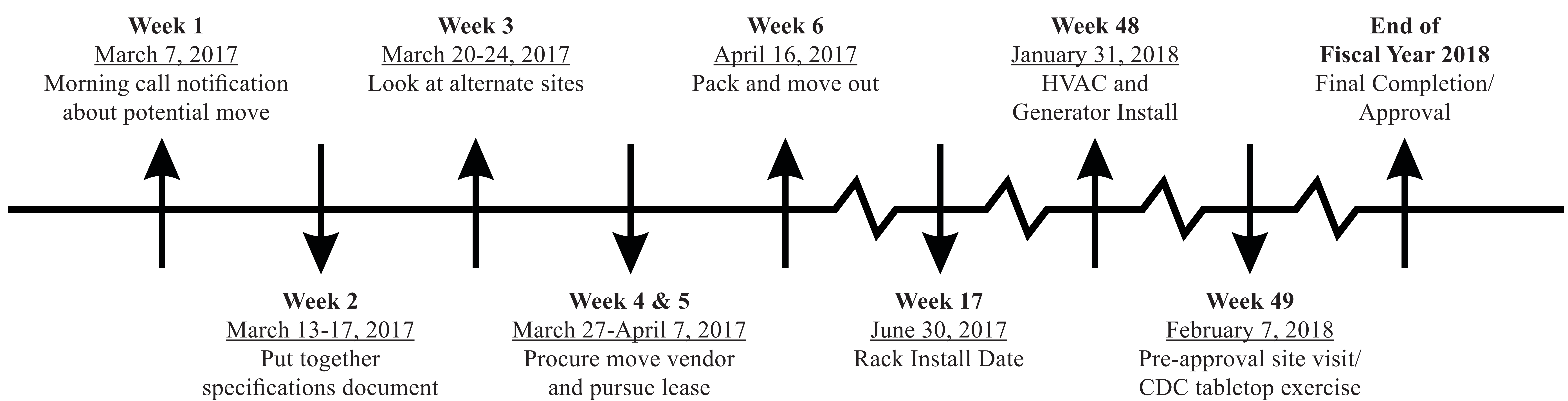
1. Describe emerging practices and theories that can be applied to improve community preparedness and community resilience at the local, state, tribal, and national levels.
2. Assess key resources and tools that will enhance or sustain professional work or volunteer role in planning for, responding to, and recovering from disasters and other public health emergencies.
3. Document key considerations and lessons learned to help other state and local health departments be better prepared for a sudden loss of facilities.

BACKGROUND

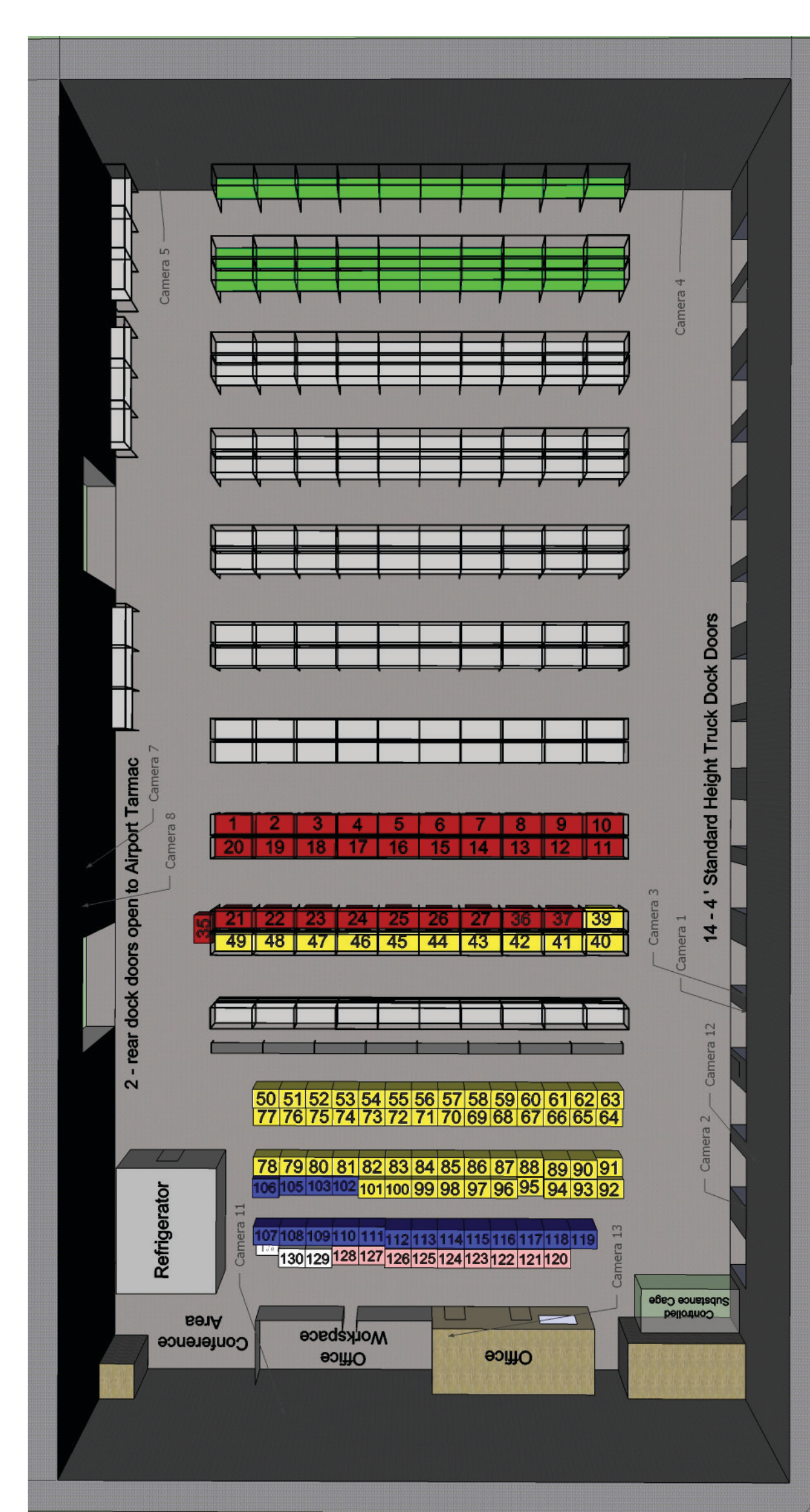
In only six weeks, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) accomplished an emergency relocation of their primary Receipt, Stage, and Store (RSS) warehouse and established a new RSS facility. Typically, months to years of preparation are needed to find a facility to serve as a RSS warehouse, which is a vital component to a state's medical countermeasure (MCM) emergency response. A RSS facility must meet the needs of the state based on previous responses and exercises, as well as the requirements and guidelines laid out by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In March 2017, MDH was informed that their existing RSS needed to be vacated and the operation relocated. MDH successfully packed and moved from their current location, identified and procured a lease for a new warehouse, and established their entire warehousing operation at a new primary RSS site. With countless meetings, planning sessions, and long hours, MDH was able to accomplish their RSS move within the ambitious schedule.

TIMELINE



RESULTS



Old RSS warehouse layout

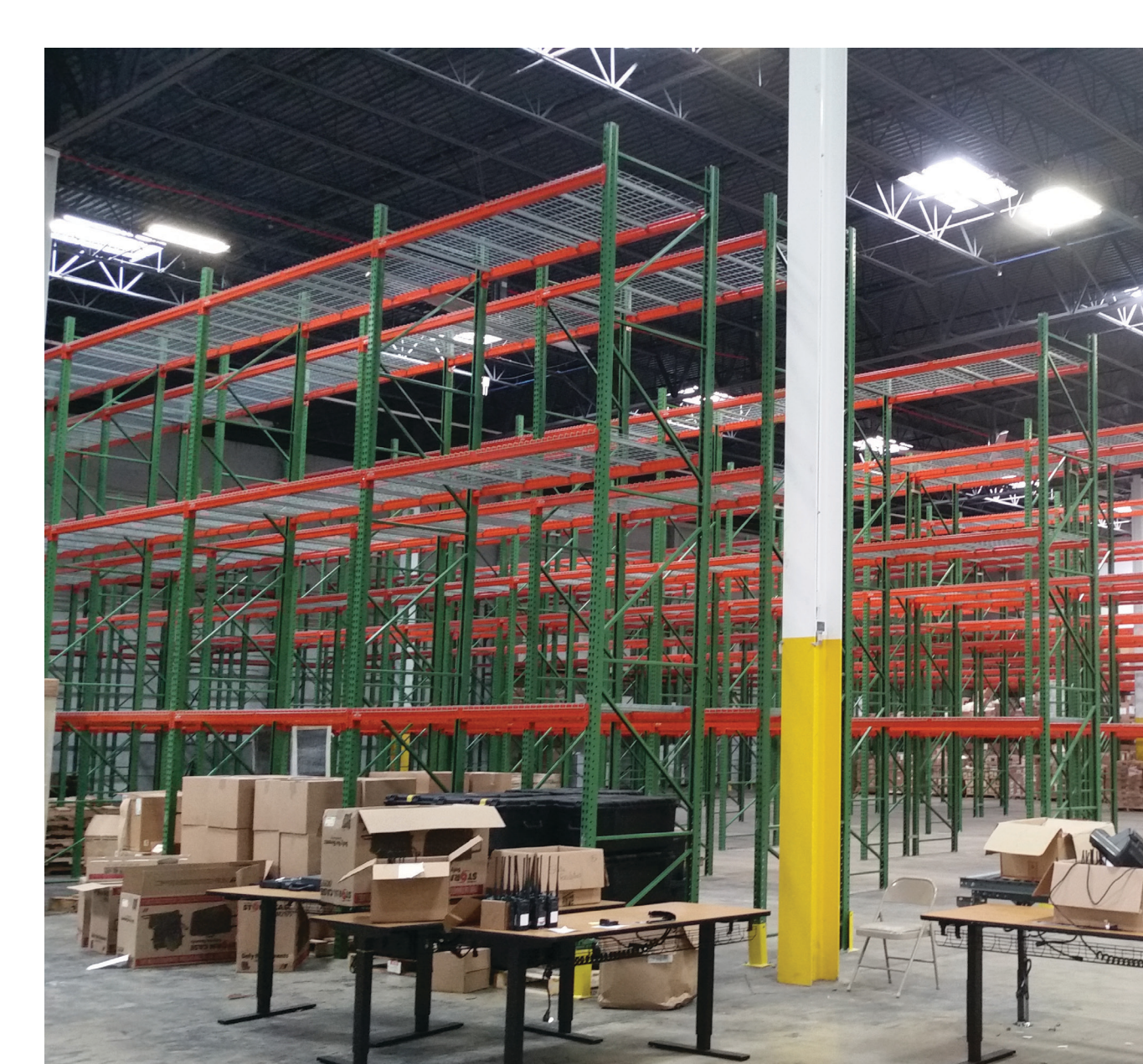
- Features of New RSS:**
- Racking System
 - Refrigeration System
 - CDS Cage
 - Knox-Box
 - Alarm System
 - Generator
 - HVAC System
 - Data/Communication Drops
 - Dock Doors
 - Office Space/ Operations Center



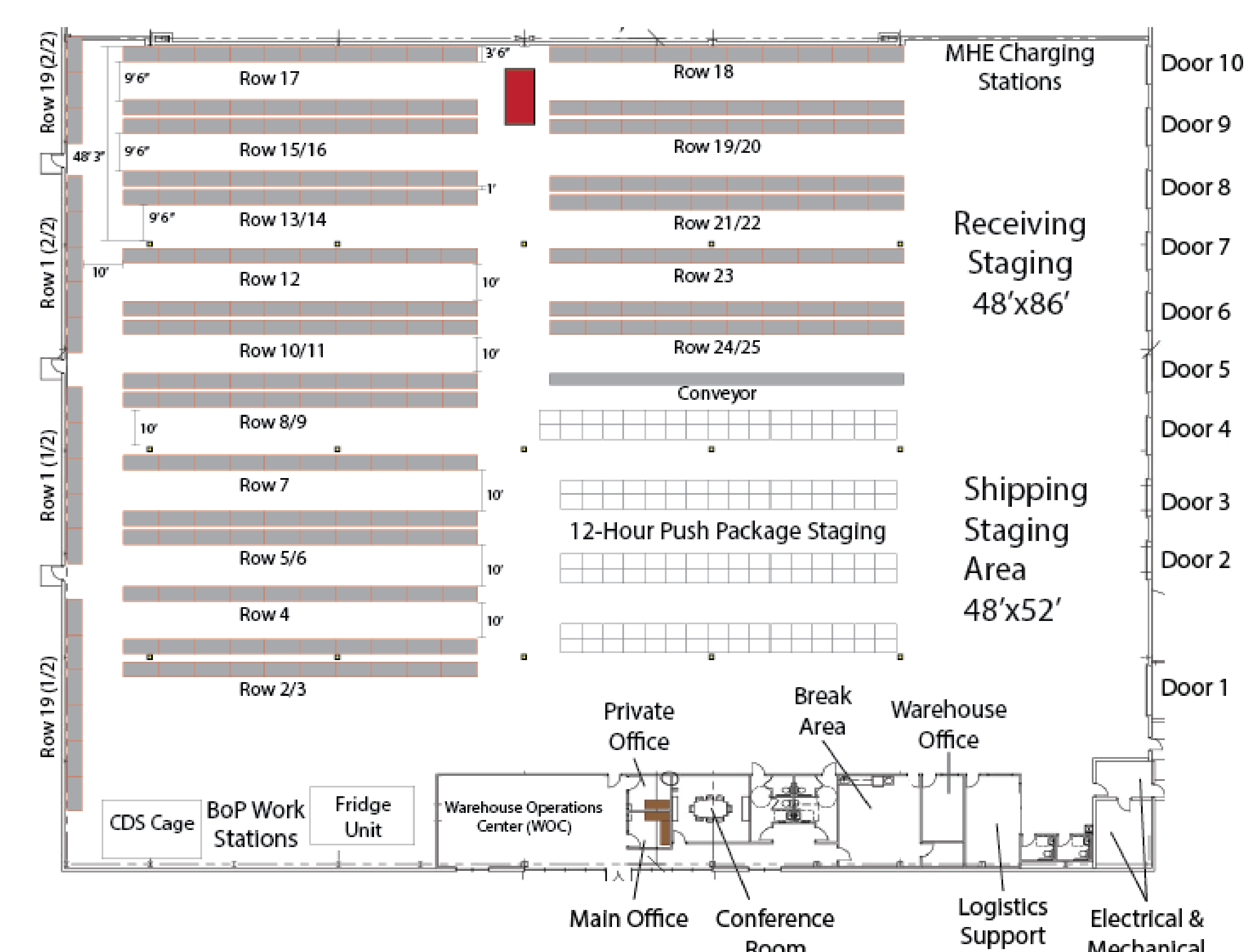
Inventory packed and ready to be moved from old RSS



Old RSS warehouse after move



New RSS warehouse with racking installed



New RSS warehouse layout

CONCLUSION

Through this experience, there have been several considerations and lessons learned:

- Always maintain accurate specifications on floor space, door configuration, and other requirements for a RSS facility. In addition, it is important to maintain a list of all upgrades and repairs made to a warehouse, including vendors that were used. MDH had to create many documents in a very limited time frame that listed all the specifications that were currently in place, and what MDH would need for a new warehouse based on current CDC guidelines. MDH also had to consider any existing gaps at the current RSS and how these gaps could be improved upon at the new RSS.
- Having a detailed inventory of all material to be moved proved important for keeping track of critical warehouse supplies. Additionally, having a plan for staging material on both ends of the move facilitated a smooth transition while allowing MDH to remain operationally ready for a response.
- Strong relationships with security partners provided readily available subject matter expertise when choosing the best facility. Having their guidance available on short notice allowed the six week deadline to be met.
- Collaboration with the procurement, information technology (IT), and central service units is extremely important. An inefficient procurement process can greatly slow down an operation, especially a time sensitive one. Detailed documents were created to keep track of all necessary procurements to help track the many procurements needed to move the RSS. These documents were organized by priority and included prices, responsible parties, and payment dates. The IT office assisted with IT-related procurement and oversight. Central services was responsible for the oversight of all other procured vendors.
- Relationships with leadership are vital to this type of timely response. Political decisions may upend even the best laid plans. It became extremely important to ensure MDH leadership was briefed early and often to avoid confusion and assist with expediting decision making.
- When choosing a new RSS facility, it is sometimes necessary to be creative to make a new space/warehouse work effectively. At the new RSS warehouse, MDH added an extra level of vertical racking to ensure MDH met storage space requirements and had plenty of floor space for other warehouse operations such as picking and pulling, or receiving a push pack from the CDC.
- It is extremely important that an operational tempo be established and communicated with everyone involved because of the many moving parts in this type of operation. With an operational tempo in place, it was much easier to meet strict deadlines while maintaining clear outcomes.

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