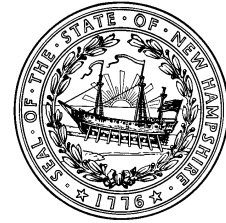


NH Department of Health and Human Services
129 Pleasant Street – Hugh Gallen State Office Park
Concord, NH 03301



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CONTACT
Public Information Office
603-271-6526

New CDC Report Indicates New Hampshire Is Well Prepared to Respond to Public Health Emergencies

Concord, NH - A recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates that New Hampshire has made significant progress toward building and strengthening its public health emergency preparedness and response capabilities.

The report, *Public Health Preparedness: Strengthening the Nation's Emergency Response State by State*, presents data on a broad range of preparedness and response activities taking place at state and local health departments across the nation. Being prepared to prevent, respond to, and recover from all types of public health threats – such as disease outbreaks, chemical releases, or natural disasters – requires that public health departments improve their capabilities in surveillance and epidemiology, laboratories, and response readiness.

“We are pleased with the results of the report and that it reflects all of the hard work employees at our Department and around the State have put in over the past few years to respond to emergencies,” said Dr. José Montero, Director of Public Health at the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). “Some real emergencies of late have also enabled us to improve our response and learn what works better.”

Accomplishments highlighted in the report for New Hampshire include:

- The Public Health Laboratories (PHL) at DHHS are able to test for specific biological agents. The laboratories passed three out of three proficiency tests to evaluate their abilities to receive, test, and report on one or more suspected biological agents to CDC.
- PHL has capabilities for responding if the public is exposed to chemical agents. The laboratories successfully demonstrated proficiency in six out of six core methods for rapidly detecting and measuring certain chemical agents that can cause severe health effects.
- DHHS has a 24/7 reporting capacity system that can receive and respond to urgent disease reports at any time.

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- New Hampshire received a score of 81 out of 100 in 2009 from CDC for its plans to receive stage, distribute, and dispense medical assets received from CDC's Strategic National Stockpile or other sources.
- To improve its readiness to respond, New Hampshire activated the public health incident command center (ICC) as part of an exercise or drill three times, and staff reported three out of three times to the EOC within the target time of 2.5 hours.
- DHHS along with Homeland Security and Emergency Management developed four after action report/improvements plans following assessments of their response capabilities during exercises or real incidents.

Public health threats are always present, whether caused by natural, accidental, or intentional means. Incidents such as the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, a New Hampshire anthrax case, Salmonella outbreaks, the Vermont Yankee tritium investigation, ice storms, and other disease outbreaks and natural disasters that have occurred recently underscore the importance of communities being prepared for all types of hazards. The 2010 CDC report indicates that the surge in effort needed to respond to the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic placed an increased strain on the public health system. Preparing adequately for future outbreaks – and other public health emergencies that are inevitable and may occur simultaneously – requires predictable and adequate long-term funding and effort to sustain and improve the public health infrastructure, staffing, and training.

The report and State-specific information on New Hampshire is available on CDC's website at <http://emergency.cdc.gov/publications/2010phprep>.

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