



THE SENTINEL

Reporting on Preparedness



Public Health

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September is National Preparedness Month



You should have a home emergency kit that includes items for survival for at least 3 days. These kits should include food, water, clothing and other essential items such as a first aid kit, medications, and some general use tools. A guide for getting a kit, making a plan, becoming informed and getting involved, can be found at www.ready.gov

Additionally, because October marks the beginning of flu season and the novel H1N1 virus has been circulating since May, it would be especially wise to be prepared for influenza this year. The first step in preparing is to get your seasonal flu shot now and the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available. Watch for symptoms of flu - fever, cough, sore throat and body aches - and make sure you have over-the-counter medicines for flu-like symptoms on hand. Flu care starts at home. Learn more at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu.

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This September marks the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Sixth Annual National Preparedness Month. During September everyone should review their emergency plan and make sure emergency kits are up to date. Home emergency plans should include an evacuation plan for your home as well as a plan to remain in your home during a disaster (shelter-in-place). Also important is a communications plan for your family that includes phone numbers for each person, contact instructions for each family member, and a meeting place if phones aren't working.

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Priority groups set for H1N1 vaccine; pregnant women, children top list

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have issued guidance for vaccination against novel H1N1 influenza. The first groups slated to get the vaccine are 1) pregnant women, 2) caregivers and household contacts for children less than 6 months of age, 3) health care and emergency workers, 4) people age 6 months to 24 years of age, and 5) people 25 to 64 years of age who have underlying medical conditions. When these groups have been vaccinated, the vaccine will be administered to others who want to get it.

The novel H1N1 virus continues to spread and officials are concerned that as schools reopen, an increase in infection will follow. The CDC encourages everyone to practice good hygiene by covering coughs and sneezes, washing their hands often and staying home if they become ill.

Vaccine for the novel H1N1 virus is expected to be ready in limited quantities by mid-to-late October. Scientific evidence shows that the flu vaccine is the single best defense against flu. Health officials strongly encourage everyone

to get the seasonal flu vaccine and the H1N1 vaccine as it becomes available.

District 2 Public Health has initiated a campaign to encourage all employees to get vaccinated against the flu. Last year, over 85% of employees in District 2 Public Health received their flu shots. "This year we hope that all of our employees get both vaccines," stated Dr. David Westfall, Health Director. "By getting our flu shots, we protect ourselves and the people we serve, plus we set an example for our communities."





Georgia Division of Public Health joins Department of Community Health

On July 1, 2009 the Georgia Division of Public Health officially became a part of the Georgia Department of Community Health. This move took the Division of Public

Health from the Department of Human Resources (DHR) where it had been housed since 1972, when former Governor Jimmy Carter created DHR to centralize state services. DHR was changed to the Department of Human Services and will continue to oversee Family and Children Services, Child Support Services and Aging Services.

The previous Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases is now the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities.



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNITY HEALTH
Division of Public Health

Georgians urged to prepare, plan and stay informed

Below is a message from DCH Commissioner, Rhonda Meadows, M.D. September is National Preparedness Month and here in Georgia, Commissioner Meadows and Governor Sonny Perdue encourage Georgians to get prepared, plan and stay informed.

The Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) encourages everyone to take action and be prepared to fight the seasonal flu and novel influenza A (H1N1) viruses this fall. September is National Preparedness month and an opportunity for individuals, families and businesses to learn how to slow the spread of the disease in their communities.

“Knowing where to find reliable and timely information is a key component to ensuring that you and your family are prepared,” said DCH Commissioner and Acting Public Health Director Dr. Rhonda Meadows. “Make contingency plans now for your home and work place needs in the event that you or your family members become ill.”

Georgians should prepare this fall and winter for higher than normal absenteeism because more than one flu virus is circulating. Current data indicates that the severity of the novel H1N1 virus has not increased but since individuals are not immune to this new virus more will be affected.

“Prepare, plan and stay informed are the keys to emergency preparedness. Prepare for an increase in the number of individuals affected by the novel H1N1 virus in schools and across businesses; plan what to do if you, your loved ones or co-workers get sick and have to stay home; and stay connected with a trusted source for up-to-date information on seasonal flu and novel H1N1,” said Dr. Patrick O’Neal, director of DCH’s Division of Emergency Preparedness & Response (EPR).

DCH launched the Roll Up Your Sleeve campaign in August in conjunction with the 18 health districts to educate Georgians about the importance of individuals within high-risk categories obtaining a seasonal flu and/or novel H1N1 vaccination. The campaign addresses how everyone can prevent the spread of the flu viruses, and points out the steps to take if they have symptoms.

“We cannot stop an influenza pandemic, but we may limit spread of the disease through early detection and a well-planned response,” added O’Neal. “If you are not feeling well, stay home; if necessary contact your medical provider. If you are a business owner identify critical roles and cross-train employees.”

For more information visit: www.dch.georgia.gov/rollupyoursleeve or www.health.ga.state.us.

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNITY HEALTH
Division of Public Health

ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVE

Arm Yourself Against the Flu!



Portable generators helpful, but can be hazardous if used improperly

During the aftermath of a natural disaster or significant weather event many people, including emergency responders, use portable generators to provide temporary or remote electrical power. However, with any device that is powered by combustible fuel, there are certain precautions that need to be taken to prevent accidents.

Since September is National Preparedness Month and we are in the hurricane season, now is a good time to review the safety tips for operating generators. Portable generators should be use outside and never indoors.



Before operating a generator, you should read and understand the manufacturer's operating instructions. Doing so will alert you to any potential danger that you need to watch for.

Gasoline and diesel powered generators discharge carbon monoxide (CO) when they are running. Operate

generators with adequate ventilation and away from windows, doors and vents so fumes won't enter the building. For added protection, install carbon monoxide alarms

indoors. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include severe headache, dizziness, mental confusion and nausea . If you are using a powered appliance and experience any of these symptoms, get fresh air immediately, turn off any combustible appliance and leave the building or area. If you suspect that you have carbon monoxide poisoning, go to your hospital's emergency room and tell the physician that you think you have CO poisoning. A blood test can be done to determine if you have CO poisoning.

To avoid electrical hazards, keep the generator dry by operating on a dry surface under an open canopy-like structure and touch the generator only with dry hands. Appliances should be plugged directly into the generator. If this is not possible, use only a heavy-duty outdoor-rated extension cord. Before connecting a generator to power a building, consult a qualified electrician to make sure that the wiring is compatible with the use of a generator. Do not plug the generator into a wall outlet. This may cause an electrocution risk for utility workers and others.

To reduce the chance of fire, store fuel in a properly marked container in a safe area away from any fuel-burning appliance. Turn off the generator and let cool before refueling. More safety tips can be found at www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/mediacorps/ffwf-17.pdf

News Briefs - news you can use

The Council to Improve Foodborne Outbreak Response (CIFOR) has released new guidelines for foodborne outbreak response. These guidelines assist local, state and federal agencies in preventing and managing foodborne disease outbreaks through planning, detection, investigation, control and prevention.

In March 2009, the President of the United States created the Food Safety Working Group, co-chaired by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. The working group is charged with enhancing the U.S. food safety system by collaborating with consumers, industry and regulatory partners. A draft of the new guidelines were released in June. After going through a public review and comment process, they were adopted in July. For more information, see www.cifor.us

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announces a nationwide recal on Accusure Insulin Syringes. This is a voluntary recall by Qualitest Pharmaceuticals on two lots of syringes in which the needles have been found to become

detached from the syringe. Providers or consumers that have recalled Accusure Insulin Syringes (31 G-Short Needle, either 1/2 cc or 1 cc, lot number 6JCB1 or lot number 7CPT1) should stop using them and contact Qualitest. For more information go to www.fda.gov/medwatch/report.htm

The FDA also informs consumers and health care professionals of its intent to take action against eight companies that market unlawful over-the-counter topical drug products containing the pain reliever ibuprofen. The products are unapproved products that require an approved new drug application in or to be legally marketed.

There are no approved applications for topical ibuprofen products. The names of the products and manufacturers are: *Emuprofen* (Progressive Emu, Inc), *BioEntopic 15% Ibuprofen Creme* (BioCentric Laboratories, Inc.), *Ibunex Topical Ibuprofen* (Core Products International, Inc.), *LoPain AF 15% Ibuprofen Creme* (Geromatrix Health Products), *IB-Relief* (MEKT LLC), *Profen HP* (Ridge Medical Products), *IbuPRO-10 Plus* (Meditrend, Inc. dba Progena Professional



News Briefs - news you can use

Formulations), and *IBU-RELIEF 12* (Wonder Laboratories).

District 2 Public Health is gearing up for flu season. Some local health departments have received their vaccine and have begun giving shots. "This year it is especially important to get the seasonal flu vaccine now, and the H1N1 vaccine when it becomes available," said David Westfall, M.D., District Health Director. "Getting the seasonal vaccine now could prevent co-infection since the seasonal flu and the H1N1 virus are circulating at the same time."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Pre-

vention and other health authorities, scientific evidence indicates that the flu shot is the single best defense against influenza. Of course, good hygiene like washing your hands and proper cough etiquette also go a long way in preventing the spread of illness.

The CDC reports that the seasonal flu hospitalizes about 200,000 Americans every year and causes about 36,000 deaths. The Georgia Department of Community Health rolled out its flu campaign - *Roll up Your Sleeve, Arm Yourself Against Flu* - in early September. Get your flu shot soon, it will be over in a pinch.

Interested in Volunteering?

Go to www.servga.org



Sign up with the Northeast Georgia Mountains Medical Reserve Corps



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David N. Westfall, M.D., CPE
District Health Director

Mark Palen
Emergency Preparedness Director

Nina Cleveland-Hall
Emergency Preparedness Specialist

Donna Sue Campbell
Emergency Preparedness Liaison

Dave Palmer
Emergency Preparedness PIO
Editor of *The Sentinel*
dbpalmer@dhr.state.ga.us