



COUNCIL

Linda A. Cartisano
Chairman

John J. Whelan
Vice-Chairman

Christine Fizzano Cannon
Thomas J. McGarrigle
Andy Lewis

COUNTY OF DELAWARE
GOVERNMENT CENTER BUILDING
201 W. FRONT STREET
MEDIA, PENNSYLVANIA

FAX NUMBER 610-566-3947
E-MAIL: delcopr@co.delaware.pa.us

Department of Public Relations
William A. Lovejoy, Jr.
Director

For Immediate Release
06/25/09
Contact: Trish Cofield
Communications Officer
610-891-4943

**Delaware County leaders set up a “POD”
to test response to a major emergency**

THE DRILL SCENARIO: There has been a significant outbreak of H1N1 in the greater Philadelphia region, including Delaware County and nearby jurisdictions. The greatest outbreak is in Philadelphia and the Departments of Health at the local and state levels have decided to do a mass prophylaxis (preventative medication program) to attempt to slow the spread of the virus.

As a result, Delaware County and other local jurisdictions have activated their SNS programs and POD plans. The necessary antivirals are stored by the federal government in the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS). Following the request of County Council, the Governor requests the release of medications to Delaware County.

Delaware County Council implements the county SNS Plan in recognition of the public health emergency. The Delaware County Office of Emergency Management activates the Points of Distribution (PODs). Heads of households are directed to report to their designated POD and get their antivirals.

* * *

That scenario was acted out Thursday, June 25, when Delaware County leaders conducted a POD training exercise at Chester High School in the City of Chester. The purpose of Thursday’s exercise was to practice and test the county’s SNS plan and to formulate solutions to any problems that might occur.

The purpose of the SNS Plan is to provide medication for treatment and/or prevention to the 550,000 residents of the county within 48 hours should it be needed in response to a pandemic or other large-scale event. The SNS Plan is mandated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and is a major component of an overall Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan.

Delaware County Council Vice-Chairman Jack Whelan said one of the most important jobs of County Council is to protect the public health and public safety of county residents.

“We have to be ready; we have to be prepared,” Whelan said. “Today’s POD exercise is part of the process that will ensure that Delaware County has a well-developed plan to dispense life-saving medication to our residents in response to a public health emergency.”

“Delaware County Council is continually testing and training on our Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) plan. During these exercises, we are training the individuals who will lead, manage and execute the tasks involved in a POD scenario,” Whelan said.

The POD exercise was coordinated by representatives from the Delaware County Emergency Operations Center, Department of Intercommunity Health Coordination, Crozer-Keystone Health System, who the county contracted with to develop and implement the SNS plan, and the County SNS Task Force.

(more)

(POD exercise continued)

“Standing up a POD is a critical part of the SNS planning. After the exercise, our emergency planners and key stakeholders review the exercise and discuss lessons learned,” said Wilbur Wolf, a consultant working with Crozer-Keystone and Delaware County in support of the county’s SNS and Pandemic plan. “It’s important that we test and validate the plan we have and this exercise is part of our continuous improvement process to ensure that our plan will work in an emergency.”

During the June 25 POD exercise at Chester High School, emergency officials worked with representatives of the county’s school districts, the Intermediate Unit, and volunteers to simulate a POD operation. Under Delaware County’s SNS Plan, PODs will be located in local schools and staffed by volunteers.

During the exercise, teams were briefed on their roles, and then an actual POD was simulated.

“We will simulate everything from the delivery of the medication to a person arriving at the school and getting their medication,” Wolf said. “This exercise is for a pill POD where heads of households pick up pills for their family members. Another type of emergency might call for a vaccination POD.”

Volunteers acted as members of the community, coming for their medication. They were greeted and provided basic information and a data form to fill out. People were then routed to the dispensing site, in this case in the school gym.

The next step is for a screener to determine if the person has medical complications. If no complications, the person goes right to the dispensing station; if they have medical complications, they get a detailed screening.

After people get their medication, they go through a final check to make sure everything is accurate.

At Thursday’s exercise, a few dozen people went through the POD. In an emergency, the county will be prepared to treat all 550,000 residents in a 48-hour period.

POD exercises have been held at Interboro, Garnet Valley, Strath Haven and Radnor high schools. Another POD training and exercise session is scheduled in August at Haverford High School.