



COUNCIL

Andrew J. Reilly
Chairman

Linda A. Cartisano
Vice-Chairman

Mary Alice Brennan
Michael V. Puppio, Jr.
John J. Whelan

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

AREA CODE 610-891-4931
FAX NUMBER 610-566-3947
E-MAIL: delcopr@co.delaware.pa.us

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

For Immediate Release
06/26/07
Contact: Trish Cofield
Communications Officer
610-891-4943

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

The scenario: Residents in southeastern Pennsylvania have been exposed to anthrax spores. A terrorist rented a crop duster plane and sprayed aerosolized anthrax spores over the region. People who are exposed need antibiotics, right away.

The necessary antibiotics are stored by the federal government in a Strategic National Stockpile (SNS). 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 report to their designated POD and get their antibiotics.

* * *

That scenario was acted out Thursday, June 21, when Delaware County leaders conducted a POD training exercise at Interboro High School in Prospect Park. The purpose of Thursday’s exercise was to 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 Response Plan.

During the POD briefing on Thursday, Delaware County Councilman Jack Whelan told the participants that the most important job 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 released the first draft of our Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) Implementation Plan in November. Now, we are testing that plan and 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.

“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.”

(more)

(POD exercise continued)

During the June 21 POD exercise at Interboro, emergency officials worked with representatives of the county's school districts and the Intermediate Unit to simulate a POD operation. Under Delaware County's SNS Plan, 16 PODs will be located in local schools and staffed by volunteers.

During the exercise, teams from the school districts were briefed on their roles and their individual POD plans. 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.

Whelan was joined by County Executive Director Marianne Grace in walking through the POD as "citizens."

"Our readiness to provide medications to our residents is vital to our overall emergency preparedness," Whelan said. "This is one of the most important and complex aspects of SNS planning and it's important to Council and our Emergency Operations staff that we are prepared to address any public health emergency."

"After today's exercise, we will take whatever steps are necessary to continue to improve our SNS plan," Whelan said.

For more information about the Strategic National Stockpile, visit the Web site for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.