



**Request for City Council Committee Action  
From the Department of Health & Family Support**

**Date:** October 5, 2005  
**To:** HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE  
**Subject:** QUARTERLY UPDATE ON PUBLIC HEALTH  
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

**Recommendation**

Receive and file.

**Previous Directives**

None

**Prepared or Submitted by:** Pam Blixt, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator  
Phone: x3933

**Approved by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gretchen Musicant, Commissioner of Health & Family Support

**Presenters in Committee:** Pam Blixt, Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator

**Financial Impact** (Check those that apply)

No financial impact - or - Action is within current department budget.  
(If checked, go directly to Background/Supporting Information)

**Background/Supporting Information Attached**

The Department is requesting to provide a quarterly update on planning activities under our federal Public Health Emergency Preparedness grant.

**PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLANNING**  
Department of Health & Family Support (MDHFS)

**CITY COUNCIL UPDATE: THIRD QUARTER 2005**

- 1) The City of Minneapolis public health preparedness team has been active in leading the region in planning for behavioral health in emergencies.
  - a) Staff planned and helped lead the “Emergency/Disaster Response: Behavioral Health Interventions” conference. This conference was an important first step in engaging behavioral health workers in planning for an emergency response and had almost 200 attendees.
  - b) Staff, in conjunction with staff from Human Resources, conducted a phone review drill with contracted City Employee Assistance Providers to determine their capacity to provide services to City employees in crisis and emergency situations. This assessment will result in clarification of best capable providers and instructions to City supervisors for the use of services in an emergency.
  - c) As the Metro Regional behavioral health lead, Pam Blixt was deployed to Camp Ripley to assist with response to evacuees from Katrina. When the Ripley effort ended, she was then sent to assist with efforts to provide behavioral health services at the State Assistance Center in St. Paul until its closure on September 28, 2005.
- 2) Five people from the City of Minneapolis attended an emergency preparedness conference that focused on planning for those with disabilities. Pam Blixt was a speaker at the conference and shared the steps taken in the creation of the City’s Special Population Alert and Response Plan (SPARC).
- 3) To continue our work in planning for the vulnerable populations we hired a community preparedness specialist, Janet Mengelkoch. She will be continuing a project we have started that will help community organizations that serve vulnerable populations create emergency plans. Janet will also be assisting with implementation of the Special Populations Alert and Response Coordination (SPARC) plan that MDHFS helped create.
- 4) Staff have led an effort to recognize extreme heat as a potential public health emergency which has resulted in tremendous gains in planning efforts:
  - a) Public health staff initiated and coordinated a “SuperHot” group for the metro urban areas (City of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Hennepin and Ramsey Counties) to coordinate on establishing standards and notification methods for a heat emergency in cooperation with the National Weather Service. The MN Department of Health subsequently recognized heat as a public health emergency and has included it within its Health Alert Network system for notification. In addition, collaboration with the United Way 211 service will for the first time provide notifications by fax to agencies serving populations potentially vulnerable to heat.
  - b) Within the City, staff has coordinated an internal group to develop an Extreme Weather Annex for the City Emergency Plan. The plan details responsibilities for response and actions from departments within the City.
- 5) Through working with the Communications department, MDHFS has completed a public health communications plan for emergencies. In the future, this plan will be adapted for

City-wide use and incorporated into the current communications plan in the City's Emergency Operations plan because it is more comprehensive than the current plan.

- 6) An updated version of the Regional All Hazards response plan for public health was distributed this summer. The primary focus of the planning efforts has been on the mass dispensing of prophylactic medication but additional efforts have been included in other areas.
- 7) The department held two training and/or exercise efforts during the summer:
  - a) A test of our ability to call up our workforce for an emergency after hours. Of the staff that was reached in the drill, 69% could report in 2 hours for the emergency.
  - b) The department held a combined training and exercise effort called Operation Celebration. The training covered basics of incident command system, tour of the Emergency Operations Center, and an overview of the City's response in an emergency. Using our annual departmental picnic as the scenario, staff was divided into the incident command sections of planning, operations, logistics, and finance. Besides having a great picnic, staff received some hands-on experience.
- 8) Many department staff attended training on the Bio-Detection System that has been installed to detect anthrax at the main postal sorting facility in downtown Minneapolis. If an alarm went off at the downtown site Hennepin County public health would lead the mass dispensing response and MDHFS would assist.
- 9) Our department is hosting a position to provide regional leadership and coordination of metro planning and response to public health emergencies in support of the Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) and Cities Readiness Initiative (CRI) programs. This is an 18-month grant funded position. The planner will be responsible for finalizing plans for the 48 hour dissemination of medication to the entire metro region population in the event of an aerosolized anthrax attack, as well as work on the dispensing of medication to critical responders.
- 10) A Memorandum of Understanding with Hennepin County for response efforts by public health has been negotiated. It details the arrangements for when response efforts would be shared and how and when the subsequent charging for services would occur. It will be coming to the City Council for discussion in the next few months.
- 11) Work is continuing at the local and regional levels to complete plans for pandemic influenza, including quarantine and isolation plans.